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of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

42 Elizabeth II

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	NDP
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	Liberal
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<i>Vacant</i>	Rupertsland	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 7, 1993

The House met at 8 p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(continued)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Good evening. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

The committee will be resuming consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 2(a)(1) on page 35. Shall the item pass?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I said earlier this afternoon that I would table for the members a copy of *Seeking a Balance: Parents' Guide to Help Children Succeed*, produced by the Native Education Branch of the Department of Education.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we were at the end of last time looking at the—what I was hoping for was at least a standard basis that we could agree to have some discussion about, but there does not seem to be a standard basis for discussion, so any questions about changes, improvements, success rates, improvement in program expansion and program impact do not really seem to be very helpful since we do not have any basic assumptions that we can start from.

Let me ask another question which is again arguing from the line that this section of the department is supposed to encourage success, support the success of native students. One of the elements of success for native students has been the increasing ability of Manitoba to staff schools with native teachers and with native administrators.

I want to ask the minister what changes there have been in that area. What are the changes in the numbers of native teachers in Manitoba?

* (2005)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, that information would not be available under this line of the Native Education Branch. We might have this information under 16.5(b), which looks at teacher certification, but again teachers may only declare themselves by language of preference; they may not declare themselves by ethnic group. So that seems to have been one of the issues we have been looking at over the past few hours, whether or not people wish to declare their membership as part of an ethnic group or not.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chair, but the department does support programs precisely for the production and graduation of native teachers, and it seems to me that should be part of the consideration of the minister in the context of native education. That is why I am asking, what have been the graduation rates in the last few years of native teachers?

Manitoba, for example, often claims that it graduates many more native teachers, has special programs for that and has done so for over 10 years, and that this should be a factor in the success of native students. This section of the department looks specifically at encouraging the success of native students, so I am looking at that element of it and wondering what the minister would like to comment upon in that area.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, I have said to the member that she might like to look at it under a specific area where we look at teacher certification.

I would also remind her that the Native Education Branch's mandate is to deliver programs and services to both native and non-native students. Therefore, all schools are potential clients of this particular branch regardless of the number of native students enrolled in a particular school. So we do have some data, as I said, on some key programs.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. There has been a recorded vote requested in the other

Chamber. The committee will resume after the vote.

The committee recessed at 8:09 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 8:29 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The committee will come to order.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chair, well, the minister was trying to divert my question again, as usual, not wanting to answer questions this time about the graduation rates of native teachers, in spite of the fact that this is a section of the department which does provide professional development to teachers and which I would have thought would have had an interest in the number of aboriginal teachers who were in the system, coming into the system, and who are in need of professional development.

I wonder if I could pose the question again. Could the minister tell us how many native teachers are now in the Manitoba system and what the graduation rates are from, for example, the BUNTEP programs and the ACCESS education programs?

* (2030)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the member is absolutely wrong in anything she says regarding the efforts to answer her questions. The answers have been provided to her. She may not like them, but the answers are provided. So I must say that I object strongly to anything that she says in that regard, and the record will speak for itself.

As I explained when I answered the last time, we do not have those numbers. Those numbers would only be available if we were to go to each school division, ask each school division to poll the teachers within their school divisions and ask those teachers to self-declare. We do not have the information on those teachers who are aboriginal and, as I explained to the member, we do provide a service to education in Manitoba through the Native Education Branch by providing in-services and providing information to school divisions and schools and teachers, and they need not necessarily be teachers of native origin or native background, and I have explained that to the member as well.

Ms. Friesen: But the minister does have programs in her department which support the production and graduation of native teachers. Those are the ones I asked about since those are ones that she presumably has numbers on. The minister then tried to answer this by referring to the other section of the department's role, which was to deal with cross-cultural education. That is what I meant by trying to divert the answer.

The question was quite simple. How many native teachers are being graduated and how is that rate changing in the programs in which the minister does have responsibility?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, as I said to the member, this information might be available in the lines which look at post-secondary education, Universities Grants Commission and also information on the Advanced Education and Skills Training section of this department.

Ms. Friesen: Does that mean that this section of the department, which provides professional development to teachers, has no knowledge of, no concern about dealing with the number of native teachers in the Manitoba system? Is this not part of the context of this particular branch at all?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, let the member not be critical of the members of the staff of the Department of Education, let her not be critical and say that the members of the Department of Education staff do not have concern for—

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: At best, I assume that the minister misunderstood what I was saying. At worst she is trying her McCarthyite tactics again, which is to put words into my mouth. I am speaking through you to the minister. I am not speaking about the staff. She has done this before.

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

* * *

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, now the member and the record will show what the words were that the member used: did the staff not have concern for. So I will remind her please not to make those comments about the staff of the Department of Education and Training.

I will also tell her now that this division does work collaboratively. We work collaboratively with the

field and we provide in-servicing for teachers. Those teachers may be aboriginal, may have aboriginal backgrounds, or they may not. We provide in-servicing and support to teachers and school divisions within Manitoba and, as the member knows, there is certainly a need to work with all members and all people who work within education, and we make sure that we do that. We support and liaise, however, with the Aboriginal Teachers Network of Winnipeg, but, again, that would be a group of people who have declared and wish to belong to such an organization.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chair, I will remind the minister that my comments are directed at the minister and her responsibilities, and I believe that the words I used were "section of her department," so I reject what the minister has said. I reject her manner in this particular answer to the question. The question still is—

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable members to put their questions through the Chair? It will avoid a little bit of the decorum problem we are having at this time.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the question I have been asking the minister is: What are the graduation rates of native teachers, the ones who form part of the groups whom this section of the department deal with in terms of professional development and indeed deal with in committee terms as well. I notice, for example, a number of committees have native teachers on. It would seem to me that this would be a concern of the minister in this section of her department, that native teachers are one of the most important elements of success in native students, which is the focus for this section of the department, and I am quoting from the Annual Report, to increase native students' opportunities for academic success. One of the things that Manitoba has done well in the past is to graduate relatively large numbers of native teachers.

I am asking the minister, in those programs which are under her jurisdiction, how have those graduation rates been over the last two or three years?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, as I have explained to the member, those statistics if available

would be best discussed under the Universities Grants Commission, which provides us with information from the university programs or from the Advanced Education and Skills Training section which provides us with additional information regarding programs such as ACCESS. The numbers are 16.7 for the UGC and 16.6 for AEST. I can tell the member, however, as she looks forward to those sessions, that we do not identify students by ethnic origin, and we cannot give a precise accounting of the number of aboriginal students that Brandon University, for instance, has graduated.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, then I understood that the term BUNTEP stood for Brandon University Native Teachers' Education Program. Has the minister perhaps misunderstood the question, or what information is she relaying in that they do not ask students to identify themselves? There are certain programs which are directed particularly towards native people, and that is one of them. I am looking at the graduation rates and the changes of those graduation rates in Manitoba.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: At this time, I would just like to inform the members of the committee that the words "McCarthy tactics" have been ruled as an expression that would cause intervention on the part of the Chair when it is brought forward. So I would ask the honourable members to choose their words carefully when they are bringing forward, so we can keep the decorum to a good level.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, again, as I see there is no acknowledgement coming from the member regarding your comments, let me continue.

My answers are the same, that these numbers would best be discussed under the area of the department in which we would have the staff available and also the numbers which are available to us.

But I would remind the member again that students would have to have declared, regardless of the program, that that is their particular background. The member has spent quite a long time looking and wanting to discuss very specifically the native ancestry, particularly of certain employees of school divisions, certain students who are served by this department.

I will remind her again that the information, the amount to which it exists, would be available under 16.7 and 16.6. The Native Education Branch is not mandated to gather stats on the teacher graduation rates.

Ms. Frlesen: The Native Education Branch, however, is mandated to provide professional development to teachers of native students and of non-native students. Since the minister is not prepared to discuss the numbers of native students in Manitoba or the numbers of native teachers in Manitoba under this line, then perhaps we can move on to something she is prepared to discuss.

Could you tell us about the impact on professional development activities of this section of the department as a result of the government's policies on professional development days?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am pleased the member will direct her questions now according to the line that we are covering.

Although the branch plays a leadership role in school planning, it encourages schools to take ownership for their decision making and to establish a school community network which is integral to the Native Education initiatives. In addition to the school-based in-service delivery, the Native Education Branch has collaborated with the University of Manitoba's Continuing Education division for teacher training. The branch also cosponsored the Winnipeg-based southern native language instruction certificate program which graduated 25 instructors in January 1993.

* (2040)

The Native Education Branch co-operated with the Winnipeg Education Centre to deliver the Native Education Summer Institute in July of 1992. The Native Education Branch also will assist the University of Manitoba's Continuing Education division in studying the feasibility of a native language curriculum development course for '93-94 or '94-95.

That is an example of some of the professional development work which the Native Education Branch has been a part of in the past year, and I know that the member has been interested to know about the kind of professional development in-service work that the department has been a part of.

She asks again how any changes that school divisions may wish to make about the number of

in-service days which they provide, and we have discussed this before. School divisions will make the determination as to how many, if they choose to use any or all or some of the days. We have also talked about the fact that in-service training can also be delivered in a number of ways and that school divisions have available to them a certain amount of money for professional development, and they may choose to send a member to a professional development training course, particularly in the area of native education. School divisions are the employers and they will decide the amount of time that would be made available for this in the coming year.

Ms. Frlesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I assume the minister has some deadlines by which she would need to know, for the purpose of planning in her department, when or if school divisions are going to take the government's advice on professional development days.

Could the minister give us an idea of what kind of timetable the government is looking at in this sense?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, school divisions are not under an obligation to notify the Minister of Education regarding their plans. They do notify the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) and they are to notify the Minister of Labour 30 days prior to their implementation. So, in that way, the Department of Education does not necessarily have to receive an official notice.

I can tell you though that the Native Education Branch does have some programs already planned for next year, one which involves parents. It involves parents and children in terms of an education in-service, and it will take place in the early part of November 1993.

Ms. Frlesen: Mr. Deputy Chair, presumably, however, some of the activities of this section of the department still will be oriented towards teachers. The department is not necessarily going to know very long in advance how many and where and when teachers will be available. So I am looking at the impact on this section of the department, which presumably depends, in some cases at least, on the gathering together of teachers from different school divisions for professional development days or for in-service days.

How is the department going to plan for the next year under those conditions? Have they, for example, decided only to deal with parents?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, no, we do not plan to deal only with parents, though we certainly believe that parents are a very important part of the education process and are very pleased to have some programs already in place which will involve parents. But, as I have said to the member, we do not know yet exactly how many divisions are taking advantage of exactly how many days. So we believe that divisions who wish to have in-servicing in the area of native issues and cross-cultural issues will still be able to be in-serviced, but the in-servicing may, as we have said before, take place in many different ways. I have referenced the funding available through the funding formula for professional development. Some divisions may choose to use some of the in-service days, and I have also spoken about some of the co-operative work in which the Native Education Branch is going to be working with Manitoba's Continuing Education Division as well as the summer institutes which we offer.

Ms. Frlesen: I do not think that the minister is answering the question. I am asking about the planning in the department under the conditions where the government has, in fact, set in motion a series of decisions by school boards and by teachers where planning is made very difficult. It seems to me that this area of the department is, amongst others, where that kind of planning will be most difficult, and I am wondering how the minister is going to deal with that—[interjection]

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Could I ask the honourable members to tone it down just a little bit? I am having trouble hearing the answers from the minister, so I do not know how the members can hear. So if we can just keep it down to a mild roar, I will be happy.

* * *

Mrs. Vodrey: We undertake planning when we hear from a number of divisions or we have a number of requests for in-servicing in the area of native education and cross-cultural issues, and we have heard from some divisions already: Brandon, Winnipeg, Agassiz, and Frontier that those divisions have identified native education as a priority.

Ms. Frlesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, one of the often quoted, in recent days at any rate, statistics about Manitoba is the tremendous increase in child

poverty that we are experiencing and our relative position across the nation in the numbers of children who live in poverty. A great majority of those children, I believe, are aboriginal or native in the broadest sense. I am wondering, in a section of the department which aims to increase native students' opportunities for academic success, where the plans of this division fit into dealing with that aspect of the difficulties faced by native children.

* (2050)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, throughout the Department of Education and Training, we recognize the needs to support students who are perhaps at risk in some way, and the Native Education Branch does provide some support as does our Student Support Branch.

When we first began the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training, we spoke about the department forming a view where members of the department who worked in various areas could understand and also take some responsibility for the concerns that were presented in all of education and not to just have simply a very segmented view of education.

So I remind the member of that, but I can tell her that the Native Education Branch focuses on strategies which are effective in promoting the retention and the academic successes of native students. We have one, the support for school-based planning, to help teachers adapt their curricula, their classroom resources and teaching styles to build on the strengths of native students.

Secondly, an implementation of an integrated in-service model which aims at involving schools and parents and other government departments and native organizations in a collaborative planning and a delivery of in-services.

We also offer program support for divisions or districts funded under the English Language Enrichment for Native Students Program. Its goal is to promote academic success by enhancing the English language skills of students who speak a native language or a nonstandard dialect of English.

Also the promotion of the Stay-in-School programs designed to strengthen the linkages between education and employment; promotion of the Aboriginal Career Awareness Days which featured native role models; early intervention programming that stresses the importance of home

and school partnerships and the role of native parents as their child's first teachers; the Cultural Awareness and Anti-Racism Workshops with native and non-native students to build positive relationships and interpersonal communications and to develop self-esteem.

So that is some of the active work undertaken by this particular branch to assist native students. I believe that is who the member was referring to. She spoke about young people who live in poverty, and then she spoke about a—in her words and this is my paraphrasing of her words—disproportionate number of those young people who may be aboriginal. So these are some of the initiatives which we have undertaken to assist those students.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the minister has argued that we should look at education holistically, and yes that is true, but her answer addressed really only the issues of child and family.

Does this section of the department, does any section of the department—did the department's submission to the Northern Economic Commission, for example, look at whole communities which are poor, communities where in fact people are not just looking for role models, but where they are actually hungry? I do not necessarily mean just the city of Winnipeg, although that appears to be true in the inner city of Winnipeg, communities where there are no libraries, communities where there are no recreation facilities, where early intervention relationship with the parents, creation of role models or provision of role models are in many ways far beyond the experience or the ability of those communities, in fact, to follow through?

Mrs. Vodrey: The member has asked to, in her second question, move beyond the issue of the nuclear family, the immediate family, into the area of community. The Student Support Branch, using the 1986 census data for each school community, each school community was assessed using the incidence of low income and single-parent family data. In the Mulvey School community, for instance, 39 percent of the population were in the incidence of low-income category and 27 percent of the families were headed by single parents.

Using the 1990-91 school base data, schools were asked to identify the number of students in the school that had an absenteeism rate of more than 30 days. For example, out of a population of 315

students, Mulvey School in Winnipeg identified 97 students or 30.8 percent in this category. I also could give another example. In the Birch River community, 20 percent of the population were in the low incidence of low-income category and 9 percent of the families were headed by single parents. Of those students in the Birch River School, they identified 38 of 184 students or 20.7 percent in the category of that risk, using absenteeism as the indicator.

Using the most recent home reporting student assessment information, again through the Student Support Branch, for the 1991-92 school year, schools were asked to identify the number of students who were two or more years below their age group in reading and in numeracy skills. For example, Mulvey School identified 78 students or 24.8 percent in this category, and Birch River School identified 33 or 18 percent.

Then using the 1990-91 data, schools were asked to document the total number of students entering school from October 1, 1990, to June 30, 1992, and the total number of students leaving school in the same period. Mulvey School had a migrancy rate of 77.7 percent and Birch River had a rate of 32.6 percent. So in this way, we have attempted to look at a community model wider than looking at single families. Through this, the Student Support Branch, which again I refer to—and it seems to be a problem when I refer to the whole Education and Training, but our Student Support Branch has, with the basis of this information, identified 239 schools as eligible for the Student Support Grant program. Again, schools with the highest ratings of some of these indicators were schools where funding then would be targeted.

I will say to the member that last year in its first year of operation the Student Support Branch was funded at \$10 million, and this year in the second year of its operation, the funding is at \$10.5 million.

* (2100)

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us how this kind of information and this recognition of what are some very dramatic situations, whether you look at it in terms of migrancy or in terms of other criteria that the minister has just discussed, what is the impact of this on curriculum development in this particular section? For example, what I am trying to get at is that there are two roles for this department.

One is to ensure increased native students' opportunities for academic success, and you are starting from a situation in a number of aboriginal communities, whether it is Mulvey School or whether it is Birch River, where there are some very serious issues of poverty. That is one element of the department. The other is to provide cross-cultural education for non-native teachers and for not necessarily native classrooms. So how does the department use this kind of information to develop particular types of curriculum? Or is it one curriculum for all?

Mrs. Vodrey: One of the important things is not to establish a totally different curriculum. That has been, I suppose, one of the difficulties. We want to make sure that all students have access to the most excellent curriculum. That is certainly what we are striving to do with our curriculum in Manitoba Education and Training.

The key to the curriculum is really what you do with it when you are working with the students. The key rests with teaching methodology. It rests with the grouping of students and it also rests with some of the resources which may be provided to help the teacher and the student work together through the curriculum.

In the Student Support Branch, the following materials have been developed in support of some classroom programs. The intent is to increase the relevance to the experiences of students and to increase the hands-on experiences.

In the social studies area, we have developed one called the Powwow Kit, and this kit is intended to assist classroom teachers in recognizing and respecting the powwow tradition. This includes introductory activities at the end of each section, the drum, the songs, the dance and the outfits.

The second example is Tapping the Gift, a collection of aboriginal Manitoba's life profiles and contributions. This book features 30 aboriginal Manitobans, both conventional role models and those who have maintained their traditional ways of life and beliefs. A teacher's guide focuses on the lessons that integrate the book into the Grades 5 and 6 social studies curriculum. Others which we have developed are Ecosystems Alive: Curriculum for Active Learning in Nature's Classroom. Those are some of the examples.

Curriculum Services also promotes implementation and program adaptation at the

school division level in six ways. We spoke about the adaptation of the curriculum as being important in terms of the methodology. One of the first areas is through curriculum support documents, as I said, which articulate practical implementation ideas for teachers or which outline sample adaptations for areas such as remediation or extension or differentiation. Secondly, through regional presentations and workshops delivered by the Curriculum Services consultant staff; and, thirdly, through sessions delivered at the initiation of school divisions or regions which request presentations or workshops, and again these are delivered by the Curriculum Services consultant staff and co-ordinated by Curriculum Services consultants. Fourthly, through Distance Education training sessions, co-ordinated and delivered by Curriculum Services, consultant staff may work collaboratively with the Distance Education technicians and the external agencies; fifthly, through collaborative support efforts with curriculum leaders; and, sixthly, through consultant support to provincial or national conferences related to curriculum implementation of program adaptation.

So we attempt to support through those five areas to assist in how the curriculum may be delivered and then we have also attempted to assist through some of the additional resources, and I have described a few to the member this evening.

Ms. Friesen: So it comes back, as it so often does, to the teacher, and again I express my regret that the minister in this context does not want to talk about the role of native teachers in this particular section, or indeed Manitoba's substantial achievement in providing and developing native teachers.

(Mr. Jack Reimer, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Could I ask, then, something that is written in for this particular line and this particular section, which is the improvement in teaching practices as one of the Expected Results of the role of this section of the department? Can the minister give us some indication of how teaching practices have improved in Manitoba and the evidence for that?

We looked last time in Estimates, last year in fact, of evidence of changes in the classroom, changes in attitudes that were anticipated by new curriculums. At that time I felt that the department really had very insubstantial ways of documenting

the changes in the classroom, so I am trying this year to look at the changes in teaching practices which the minister may have more information on and which may be perhaps more directly documentable.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Acting Deputy Chair, first of all, let it go on the record that I have been very willing to speak about native teachers when we get to the line which looks at the training of native teachers and when I may have available more of the detail information that the member would like to have covered.

However, she has asked, do we have any way to look at any benefits which might be occurring as a result of work being done by the Student Support Branch or the Native Education Branch. We have collected through our student support grants program implementation comments from eligible schools. I would just like to read a few to the member.

This one comes from Frontenac School Division, School Division No. 3, and it is a quote: The opportunity to attend professional development sessions, time for team development, and planning and the direct assistance of personnel from the Student Support Branch have been invaluable supports for our work to date.

Then from Morris School Division, No. 19: Numerous benefits have been evident from the implementation of the program in their school from the Student Support Branch. The school and the staff are working and planning co-operatively through inquiries about specific special needs students. Teachers attested that these students have greater awareness of social skills and have improved their interaction. Teachers are beginning to see themselves as resources to nourish the unique strength of each student, thereby providing a means for students to share those strengths with each other. This enabled at-risk students to achieve increased confidence and a higher success rate. From the classroom environment to the lunchroom to outdoors, co-operative learning strategies are helping to reduce discipline tensions.

From La Verendrye School, the response is: What have been some of the outcomes of our Try Another Way program? We have some trained teachers that feel that they have a handle on some of the problems that we felt were outside of the realm

of our solutions. We have families that believe an honest attempt is being made to make their school a safe place, and we have students that can see there are other ways to solve problems besides striking out. That one also carries on.

* (2110)

In the area of instructional strategies, from Brooklands School, Grade 1: The students benefited because they had a lot of time in small-group instruction and one-on-one support in the area of reading and writing. For example, if a book was too difficult, the pace was reduced, and more time was given for practice and study than other children had.

From Hastings School: I feel very positive about co-operative learning in our classroom after spending a lot of time focusing on developing basic social skills. The class is now able to incorporate academic goals well. From Lincoln School: I am more conscious of the instructional techniques and more aware of how to use them to help at-risk students.

We have a number of other responses which have come from schools. Gladstone School: I have realized that my teaching style will not benefit everyone, and I must try other teaching styles to benefit others. I have learned how to take risks.

So there have been a number of supports which have been given to the field in which there has been anecdotal responses where people have described the changes that they see.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I think those are excellent indications of the way teachers feel about professional development days, and perhaps a reminder to the minister that it is not very productive for education in Manitoba to suggest that school boards use the opportunity offered by the government to take away those professional development days.

Those were a few examples. They sounded very positive and it sounded as though they had direct impact in the classroom. I think everyone, including the minister, will welcome those and see the value of professional development days.

I wanted to ask the minister, as a follow-up to that again, effective teaching and improvement in teaching practices, how this kind of improvement and change is communicated to parents and how are they brought into that circle?

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mrs. Vodrey: Just to comment on the member's remarks around in-service, let me remind her that in the kinds of programs which I have just spoken about, there has been a shared responsibility. There has been certainly support from the department in the areas of grants. So we certainly have provided for the assistance to individual schools and teachers to deal with the area of in-service in the particular programs that I have spoken about.

In terms of involving the parents, it is very much part of what happens within individual schools. We do encourage individual schools to set up these relationships and to promote a local dialogue with any of the programming which we have assisted through grants, because, again, a number of the programs are at the ideas of a local school and that is how they have been funded. But just to give you some idea of some of the programs, first of all, we have had some programs, home-school programs, and these are programs designed to promote more effective parent-school communication about school programs and children's progress. They include home visits, increased phone communication, school newsletters, information on skills required of students, increased parent-teacher conferences and informal parent evenings.

There are also early school years language development programs. These programs assist children in the Grades K through 4 with language difficulties by providing specialized programming and involving parents so that school learning is supported in the home. This includes providing specialized training for parents.

In addition, we have early literacy programs. These programs promote parent-child, or kindergarten through 4, literacy activities in the home, and they are co-ordinated with the classroom reading and writing. They include some home reading and some home writing programs.

We also have home math programs. These programs promote parent-child math activities that reinforce math skills by co-ordinating the activities with the children's classroom programs.

We have family intergenerational literacy programs, parent educational programs, parent volunteer mentor programs, services to immigrant students and families, and programs for adolescent parents.

Ms. Avls Gray (Crescentwood): Just a question on the Native Education section, does the staff in this section work with the organization—and I might not have the name exactly correct—Manitoba Indian Cultural Education Centre on Sutherland?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that there is a consultative relationship with this group, and we also use the people's library as a referral support. Also, we do refer people who are looking for a very particular type of expertise to this particular place.

I would also, Mr. Deputy Chair, just like to table—I would have to ask you if you could prepare some copies—but just in response to the final question from the member for Wolseley, when asked about the role of parents, I can just say that I refer to the Dauphin Herald, and I am happy to table this, that there were two parent conferences held in the Dauphin region. They were organized by a committee with Native Education, school divisions and community organizations, and they do say that the conference was well received. I am happy to table that newspaper article.

* (2120)

Ms. Gray: Does this Native Education section actually use some of the resources? Have they incorporated some of the resources that the Manitoba Indian Cultural Education Centre have developed, and have they incorporated that and actually used them to pass on to teachers who are involved in teaching culturally appropriate programs?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that, no, we have not used many of their materials but, in fact, have supplied them with materials from our Native Education Branch, particularly in the area of videos.

Ms. Gray: I actually want to ask a few questions in this area, this entire Program Development and Support Services, in the area of special needs. I may be presumptuous in this, but I would assume that the minister might agree that, when we are dealing with the education of children with special needs, we probably have not reached an ideal or achieved all of our objectives in this area in that there still are areas that need to be refined and resources that are needed in the area of special needs. I am wondering if the minister could identify for us what she sees as sort of the three or four major difficulties or stepping stones, however you want to use the term, in terms of reaching better education for children who have special needs.

(Mrs. Shirley Render, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Acting Deputy Chairperson, first of all, in terms of initiatives and areas of concern, I would like to speak about the initiative which we have underway in the additional funding available at Level II and Level III for emotionally and behaviourally disordered young people.

In the past, there had not been a recognition and had not been the way to access funding on behalf of these young people which then would provide them with the classroom supports that are necessary. Certainly, having worked in the schools and having been in many cases the person who was the resource as part of a team in looking at the behaviour management for emotionally, behaviourally disordered young people, I certainly see that as a development, and we look for some feedback from the schools over this year as they begin to use that particular funding.

We have also, through the changes to the funding formula, provided that Level II and Level III funding for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing students. Again, that was a recognition of some of the supports that those young people who may be called special needs would need in school and perhaps there had not been the availability of funding that they could access in order for support.

In a second area, I would say that there has been a development in the ADAP process which is where school divisions identify the kinds of supports that they would like to have in place, the policy that they would like to have in place regarding special needs children. Certainly, the department has noted that there have been some significant changes, that there has been policy development occurring at the local level, that there has been increased parental involvement.

We have spoken over the course of these Estimates of the importance of having parents involved in a child's school life. Where there is a special needs child, parents are very integral in the child's school life also because, particularly in the area of behaviour management, often there is a requirement that behaviour management which is put in place in school to be reinforced in the home so that the child is getting a single message as opposed to a variety of different messages.

As I said, we are noticing that there is this implementation of policy at the local level and the increased use of the ADAP process.

The third area that I would reference is the whole area of violence prevention, and though I have spoken about the funding available for the emotionally, behaviourally disordered young person, the issue of violence in the school has been identified across Manitoba as a real concern, and some of the young people who have been involved in violence in the school may not in fact be classified as emotionally, behaviourally disordered.

So we do have the interbranch committee and we have just finished the consultation process. I spoke last week about the consultation process which has been occurring with the community. It has involved approximately 40 people representative from all areas of the community to begin to look at the issues of violence in the school and come to some, at least, early identification of how to cope better with the issues of violence in the schools.

Those are three areas which I can say are seen as priorities and certainly are what we would see as evolving areas for support.

Ms. Gray: I thank the minister. In her answer, she does talk about the extra funding available for Level II and Level III. Can she tell this committee, with that extra funding, does she have an idea of how many extra students that may provide some funding support for, or will there be any extra students? Is it just additional funding for students who are receiving existing services in a particular level?

Mrs. Vodrey: I can say that some of the students that this would fund are probably students who are currently in the schools and who perhaps had not received funding before. That funding has not been available to recognize their particular issues.

We have now finalized the guidelines under which schools will be able to access this funding. Those guidelines have been distributed to school divisions, and we are now in discussion with school divisions as to how they will identify those young people and then access funding.

Ms. Gray: The minister referred to some students, does she have an idea as to how many additional students or schools may be able to access funding for so many extra students? Does she have a ballpark figure?

* (2130)

Mrs. Vodrey: Well, again, the criteria and guidelines have just been set and are being distributed so we really are not able to guess with any degree of accuracy exactly what the numbers may be. I suppose if we were to really provide a very broad estimate, we might say approximately 100 students for Level III and approximately 50 to 200 for Level II.

Ms. Gray: Given that the number of students obviously, because it is not really known how many, was not really a deciding factor in looking at the extra funding, what was sort of the rationale behind providing extra funding in this area?

Mrs. Vodrey: We certainly received ongoing information from school divisions. We received feedback from their special education co-ordinators. We also received feedback from the superintendents around the kinds of students that schools were dealing with and then this information was reviewed by the advisory committee on Ed Finance. As they looked at all of the areas that had been submitted to them for recognition within the funding formula, this was one of the priorities.

Ms. Gray: Can the minister tell us, the proposal from Manitoba Teachers' Society and the Manitoba Association of School Trustees—and there might have been another organization there—but the proposal that looked at provision of medical services to children in schools, can she tell us what her response has been to that proposal?

Mrs. Vodrey: This has been an area identified particularly over the past year, the issue of the medically fragile young person. I am not quite sure if the member is speaking of the report between MAST and MTS and so on which identified a look at the sharing of services among departments, or if she is speaking specifically about medically fragile young people.

In terms of medically fragile young people, I can tell the member that there has been a committee which has been set up. It is an interdepartmental committee. In Phase I of that committee's work, they were to look at the issues that surround the medically fragile young person in school. Also, that committee looked at the emotionally behaviour disordered young person. That Phase I report has been submitted to me as minister and also shared with my colleagues.

The second phase was then to do an inventory of service. The inventory of service would look at the service provided through all of the affected departments. It would be Education, Health and Family Services. I have now received that report and I will be looking to discuss that with my colleagues.

I can tell the member as well that it certainly has been an area of priority and that we have devoted quite a lot of staff time within our department to also work with other departments to look at ways to resolve the issues around the medically fragile young person.

Ms. Gray: Can the minister tell me, this committee that she has referred to regarding medically fragile children and Phase I and Phase II, is that a different committee than the committee that also is involved, of deputy ministers who are looking at co-ordination of services amongst the three or four departments?

Mrs. Vodrey: This is the same departmental committee that has been working. As I said, there is a committee of deputy ministers, and that is chaired by the Deputy Minister of Education. Then there is the working group committee, and that is chaired by the Assistant Deputy Minister of Education. They have looked at this as they have looked at other issues, but there has been some specific attention paid to the area of the medically fragile young person.

Ms. Gray: So it is the same committee and the minister has said that there is a Phase II that has been completed. She has now received an inventory of services as well as information on Phase I. If she could just clarify, I was not quite sure if she said what the next step was or perhaps what the time frame was.

Mrs. Vodrey: I have said at other times during the Estimates discussion that we are now going to meet as ministers to examine the reports and to give further direction, and we will be looking to meet as soon as possible.

Ms. Gray: Can the minister tell us what is the nature of the recommendations that she has received in regard to co-ordination of services? Is there a recommendation that a particular department take a lead role in the provision of services, or what is the nature of the recommendations?

Mrs. Vodrey: The recommendations certainly focus on the issue of collaboration among

departments, and now as ministers we will have to look at how we can be the most effective in the area of collaboration.

* (2140)

Ms. Gray: Can the minister tell me, are there recommendations that refer to funding and where the dollars should come from to provide funding for the provision of these medical services for special needs children?

Mrs. Vodrey: As I have said, I have received Phase II of the report. I will be sharing it with my cabinet colleagues. At this point it would be a little bit premature for me to look at exactly what we will do with the recommendations or exactly what further direction we will give until all ministers have had a chance to examine the information.

Ms. Gray: Can the minister tell us, has she relayed the progress of the committee in regard to the explanation she has given this committee this evening? Has she relayed that information back, either her or her other ministerial colleagues to MAST and MTS, the individuals who wrote that particular proposal on provision of services to medically fragile children?

Mrs. Vodrey: I can tell you that the Deputy Minister of Education meets regularly with the organizations, MAST and MTS and MASS. I can tell the member also that when I have had the opportunity to dialogue with my colleagues and when we have further direction to be given, then that information will also be relayed to those member organizations.

Ms. Gray: Can the minister perhaps rephrase her answer because I still was not quite sure. Can she tell me if the MAST association and MTS have actually received a response back in writing from this department indicating what has happened with the proposal and where it is at in terms of looking at the proposal and looking at recommendations, et cetera?

Mrs. Vodrey: To clarify for the member, the educational organizations are certainly aware of the process that has been in place as the departments have come together through the deputy ministers and also the working group.

In terms of the final results of that, no, they do not know the final results yet, but I understand that MAST did put forward a resolution in which they requested an update. We are certainly able to provide the update, but I need to meet with my

ministerial colleagues before I can provide exactly what the direction will be and the next step.

Ms. Gray: I know I have asked this question before, but can the minister indicate to me since the last time I asked this question a couple of weeks ago, does she have any update or information on when her cabinet colleagues will be meeting and where on the agenda this particular issue is? I think it is very, very crucial. I mean, this is an issue that has not just been in the departments for the last five years. This is an issue that goes on for eight to 10 years, so it has created very much frustration for professionals, for parents and for the students themselves.

I am wondering if we could see a real priority with this particular issue in terms of getting some kind of consensus from the departments as to better co-ordination of services, who is going to be providing the dollars, et cetera, a protocol to put in place so that in fact the students and the families do not end up falling through the cracks because departments want to argue with each other about who is going to pay the bill.

Mrs. Vodrey: We think that it is important, too, as the member has said. I understand that it has really been a long time coming to this point. As I have said before in these Estimates, I sat in the early '80s with the Education minister of the former government asking that minister to please take some action, and none was taken. So where we are now is that this government has taken some action. We have had the working group do their work, and we will be meeting as soon as possible to make sure that we have had a good discussion and can provide direction for the next step.

Ms. Gray: Could the minister give a commitment today that in fact we could have a response, some protocols in place, by September of this year?

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, as the member knows, it is going to require several ministers to look at their departments, so I would not be able to speak on behalf of my other colleagues who would be involved. We will have to wait until we have that meeting, but I do expect that meeting to occur very shortly.

Ms. Gray: Can the minister tell us, with the recommendations that are going to her ministerial colleagues, will there be some opportunity for input from the education officials, people in school divisions, et cetera, in terms of what the proposed

solutions are, so that in fact whatever the solution is, it would be something that would also be sanctioned or would be seen as appropriate by school divisions, et cetera?

Mrs. Vodrey: The member organizations have asked to be involved when the ministers have had a chance to look at this, and we will certainly make every effort to make sure that they are involved in whatever the next stages are.

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): I would like to follow up on that important point, that we take up here where we left off the first night discussing the Estimates and the committee that was set up. We have now been in Estimates for three or four weeks, we want to see what progress has been made here, and we do not know that a lot has been made. The minister is still giving the same answers.

I just wanted clarification on this particular matter, the time line for the decision making on the integration of services, the establishment of some protocols as the member for the Liberals that was just speaking said. Is that the same as the time line for the medical services, that committee is looking at both of these issues? Are they handling them in lock step, or will one be dealt with perhaps on a more urgent basis?

For example, the medical services is one on which The Teachers' Society has recently put out a policy statement to all teachers which does perhaps place in some jeopardy the provision of these services, because they are basically telling the teachers not to do it unless ordered to do so. So the medical services aspect of it, it seems to me, is very pressing as to who is responsible and under which circumstances a teacher is responsible. So I am asking whether the minister believes the time line or the relative urgency of those is the same, or whether she would see the medical services portion of this being dealt with sooner?

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, I have explained to the member that I will be meeting with my colleagues as soon as possible and we will be looking at all of the information that is before us. I have explained that the issue of medically fragile young people was looked at as a separate issue because it was one which had been presented as one of great concern. When we have a chance to look at what has been presented in terms of how the issues have been identified—that was one area—and then what kind

of services are currently available, then the ministers will be able to provide the next direction.

* (2150)

Mr. Plohman: Yes, so the minister believes then there are several steps yet before establishing the policy. She had talked about a Phase I report which she received, reviewed. Then there was a Phase II which she has received but not reviewed with her colleagues. Do you expect a Phase III and a Phase IV and Phase V, or just a Phase III? What is the time line on this?

If the minister could shed some light on this important issue for the committee I would very much appreciate it, because it is not good enough to just talk about, well, you know, we are going to look at this. Let us get some idea whether we are going to see some actual movement on this. We realize it is important. Maybe as much was not done in the past as should have been done, but that is not the issue right now. We are at this situation. The issue is the minister's action on this. People are waiting. They need to know.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, well, action has happened and the Phase I report identified the issues; the Phase II report was able to identify all of the services that are currently available by a number of departments. Now we are able to look in a very co-ordinated way at what is available for special needs young people and for medically fragile young people.

As the member is asking for a specific time frame, I can tell him that there are several ministers who are involved, so it will be up to the ministers involved now to determine exactly what the next step will be.

Mr. Plohman: Yes, we are talking about medically fragile young people, and I believe that after going through two phases, the minister should see some light at the end of the tunnel, start to see something taking shape.

I am simply trying to get from the minister, just assuming that by the end of June she was out of Estimates, when could we expect a decision on this kind of thing? Do we see—

An Honourable Member: That is a hypothetical question.

Mr. Plohman: No, I am just trying to put it in context. It could be middle of July, it could be before the end of June. Let us just assume that, if this is holding things up at all with the decision

making for the minister, what kind of priority is this going to get for decision, for matters on the minister's plate?

She has her colleagues here, we have important issues, she keeps saying, well, it is up to the ministers now. That means her, that means this minister and her colleagues. Are they going to give it priority; is she having difficulty getting them to look at this? If so, what can we do to try and press this issue for her on her behalf to get some support here?

We have been around this and the members are saying, you do not have to yell. The fact is, we have been dealing with this for some time, trying to emphasize this point because we are not getting any direct response. I do not know what we are going to do here. What is going on? Are we going to get some action from this minister or not?

Mrs. Vodrey: Let me give a reasoned response to the member's question.

As I have said, it has been an issue of importance. First of all, it has been an issue of importance to myself because, as I have explained, my experience within the school system has shown me that this is an important issue. So I have let him know that personally I have taken this very seriously, my department has taken the lead role in terms of chairing the committees at all levels. Now, with his understanding that this is important to myself personally and to my department, I will be taking it forward to my colleagues and we will be looking at the information that is provided and then we will be looking at the very best way to proceed. We fully see this as an important area and, as I have said, certainly in Education we have viewed it as a very important area.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, can we expect this issue to be fast-tracked by the minister, compared to the other issues on her plate? Can we expect some real movement on this issue? Can we expect the minister to go through the sharing of this report with the ministers at the earliest opportunity, and, secondly, can she see that there would be several more phases? Are we nearly at the end of the decision making here? Just a simple answer—first opportunity for sharing of this report, and are we at the end of the process or are there a number of phases left?

Mrs. Vodrey: As I have said, we are at the report stage. We have received a Phase I and a Phase II

report. Both are very important pieces of information that we need. Now the ministers will be viewing the information and I know that they see this as an important issue, but I can speak best on behalf of the Department of Education and Training and for myself as minister about how important I think that this issue is.

The member asks how other colleagues feel about it; in their Estimates process, I am sure he would like to ask them.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Good answer, good answer.

Mr. Plohman: No, this is not a good answer. The Minister of Consumer Affairs talks about good answer. It is not a good answer at all. It is the same kind of stonewalling we have seen for the last month almost in these Estimates. It is a deflection from the issues. It is not an attempt to answer directly.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable member to put his comments through the Chair to the minister?

We will carry on with decorum. And could I ask the honourable members if there is a full moon out there tonight?

* * *

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there has to be something going on with these members and with this government that is directing them. It certainly is not the issues on the ground here that we are trying to deal with.

I am simply asking the minister if there are other phases as she sees it at the present time, simply asking a question that is straightforward here. Can she answer that? Are there phases other than the minister's looking at it and then writing up the protocols?

Mrs. Vodrey: I have explained to the member, the next step is that the ministers involved will be looking at the report.

Mr. Plohman: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, for gaining some order in this committee so that we all may hear the very important questions being asked.

I am asking the minister whether there are other phases involved. She says the next phase is for the report to go to the ministers.

Did Phase I go to the ministers?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, the ministers all received Phase I, which was an identification of the issues, and what followed that was then to say, let us look at the services provided in each of the departments. We now have an inventory of the services provided, and now the ministers will be making some decisions and providing some further direction. But, as I have explained to the member, there is more than one minister involved in this, and there are, in fact, several ministers who will be considering this as part of their responsibilities.

We have established this as an issue of priority, and I have given the member the answer that we will certainly be looking at it as soon as possible and that I will be bringing it forward as an issue of priority.

* (2200)

Mr. Plohman: Well, that is somewhat encouraging, but when we consider that Phase I went to the ministers and then there was a Phase II, was Phase II planned before it went to the ministers for the response to Phase I? If it was, then the minister should know if there is a Phase III, another report that the minister is going to ask the committee to prepare in anticipation of finalizing this issue.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, again, we have approached this issue in a very orderly way. We have, first of all, examined the issues. We were aware that we also wanted to look at the services provided in each of the departments. We did present the issues, and then the committee got to work on the services which were being provided in response to some of the needs identified.

Now we will be looking at the best way to look at how the ministers will now look at what their response will be. The member seems to be having trouble understanding that there will be several ministers who will be looking at the information and be making decisions based on the services that their departments offer.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The hour being after ten o'clock, I will just canvass the committee and see if there is a will to carry on. [agreed]

Mr. Plohman: Well, we have established that this is going to the ministers, and the minister says she is going to make it a priority. Does she have any understanding of the process from now on? In other words, are the recommendations from Phase II as to the remainder of the process?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there is information in the Phase II report; there are some recommendations in the Phase II report. They will be considered by the ministers.

Mr. Plohman: Do they deal with action on these various services that are provided, that have been identified now as to who should be providing specific recommendations that the ministers can consider?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, as I have said earlier, the ministers will be reviewing this information first. When the ministers have had an opportunity to review the information, then the information and the result of that will certainly be shared and be shared with the educational organizations who, I know, are interested in it. Right now it would be very premature for me to discuss all of these issues before my colleagues and I have had a chance to discuss it in a co-ordinated way.

Mr. Plohman: The minister should understand that I am not asking for specific recommendations. I am simply trying to understand if there are further phases before decisions can be made. So I simply ask the minister whether there are specific recommendations in this phase that could lead us to understand that the minister will have some decisions made after she consults with her colleagues, or are we just going to get directions for further action for the committee and a subsequent phase?

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, I am not able to anticipate exactly what the outcome will be of discussion that my colleagues and I will have. I have explained that this is a priority, but the member is asking me to prejudge exactly what my colleagues will say. I am not going to prejudge what my colleagues will say. We will have that discussion, and then we will make the determinations that we need to.

Mr. Plohman: As I said before, the members of the education community are very concerned about this being dealt with in a priority way. They want to see some action on it. So we are just relaying those concerns to the minister and asking these questions, what kind of a time line can we expect some action here—within the next number of months, or are we looking at a lengthy process that is going to go on for a number of years? So I have to just ask the minister, is there any other impediment to this being dealt with? Is there a major financial impact question that has to be considered?

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, the information that is in that report will be shared with my colleagues, and when my colleagues and I have had the opportunity to review it, then we will look at the recommendations that are made and those will be shared with the education community.

Mr. Plohman: So the minister is not making a commitment to fast-track this or treat this with any degree of urgency in her department and with her colleagues. Is that a correct statement?

Mrs. Vodrey: I have explained that I see this as an area of priority. I have explained in the past and during the discussion this evening that I see this as an area of priority on a personal basis because of my experiences as I have worked in the schools, and I also have seen it as a priority as minister because it has been brought to my attention from a number of the educational organizations. It also is brought to my attention when I visit schools.

I have made it a priority. I have made sure that Education has chaired the committees and that there has been progress in that area. Now I will be taking the information to my colleagues for discussion.

Mr. Plohman: Okay, then, can the minister say then when she first began with this committee on medical services for Phase I? What was the date?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am informed that Phase I began their work in February, March '92 and received their information in the fall of '92. From that then, the committee began its work on Phase II. Phase II has been now tabled, and we will be discussing it as ministers as soon as possible.

The member seems to have some difficulty with that particular step—

An Honourable Member: The first phase was '91?

Mrs. Vodrey: '92 was the beginning of Phase I.

An Honourable Member: You said Phase II started in the fall of '92.

Mrs. Vodrey: No, I said—let me just go over again the dates for the member who missed them.

Phase I was started in February to March of '92. Then the receipt of that Phase I report was in the fall of '92. Following that, the work on Phase II began, and Phase II has been provided to me in the spring of '93. That will now be looked at by the ministers.

So there has been quite a lot of work that has been done among a number of departments which have come together. As I explained, there has been work done by the deputy ministers as well as work done by the working group.

Mr. Plohman: This is very telling, because we see about a six to seven-month period between each phase here. If we looked at that and project ahead, and we know the minister plans several phases, we could easily find out what the time line is, but it looks like we have not been able to determine—I would assume, from what she said, there is only one way to interpret this, and that is that the minister does not really know where she is going on this. She does not know what the other phases are. She is going to go to her colleagues and hope they give her some direction.

It is unfortunate that we do not have a minister taking more leadership in this area that is so important, to indicate to her colleagues, this has to be dealt with, here is the time line, I am going to you for your acceptance and support of the time line.

* (2210)

I think it is time that the minister took that kind of leadership—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mrs. McIntosh: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I hate to see an inaccurate statement on the record. I do feel this minister has shown extremely strong leadership and been very courageous on a lot of the decisions she has made. [interjection] Oh, is that not a point of order?

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

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, again, I would not want the member to have inaccurate information on the record either. So let me remind him that it was through the Department of Education and Training who chaired the committees, both the committee of deputies and also the committee of assistant deputy ministers, and that there has certainly been a commitment to this.

Maybe the member is not quite familiar with the process of a collaborative approach. We have been working—our government works in a collaborative approach, and we certainly have used

the collaborative approach to this particular committee. The collaborative approach has meant that it has required staff time from a number of different departments, as well as from deputies of those different departments. We now have that information, and the ministers will be looking at it and then we will be determining the next step, but the member seems to want me as a single minister to speak on behalf of all the other ministers before we have had a chance to have a discussion as a group.

Mr. Plohman: That is not what I am saying at all. The minister is misinterpreting what I said again. I simply wanted to know if she is recommending a time line here and she is making specific leadership type of recommendations. As the lead department with the deputy ministers, the lead deputy minister on this issue, we are simply asking if the minister is making some specific recommendations as to time line and doing it on an urgent basis because of the urgency of the issue.

I would really implore the minister not to try to misrepresent the questions that we are asking here.

Mrs. McIntosh: You are only asking one question.

Mr. Plohman: Well, I have to keep asking. The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh) is making some statements from under her breath about me asking the same question. I am pursuing an issue with the minister in a dogged fashion. I am not going to stop until I get some answers. I do not care about all this peripheral kind of talk that the minister gives. I simply want to cut through and ask specific questions here and push the issue until I find out whether the minister is giving this some urgency. Is she making specific recommendations?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, well, let me go to the leadership issue to say, absolutely, as minister I have taken leadership. It has taken leadership to direct this very complex and very comprehensive issue and to see that it has moved along to the point that it has, and now the member wants me to speak on behalf of my colleagues regarding a time line. I have told him that I am not able to speak on behalf of my colleagues regarding a time line. However, I have assured him, as I have assured the Legislature, that this is a priority, that we will be looking at it as soon as possible and that I as minister and as an individual have taken this as a priority issue.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the record shows again that the minister has not provided a definitive response, leadership on an issue that is required. We cannot go away from this committee tonight with any feeling of satisfaction that this issue is in good strong hands being dealt with expeditiously. I know that staff want to deal with it expeditiously. We do not know if the political will is there from this minister. She has not given us any comfort level on this important medical services issue.

I can only say that this follows a pattern we have seen so often in this committee, unfortunately, and it will ultimately be the downfall of this minister. Ultimately it will. The minister may feel comfortable and feel some pride in being able to evade the questions, which are answered and not answered with all of the straightforwardness that is required in the committees. She might feel good about that, but, ultimately, it is not going to help her situation.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have not felt any satisfaction with those answers. They are not clear. They do not indicate urgency—[interjection] The minister's colleague continues to mumble under her breath.

I want to ask the minister whether this area of Child Care and Development is an area that the whole policy on teacher abuse and/or violence in the schools is dealt with, or is this under another area?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, we have approached the issue of violence in the schools, which we recognize as a very serious one, as a divisional issue, and I have spoken about a number of divisional issues today. We spoke about native education also as being very much a divisional issue, which is being addressed by a number of the branches within PDSS. Violence in the schools has been addressed similarly.

There is an interbranch committee within the division. So, within the division, we have a number of branches representative, and CCDB or the Child Care and Development Branch is one of those. We have had a number of issues which have come forward relating to the issue of violence in the schools.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we are prepared to—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2.(a)(1) Salaries \$184,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$45,600—pass.

2.(b)(1) Salaries \$2,204,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,695,700—pass.

2.(c)(1) Salaries \$616,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$222,100.

Mr. Plohman: You are on (c), Mr. Deputy Chairperson?

An Honourable Member: You are on 16.(c)(2) Other Expenditures?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: That is correct.

Ms. Frlesen: I had a question on Supplies and Services. It shows a considerable drop, and I wondered what the impact of that would be on the department's programs, on this section's programs.

Mrs. Vodrey: In that area of Supplies and Services the reduction relates to the Native Education Branch reducing capital expenditures in the area of computer hardware and work station furniture from the '93-94 systems plan. The area of computer hardware, they will be utilizing existing hardware, and in the area of work station furniture there will be a realignment of the work station furniture from within the division.

* (2220)

Ms. Frlesen: On the Professional Fees, could the minister tell us who is involved in it and what the contracts are?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, the Professional Fees line refers to money paid for the development of coursework materials. An example is funds paid to Dr. Leo Pettipas, who is a writer who worked jointly with our Native Education Branch, with INAT, with Frontier School Division, and with Winnipeg No. 1 committee.

In addition, there were two videos produced: the native artists series by Jordon Wheeler, and also a native language video with the Continuing Education department of the University of Manitoba. It also went to funds provided for the Parents' Guide, Seeking a Balance, to the writer of that particular document that I have tabled this evening, and the writer's name is Astrid MacNeill.

Ms. Frlesen: And that was for last year, was it? What are the expected programs or plans in that line for this coming year?

Mrs. Vodrey: Three of the projects for this year are with the Metis Women's Association, a video production; with Frontier School Division, a video production re band governance; and a Metis heritage kit with the MMF.

Ms. Frlesen: Just further clarification on the Metis Women's one. Is this the one that I have read about in the press that is gathering genealogies and family histories?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, no, it is not a video on the genealogy. It is a video comprised of footage which was filmed in The Forks area and it focuses on Metis heritage.

Ms. Frlesen: Are any of these videos available either in French or native languages?

Mrs. Vodrey: No, not at the moment.

Ms. Frlesen: Are there any plans to make them available in French?

Mrs. Vodrey: We do not have any immediate plans to translate the videos into French; however, the Parents' Guide, which I provided earlier this evening, has been translated into French, and also Reaching for the Sun, which has supporting documents as well—it goes along with a poster series—Reaching for the Sun, a Guide to Early History and Cultural Traditions of Native People in Manitoba. This also has been translated into French.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2.(c)(2) Other Expenditures \$222,100—pass;

2.(d) Manitoba School for the Deaf (1) Salaries \$2,384,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$353,900—pass;

(e) Child Care and Development (1) Salaries \$3,201,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,170,200—pass;

(f) Instructional Resources (1) Salaries \$1,043,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$716,500—pass;

(g) Distance Education and Technology (1) Salaries \$1,612,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$2,662,700—pass;

(h) Student Support (1) Salaries \$416,500—

Mr. Plohman: Just a brief question or two here. The minister has indicated in the Supplementary Estimates that she is dealing with—that this is primarily this area for children, students at risk.

What definition is used for determining students at risk?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: As long as we are waiting for the minister, I just wanted to make note that there were two lines, Less: Recoverable from Other Appropriations, one under (d), so it is (3), and the other one is under (g) and it is (3) as well. [interjection] There is no dollar amount to pass; I still should have recognized the lines, so I have done it now.

Mrs. Vodrey: In the area of the Student Support Branch, to establish risk we look at seven factors. The first factor is the incidence of low income in the community expressed as a percentage, and we discussed that a little bit earlier this evening regarding a specific project. We look also at the percentage of single-parent households within the community. We look at the school migrancy rate for the '90-91 school year. We look at the number and percentage of students referred for the English language development for native students support in the '91-92 school year. We also look at the number and percentage of students referred for ESL support in the '91-92 school year. We look at the percentage of students in the school who are two or more years behind their age group in reading and in numeracy skills during the '91-92 school year, and we look at the percentage of students who missed 30 or more days during the '90-91 school year.

Mr. Plozman: Does the minister have any statistical information about numbers? Is it by division, or where is the greatest concentration? I imagine Winnipeg No. 1 would have a large concentration. What are the other areas of the province and numbers?

Mrs. Vodrey: This information is collected by school. All 800 schools are included in this survey. There is an index rating of each school by category, and by division we know then where there is the highest concentration of at-risk students. This year we are looking to refine the seven indicators with the field so that next year there will be another process of data collecting this fall so that we will be able to update these statistics that we have.

* (2230)

Mr. Plozman: So is the minister saying that the present statistics do not provide, as far as the department and yourself are concerned, a comfort level insofar as the statistical information is not as defined as they would like to have it?

Mrs. Vodrey: This statistical data was collected in the first year of the Student Support Branch program; that was in school year '91-92, or the school year just preceding this one. We do believe that the information that we have is fairly accurate. However, we would like to ensure that our data continues to be accurate, and because of that we have engaged in this process of refinement to make sure that we have updated the information and any changes which may be occurring within individual schools so that we are able to make the very best decisions possible on behalf of the young people in those schools.

Mr. Plozman: Are there various classifications of at risk?

Mrs. Vodrey: We do look across the province, and we do know that certain schools have a higher concentration of at-risk students. That is noted by the index rating that is given, based on the seven risk factors. Also the concentrations of at-risk students are reflected in the grants allocated. So I can tell the member, for instance, Winnipeg No. 1 receives approximately 65 percent, over 65 percent, of the grants allocated to this program.

Mr. Plozman: Well, that was my next question as to what kind of grants are available for students identified as at risk and total amounts of money. I imagine those issues will be discussed in Support to Schools. Could I get some information about specific dollars allocated to school divisions for at-risk students? Then I get back to my previous question which was not about the dollars, but whether there were various levels of at-risk designations just like there are for special needs kids: Levels I, II, III, IV, whatever. Do we have those same kinds of levels, and is funding allocated on the basis of those levels?

Mrs. Vodrey: Funding is not provided according to Level I, Level II or Level III grants for special needs young people. The funding is provided in three categories. There is funding through what is referred to as the minimum guarantee. It is the sum total of the '91-92 compensatory and inner-city grants. This funding is not intended to replace the regular or the base funding. For '93-94, divisions can fund existing programs previously supported by the compensatory or inner-city funding.

Then there is funding in a category called special projects. Schools eligible can apply for a \$10,000 grant for the improvement of existing services, and

projects must be time limited within a three-year maximum. The deadline for renewals is April 16, 1993.

Then there is a third category called the innovations category in which we look for collaborative demonstration projects between Manitoba Education and Training and the school division. We focus on services that do not currently exist, which is why it falls into the innovations category.

There is a significant evaluation process, and the time is limited to a three-year maximum. Again, the deadline for renewals is April 16, 1993.

Mr. Plohman: Who does the evaluation as to whether students are at risk or not, using the seven criteria that the minister mentioned?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, the member asks how these evaluations are done. They are done with a school division committee which works with Manitoba Education and Training. Occasionally, we do use the services of an external evaluator.

* (2240)

Also, we have a program evaluation consultant within the Department of Education and Training, and also, to support evaluation, there is a grant to support a half-time consultant for Winnipeg No. 1 under the minimum guarantee to assist in this.

We view the evaluation process as a learning process for the development of programs. The information that we get in this process is shared with other schools. We also look to develop the process so that schools can improve their own implementation.

Mr. Plohman: Okay, so it is primarily in the inner city, but are there a lot of divisions in the province that have some allocation of at-risk students?

For example, take a look at the Parkland, Duck Mountain, Dauphin, Intermountain, Swan River, is there a large number identified or is this something that—first of all, is there a belief that there are not at-risk students if there have not been a number identified, or is it just a matter of no resources to do it?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, we most certainly recognize students at risk across the whole province. There is funding provided in at least one of the categories for, I believe, every school division within the province.

I spoke to the member about the three types of funding. Funding could be obtained through the minimum guarantee, through the special grants and through the innovative grant. The exception to a division which receives funding in any one of those categories is Pine Falls because Pine Falls did not apply for any funding to assist them with their at-risk students.

So divisions across the province have been able to qualify for funding for at-risk students under at least one of the categories, and, in some cases, divisions have qualified with all three categories for funding for special needs students. So I think it is important for the member to know that this particular branch and its grants recognize, across all divisions, that there are at-risk students.

I would remind the member that this was a very innovative creation of a branch. It is the only branch of its kind across Canada. Manitoba Education and Training recognized the concerns with special needs students. So this branch was created a year ago. It is in its second year of operation.

Mr. Plohman: I notice the minister talks about special needs. We are talking about at risk, and I do not know whether she is using those two terms synonymously, but the minister has always said that there has been increased support. We argued that there was actually a decrease because of the layoff of the clinicians and then now I see in this appropriation that there is a decrease this year in staffing and in the total allocation by some \$72,000 or about 10 percent.

So we see a decrease there. I hope there is some increase in the grants. Otherwise, the minister has possibly been giving us a little bit of inadvertent false hope here.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, there has been an increase in the grants available to schools. The decrease, in terms of the staffing in the department, was a decrease of a secretarial position. There is, in fact, an increase of funds available to schools.

The member might be interested in the program that the Dauphin-Ochre School Division, Swan Valley School Division had. The name of the program was Instructional Focus, Middle and Senior Years, and the amount of money was \$30,000 which was provided.

It focused on instructional strategies, learning organizations, co-operative learning, learning styles

to be developed at the senior years, and a staff development model be utilized that includes theory, demonstration practice, feedback and coaching. This program involves collaboration between the two school divisions and Manitoba Education and Training.

(Mr. Jack Penner, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Plohman: Well, we will leave this; my colleague has a couple of questions.

Ms. Frlesen: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I wanted to ask about the federal Stay-in-School Initiative. Could the minister tell us how the money comes to the department for that? Is there federal money in the department here for that particular program?

Mrs. Vodrey: The Stay-in-School funds do not flow directly to the department. There is a joint committee which is established. The terms of reference from the joint committee were developed when the Stay-in-School Initiative began. This joint committee then makes recommendations for program funding.

On the joint committee are two representatives from the federal government and two representatives from the provincial government. There is an ongoing dialogue between the federal government, the Deputy Minister of Education and Training and the Assistant Deputy Minister of Education and Training regarding program directions.

So the Department of Education and Training works as a joint partner in the program through this federal-provincial steering committee, and at the moment, the federal Stay-in-School program will continue with its program initiatives during the '93-94 school year.

The department will continue to provide educational expertise to the issue of students at risk, of not completing high school with adequate skills, and there will be a continuation of the current joint structure.

Ms. Frlesen: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, there is a joint program committee composed of two federal and two provincial members. How much money is allocated from the provincial part and how much from the federal part?

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, this is not a program which requires matching program dollars from the provincial government. However, there are times when we do collaborate on initiatives. Such a collaboration is occurring with the St. Vital School Division and the Stay-in-School Initiative to offer a trainer of trainers seminar for individuals to train classroom teachers in implementing the co-operative learning strategies.

* (2250)

Ms. Frlesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, how much money is the provincial government allocating to this program this year?

Mrs. Vodrey: As I said, there are no specific program dollars required to match the Stay-in-School Initiatives. However, I would tell the member that the entire \$10.5 million from the Student Support Branch does go toward programs which ensure that the needs of students at risk will be addressed.

So our Student Support Branch, which again, as I have said, was a very innovative creation of the Department of Education and Training in Manitoba, is the vehicle that we use specifically to put our provincial money towards students at risk.

Ms. Frlesen: I am still trying to understand this program. What I am understanding from the minister is that there is no specific allocation; it is simply departmental co-operation in implementation.

Mrs. Vodrey: The federal government designates dollars to the Stay-in-School program, and they are managed through the federal system. There are targeted amounts directed towards specific programs.

The Department of Education and Training provides educational expertise to the issue of students at risk of not completing high school, and this program compliments the work that the province has been involved in with students at risk, which I have said we support through our Student Support Branch.

Ms. Frlesen: How much federal money is designated for Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, we would have to total up the amount of money on all the projects of the federal Stay-in-School Initiative to give the member an exact total. I can give her an estimated total of federal project money of approximately \$1

million; however, there is then money also available for the public awareness campaign. The member may have seen those awareness ads. Then there is national innovations project money. Manitoba does have one of those national innovations. It is a collaboration with Frontier School Division and the federal Stay-In-School Initiative for increasing parent involvement.

Ms. Frlesen: How much is designated to the Frontier School Division project?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we do not have before us the money that the federal government is putting into Frontier School Division for that innovations program specifically. We could get it for the member and I would be pleased to give it to her tomorrow.

Ms. Frlesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would welcome the Frontier School Division amount, but overall it is not so much the specific amounts that I am interested in but the way in which the program works and the range of projects which have been chosen. The minister mentioned one, the St. Vital School Division, Training for Trainers.

I guess what my concern is, the federal money and the provincial programs, how is it being targeted?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the federal Stay-In-School Initiative dialogues with the Department of Education in Manitoba. They look at what are the priority areas that have been identified through the Student Support Branch.

The federal Stay-In-School Initiative I understand has a broader catchment area or a broader scope of those who can apply. Their focus is junior and senior high school, roughly Grade 7 through Senior 4. With our Student Support Branch, the distinguishing factor is that we look at kindergarten through Grade 12.

* (2300)

The Department of Education and Training also collaborates with the Gordon Foundation. But the Gordon Foundation also looks at a focus of Grades 7 through Senior 4, and they too have a broader definition of who can apply. The Stay-in-School initiatives tend to focus on the transition from school to work. They look at work education; they look at mentorship; and they look at career and personal development.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 2.(h)(1) Salaries \$416,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$253,100—pass.

Item 2.(j) Canada-Manitoba Winnipeg Core Area Renewed Agreement - Education Development (1) Grants—there is nothing there to pass; (2) Less: Recoverable from Urban Affairs—there is nothing there to pass.

Ms. Frlesen: As the Deputy Chairperson has said, there are no dollars on this page, but my concerns are for the Core Area Agreement. I wanted to ask the Minister of Education, who is not responsible for this, but who obviously is seeing a decrease in her budget because of this, or the absence of a Core Area Agreement, and I wondered if the minister had any comments on what had been lost, how the department was changing its programs to cope with the absence of Core Area money, or whether the minister does anticipate some version of renewed Core Area.

Mrs. Vodrey: First of all, as the member knows, the responsibility for negotiating the Core Area Agreement does fall to my colleague the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ernst). However, I can say that funding which may have been lost or expired with the ending of the Core Area Agreement really has been more than matched by our Student Support Branch. The Student Support Branch has maintained the commitment to the inner city, and has also expanded the concerns that have been raised about students at risk from the inner city, and expanded that to apply to the province.

I can tell the member that in the first year of operation the Student Support Branch had increased funding for the school year '92-93, that increased funding by \$3 million. This year, and I know we have just looked at that line, we have increased the funding by 0.5 or half a million dollars for the school year '93-94. Again, as I said to the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), as he was looking at where some of this funding occurs, 65.9 percent of the funding does flow to the Winnipeg School Division.

Ms. Frlesen: Mr. Deputy Chair, the advantage of the Core Area Agreement was that it drew money from three sources and was able to concentrate them on the same programs in the same areas that the minister recognizes have to be addressed and to which she has added some additions of monies. Again, I wanted to ask the minister, does she as

Minister of Education have any indication from her presence in cabinet of the anticipation of a new Core Area Agreement of some kind.

I am sure she knows that this has been talked about since at least 1990, that we have had ministers of Urban Affairs who have said they are hopeful that preliminary negotiations have taken place, that continued meetings have taken place. The various parts of the federal government, as we get closer to a federal election, even the most cynical of us do anticipate that there might be some kind of an agreement with the federal government.

I am wondering what advantages the minister sees in drawing together those three types of money and focusing upon one of Manitoba's areas of greatest need in educational terms.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, I know that my colleague the Minister of Urban Affairs has responded to questions in Question Period regarding the status of this particular agreement, and I am sure in his Estimates he will be able to provide the update that the member requires.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Resolution 16.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$18,769,100 for Education and Training, Program Development and Support Services, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994—pass.

We will take a 10-minute recess and come back and do the Bureau de L'Education Française if it is okay with the committee.

An Honourable Member: Who wants 10 minutes? Everybody?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Everybody.

The committee recessed at 11:05 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 11:13 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

Item 3. Bureau De L'Education Française: Provides policy and program development and delivers services related to French language education, including all programs emanating from the Official Languages in Education Agreement with Canada; provides services to students and teachers in Franco-Manitoban schools, in French Immersion programs, in French as a second language program

in English language schools; provides liaison with the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface.

(a) Division Administration (1) Salaries \$106,900. Shall the item pass?

Mrs. Vodrey: Excuse me, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would just like to take a moment to introduce the two staff members from the Department of Education and Training who have joined us at the table: Mr. Guy Roy, who is the assistant deputy minister, and Mr. Roland Pantel, who is the director of Official Languages and Administrative Services.

Mr. Plohman: Can the minister indicate whether there is a federal-provincial agreement in place at the present time to deal with the Official Languages Programs Administrative Services? I understand one of the Activity Identifications indicates that negotiations are part of the role and administration of the Canada-Manitoba Agreement, and I just wanted to know the current status of that agreement.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, the Official Languages in Education agreement expired on March 31, 1993. An evaluation of the Official Languages in Education program has been conducted by the Department of the Secretary of State. Also, an evaluation of the Official Languages in Education protocol has been conducted by the Department of the Secretary of State and the Council of Ministers of Education Canada, the CMEC.

Indications are that a new five-year protocol will be negotiated between the Secretary of State and the CMEC on behalf of the provinces, following which bilateral agreements will be signed between the Secretary of State and each of the ten provinces and the two territories. It is probable that interim arrangements will be agreed upon for the '93-94 year since the new agreement has not been signed before March 31, '93.

Mr. Plohman: I knew, of course, that the old agreement was expiring; but that a new one is not in place, that an evaluation is just taking place now, that seems rather odd. Is there not a provision for this to take place, this evaluation, in the final year of the previous agreement or in the third year of a five-year agreement, and then a new one that would take effect immediately, with negotiations commencing at least a year in advance of the completion? What has happened this time?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, the same situation occurred as the previous agreement expired. The federal government evaluates their programs in the fifth year of the protocol, so, that being their process, that is why the evaluation took place at the time that it did. However, it does not stop both parties from pursuing interim arrangements until the signing of the new agreement. Negotiations have begun, and the Secretary of State has written to the chairperson of the CMEC, who is the honourable David Cooke from Ontario. He did let the chair of CMEC know that the federal government and federal cabinet had approved funding for the new protocol.

Mr. Plohman: It seems like a very inconvenient way to operate. Has this been standard through successive governments over the last 20 or 30 years, or is this just a new development?

Mrs. Vodrey: This particular methodology has been in existence for the life of the Official Languages in Education program. The date, I am informed, has been since 1974.

Mr. Plohman: What is the value of the current agreement, the magnitude of the current agreement?

Mrs. Vodrey: The OLE program generated \$10,439,699 in revenue for Manitoba in 1991-92.

Mr. Plohman: Has that escalated year by year by inflation or whatever else? Is a standard formula built in, or is it renegotiated each year? How do they arrive at the figure?

* (2320)

Mrs. Vodrey: As I look historically at the amount of funding, there has been a slight increase year over year since 1984. It is, I am informed, very sensitive to enrollments.

There is also a minimum guarantee to each province that says provinces cannot get less than they did the year before unless there is a dramatic decline in enrollments.

Mr. Plohman: Does that mean while the minister is cutting back support to public schools for the province by 2 percent this year, that this area would not have received a similar cutback because the province would not have gotten less? Is it a matching grant, or is there some formula so that it would be dependent on the province putting in some money as well?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am informed that we maintained our support in the bilingual categorical grant for infrastructure. The province does match this, and it is enrollment driven.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, on a per-pupil basis, the grant cannot be lower than the previous year, or is that in total?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, as the member refers to the reduction in terms of funding of public schools, a base funding was reduced, and that included schools which offer French language programs also. The categorical grants to schools across this province did not go down. They did not go down in the area of French language programming, and then they did not go down to other schools across the province either.

Mr. Plohman: I just want to know the total amounts on these agreements. Now the federal-provincial agreement that in '91-92 yielded \$10,439,699, and there is also an interprovincial agreement regarding French language education, does that involve money, or is that just standards? What does it involve? I looked under Educational Support Services, Activities Identification: "Supervises an interprovincial agreement regarding French language education."

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, under this particular interprovincial agreement, it does not mean direct funding. What has occurred under that agreement is that we have sent consultants to Quebec for some short-term intensive training. We have also received support in the area of expertise where, for instance, university professors have come in to provide some assistance in training. We have also had some short-term exchanges with teachers and students from Manitoba.

So the money is simply to operate this portion of the program. It is operating dollars. The money is not provided in terms of grant money through the interprovincial agreement.

Mr. Plohman: So this is the sole source of revenue from the federal government, is the federal-provincial agreement. Is there any other source of monies that has provided for French language education in the province, other than through this agreement?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, all the money which flows from the federal government flows through the Official Languages in Education agreement.

Mr. Plohman: I seem to recall an announcement by the federal government that for the implementation of the Supreme Court decision for the Francophone division, there would be some, as I recall, \$112 million over six years, or five years, whatever, to all the provinces collectively. I do not know how much is coming to Manitoba.

I would like to know how much of that \$112 million would come to Manitoba per year to establish a new Francophone division, and totally?

* (2330)

Mrs. Vodrey: The exact amount of money which will flow to Manitoba still has to be negotiated, and that will be negotiated very shortly. But I can tell the member that approximately 70 percent of that \$112 million which is to flow over six years to eight jurisdictions, approximately 70 percent of that will flow for Francophone Schools Governance over six years in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Manitoba's share of that has now to be negotiated.

Mr. Plohman: So what the minister is saying is that 70 percent applies to those provinces she mentioned, and a large province like Ontario then is not included in that 70 percent. They would be getting the other 30 percent?

Mrs. Vodrey: The Province of Ontario does have a governance model currently in place. The other 30 percent, the other part of the agreement, focuses on post-secondary education, and Ontario and New Brunswick will each have a share for a post-secondary.

Mr. Plohman: Okay, just to get an idea of ballpark figures. The minister may not be able to give a precise figure because she said it is still to be negotiated, but based on historical basis on numbers, relative numbers, can Manitoba expect in the neighbourhood of 20 percent of that total, or would that be high?

Mrs. Vodrey: It is going to be very difficult to make that estimate because Manitoba does have the highest numbers of students enrolled in minority education. If we look at enrollment, that might provide us with a higher proportion of share than the range that the member mentioned, 20 percent. However, if we look at population as a gauge among the provinces, we may not in fact receive the same percentage. So that is why I have been very careful to say that the amount of money which will flow to Manitoba is still to be negotiated.

Mr. Plohman: Yes, have they indicated whether it will flow on the basis of student enrollment or Section 23 population? It certainly would not be, I would not think, on the broad population of the province because that really has nothing to do with the Francophone population and the demand for the service.

Mrs. Vodrey: The federal government has not indicated to us on what basis they will be flowing the money.

Mr. Plohman: The minister is saying though—well, has the minister taken a position as to what she believes should be the criteria? Would it be Section 23, Population, or Student Enrollment?

Mrs. Vodrey: I can tell the member that we certainly will be looking in this process to negotiate the very best deal for Manitoba. However, it really would be inappropriate at this moment for us to discuss what our strategy will be with the federal government. As I have said, we will be looking to do that negotiation very shortly.

Mr. Plohman: I would assume the minister would be trying to determine the most advantageous negotiating position for the Province of Manitoba. That would seem to stand to reason.

Are we dealing with a federal-provincial agreement here based on matching funds, or is that not even known?

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, that particular issue is part of the negotiations which we will be looking to do with the federal government.

Mr. Plohman: We have to be careful since you have two sets of negotiations going on, one with the OLE agreement and this one, that they do not try to throw the two of them together with that money lost in the federal-provincial agreement. I just raise that as a caution in these negotiations.

Has the minister any idea of how they arrived at a figure of \$112 million?

Mrs. Vodrey: There was some consultation, I am informed, by the federal government with Francophone groups across Canada. There was some extremely informal discussion with the provinces approximately a year ago, but it appears to us that it was, by and large, developed based on available resources.

Mr. Plohman: There was no special requirement then for the federal government to pick up these costs, and so they just pulled a figure based on what

they thought they could afford. Is that what the minister is saying?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, I did say that the federal government had consultation with Francophone groups across Canada. Again, it is very hard to speak for them, but I would assume that, based on the consultation, they integrated that and also had to look at what their available resources were.

Mr. Plohman: I have just one further question. Did they consult with the bureau here and the department? What advice were you giving them—to look at a per-pupil amount, an establishment grant to set up the new division, or was this ongoing support?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, the federal government did ask the Department of Education and Training in Manitoba to look at the approximate costs of implementation. We did provide them with the information that we could, but we did not ever hear back following our provision of that information so that we are not sure exactly how much that factored into the decision of the federal government on the amount of money they have chosen to provide.

* (2340)

Mr. Plohman: The minister's comments coincidentally raise the point that I was going to ask the minister, and that is to the estimated costs of implementing or establishing a new Francophone division. Does the minister have a figure that was estimated based on data used when putting together the bill that is before the Legislature and planning for the Supreme Court decision?

Mrs. Vodrey: Within the Gallant report there was estimated an expenditure figure, but the Gallant report did assume that all students, all eligible students, would transfer into the Francophone Division, and it was estimated by that report that there might be a shortfall of approximately \$600,000; that is with the revenues expected and the costs incurred. However, now we have a model which Manitoba has implemented which indicates that perhaps all students who are eligible will not transfer into the Francophone Division. So we are into now an implementation process, and we are expecting no new costs per pupil, as I have explained to the member.

Mr. Plohman: There are two figures really, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. It seems to me there is an

establishment figure to establish the divisional office. There is staffing, there is office and capital costs and various establishment costs, and then there is the ongoing operations with the per pupil grants coming in. I am not talking about the ongoing operation based on per pupil costs. I am talking about the establishment of the division itself, the initial costs that are one time only basically.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, I believe the member is asking now about the work of the board from the election of its trustees to the first students, because we recognize that board will have to operate one year, almost one school year, without students. There has been an identified cost for that particular year of approximately \$560,000, but, again, that is an estimated cost for the work of that board and the hiring of its administrative people and so on in that first year of operations before students.

Mr. Plohman: So this is part of what the minister would anticipate the federal funding would be used towards, and then the ongoing operation of the administration of that division, is that part of the federal funding? It would not be per-pupil grant funding, would it?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in terms of the education of its students, Manitoba is held responsible for the education of students, as we are now, but we could look for some of the federal money to assist us not only with the start-up costs at \$560,000 which I have mentioned, but also to assist in, sort of one-time only special projects which might be associated with the starting up of the Francophone divisions. For example, it might be initiatives such as the setting up of a central office or a regional office or the programme d'accueil, which is the program to support students whose language fluency is not necessarily at the point where they could benefit directly and they do need some support, though they are students who are eligible to attend that particular Francophone program.

Mr. Plohman: We have asked the minister a number of questions at length about the new Francophone division. She has indicated in previous sittings that Justice Monnin is now out and gathering information and registering students—would it be appropriate to use that term?—in anticipation of becoming part of the new division.

Is there any new information on the progress of the implementation committee since we last sat?

Has there been a report made, any more estimates on numbers of students that would be involved?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the implementation committee has been out in the community doing its work. I am informed that including a meeting which was held this evening, there have been five public meetings held. Mr. Monnin will not be tabulating the intent to register forms until the end of June, so we do not have any information on that, but we do know that the meetings are in progress. They are expected to be finished by the end of June.

* (2350)

Mr. Plohma: Can the minister just give us a quick indication, rundown, of where the meetings are being held?

Mrs. Vodrey: Meetings have been held in La Broquerie; in St. Leon; at Noël Ritchot, which is in St. Norbert; Lagimodière, which is in Lorette; and Gabrielle Roy, which is in Ile des Chenes.

Mr. Plohma: These are the meetings that have been held. Is that right? I only got four of them, but I think the minister said five or six. How many in total are there going to be held?

Just to facilitate the activities of this committee, if the minister could provide us with a list of those meetings, I would appreciate that at another sitting.

I just wanted to ask a couple of questions about interaction between français and French Immersion schools and classes and so on. There seems to be some separation whether it be through interschool activities; there seems to be a line drawn that français program schools do not interact in a full way with French Immersion schools. I wonder why that is.

I say this from some experience. My children are in French Immersion. They have been since kindergarten, and so they go to College Beliveau in St. Boniface. I note many competitions in track and field and other events do not involve the French Immersion schools. Yet it is a full French-speaking school in terms of the students. I think it would benefit the students to have that interaction. I do not think it would hurt them.

If the goal is to give them exposure to French culture and to the language and so on, why would there be so many limitations to that interaction, simply on the basis that their parents do not speak French?

The other thing about it, I notice that when I talk to the students of the French Youth Parliament, immersion schools are not, I do not believe, invited to participate. They cannot participate in the French Youth Parliament, and I think that would be a valuable experience. I just wonder what some of the thinking is behind this, or what the policy of the minister is on this. It may not be the minister's policy or the bureau's policy. It may be the individual school division's.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, it is, by and large, a school division policy which determines whether or not there will be joint interaction between the français and the French Immersion programs.

The member has mentioned a number of activities which are separate, but I am informed that, in fact, there are more joint activities. I will not try and say them in French, but I will give you a sense in English of what the activities are—the French youth theatre festival, and also the festival of films or videos, and then the Festival du Voyageur.

Mr. Plohma: I believe there are such things as the honour choir, the honour band for all schools—English, French Immersion and français.

I understand that, but there are many others that are limiting such as a français-only track meet, for example, and the Youth Parliament that I mentioned.

The Youth Parliament is one where I would think there is probably a provincial policy involved because it involves all of Manitoba. If there is not, maybe the minister could find out what the policy is and see whether there are any impediments to broadening that from the point of view of the individual immersion schools being involved.

There are now a number of immersion schools in the city, at least Jeanne Sauve and Beliveau and others, but the number is very small. So they are kind of separated from the English-only schools, and they are separated from the français schools, and they are kind of in the middle by themselves.

I think it is important to have that interaction with the français schools in all respects, as well as, if they want, with the English schools, but they do have their own little entity. It is a small number and it kind of leaves them, I think, without that feeling that they are fully accepted in the French community.

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, I can say to the member that this is the policy of school divisions and how school divisions and schools provide groupings and

opportunities. I would also say to the member that some decisions are based on choice, and they may be the choice of the people participating or choosing not to participate. So some may be divisional policies and others may be based on issues of personal choice.

Mr. Plohman: I am not speaking, basically, where there is a personal choice involved. It is a policy that certain schools are invited to certain activities based on programming. I would ask the minister though to look at this issue, which she has not commented on, of the Youth Parliament, from the point of view of seeing whether there are some opportunities that can be made available there.

I think that we are prepared to pass through this division before we close tonight. We may have some questions on the lines as we go through, but basically we should do that fairly quickly.

* (0000)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 3.(a)(1) Salaries \$106,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$27,200—pass; (3) Francophone Schools Governance \$116,000—pass.

(b) Curriculum Development and Implementation
(1) Salaries \$737,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$149,000—pass.

(c) Educational Support Services (1) Salaries \$212,700—

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to ask a question about enrollments, which I think comes under this. There is a popular perception that enrollment in immersion programs is declining, and I wonder if that is the case for Manitoba. Do we have sort of a five-year record that would show that or is it a temporary dip of one or two years, or what is the minister's assumption?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in looking at the enrollments beginning in 1980-81, there had been a constant increase. At about '89-90 we were in the range of 19,000 students. That was increased to 19,644 in '90-91 and in '91-92 to 19,751. So in those years it was a slight increase over that time period. We had thought we might reach 20,000, but in the year '92-93 we had a slight decrease to 19,692, a decrease of 57 students.

Ms. Friesen: Does the minister have any sense of how this compares to similar provinces? I am thinking of Saskatchewan particularly.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am informed that, in general, this has been the trend across Canada. We do not have specific data on other provinces.

Ms. Friesen: I would anticipate that there would be an expansion of high school enrollments; that is, certainly the number of high school places has expanded. Does the minister have a quick reference on, say, how the distribution of these students has changed?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we only have available this evening the figures from this year. The figures from this year, I am informed, do indicate that there is an increase in the students who would be attending the high school program as the larger number of students, particularly in those years where there was the greatest increase, as I was describing in the total numbers, are now approaching the high school years.

Ms. Friesen: Can I look at the other end now and look at the intake over the last two years? You said that there is a drop of about—what was it, about 50? Where is that drop coming? Is it coming from the junior high, Grades 8, 9, 10, or is it coming in the intake? What I am really looking for is what the future projection is.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the figures that I have before me show that there is a drop of approximately 112 students in the kindergarten year, a drop of approximately 263 students in the Grade 1 year, 68 students in the Grade 2 year, 41 students in the Grade 3 year, and then we have an increasing number of students slightly until Grade 7 when we have a decrease of 76.

Ms. Friesen: Just a comment on that. That drop in Grade 1, I think, is really quite startling. The drops in Grades 2, 3, you probably have always had as people switch programs and realize that immersion is not for them, but that 216 for Grade 1—this, I assume, is not a drop necessarily of people who have gone from kindergarten to Grade 1. This is actually a standard intake into Grade 1, regardless of whether they have had kindergarten. It is not slippage in that sense.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, I am not able to speculate on what the causes are. We do not know exactly what the causes are for that drop. I suppose the causes could be many. It may even reflect birth rate in that year.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 3.(c)(1) Salaries \$212,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$68,600—pass; (3) Grants \$974,500—pass.

3.(d) Official Languages Programs and Administrative Services (1) Salaries \$404,200.

Mr. Plohman: The bursaries programs for teachers and students, what is available from the province on that?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, the amount is \$140,000 available for teachers, \$346,000 available for students.

Mr. Plohman: And a number of different programs for these or are these just under one administrative program, one bursary kind of program, and have these been affected by any of the decisions made about bursaries by the minister?

* (0010)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, in terms of the teacher bursary, there is just one teacher bursary program. That is for teachers who study in the summer and they may either be teachers from the français program or teachers in the French Immersion program.

For the student bursary, this is a different program than the bursary through our Student Financial Assistance program. It is a bursary available for students who will be studying at St. Boniface College or for students who study outside of the province in French or bilingual programs.

Mr. Plohman: So is it treated like a scholarship or is it strictly on the basis of need?

Mrs. Vodrey: These bursaries are not awarded based on need, and they are not awarded based on academic achievement. They are awarded based on a lottery system.

Mr. Plohman: How many are awarded each year?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, in 1992-93, there were 591 student bursaries and there were 141 teacher bursaries.

Mr. Plohman: A couple of other questions, the minister had indicated earlier, in negotiations regarding the Francophone division for the \$112 million federal available to all the provinces eligible, that she had not yet determined the criteria. I had asked about whether it would be based on per pupil or on Section 23 parents or what would be the criteria?

I noticed that the minister has said under this section, under expected results, the attainment of the best possible financial return for the province on negotiating with the federal government. So I ask her the simple question, basing it on the number of Francophone or Section 23 parents, eligible parents, as opposed to on student enrollment, which would give the best financial return to the province?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am informed that the result would be approximately the same.

Mr. Plohman: One other area that I wanted to question the minister on, and that is the issue of standards, or standings, relative standings on performances of people, of students in immersion programs versus the English stream as to how they perform overall.

There was all kinds of speculation years ago about whether kids would be behind in their English language arts, and we have found from our own personal experience that is not the case, as perhaps I believe they are actually ahead, or perhaps it would be where they would have been in English only.

Now that many years have gone by, we have graduates from immersion that have gone right from K to Grade 12, what are the results in Manitoba's experience on the relative performance of kids who have gone through the French Immersion programs versus English programming only?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, I am informed that on the provincial assessments which we spoke about being done on a cyclical basis, the students in French Immersion and français scored at least at the same level as their English counterparts and in some cases may have done better.

Mr. Plohman: Is this math and social studies, or are we talking English only here, English language arts?

Mrs. Vodrey: The areas assessed are in all the areas we assessed through our provincial assessment program. It includes areas such as math and science and English language arts.

Mr. Plohman: Is there any comparison done on performance on the CTBS testing?

Mrs. Vodrey: No, that testing is done within the division.

Mr. Plohman: So there is no central correlation or comparison by the province of those results.

Mrs. Vodrey: No there is not.

Mr. Plohman: Did French Immersion and français students also write national tests that were written just recently in math for 13- and 16-year-olds?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, the students did participate in the SAIP program in the math testing which occurred this year. They will also participate in the language arts assessment which will occur next year. They also participate in our provincial exams.

Mr. Plohman: Is the minister aware that students, 16-year-olds, taking these tests were by and large not enrolled in 300 courses because the majority were in Grade 11, that they were being tested on information, on curriculum, that was developed based on 301 courses, and that therefore they could not have taken some of it because they are still in Grade 11 or Senior 3?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, again, the SAIP assessment was done to look at functioning of 16-year-olds. Then the test was developed for français and for French Immersion in Quebec. However, they did work with their English counterparts. The test was piloted within the French schools as the test was piloted within the English schools.

Certainly our information is that there was quite a close match in terms of the skills developed. As the member knows, that particular test tested a range of skill development. So we know that not all students would be able to complete all forms of the test. The test was to look at students functioning within math in a series of concept areas at a series of levels of functioning.

I am informed that we have had no questions raised from the schools regarding the SAIP test.

Mr. Plohman: The test that was written in math for 16- and 13-year-olds was, as the minister said in the House, designed to compare Manitoba's curriculum and how Manitoba students would perform as compared to other students, but the problem being that the curriculum is—well, the minister can give us the objectives of the test then for participating in it, if she wishes, if they are not correct.

* (0020)

In any event, the problem is that they were being tested on a standard curriculum. It is a standard test across the province. That does not exist. There is no national curriculum. That way it tends to be unfair to some provinces. My understanding is that to 16-year-olds in Manitoba what was being

tested was basically based on Ontario curriculum that did not apply in all cases to—well, did not apply to Grade 11, basically, for a lot of the skills required in math.

I wonder if the minister—and that is why I raised it in Question Period in the House—was aware of that and why she would have accepted to allow students to be put through that kind of situation, and teachers, when in fact they were at a distinct disadvantage before they even started, not because they were not performing students and they could not perform, but because they had not been exposed to curriculum under which they would learn those skills. It does not make any sense to put them at that disadvantage. It certainly is not a realistic comparison.

That is the information I have, and I would appreciate if the minister could—I perhaps should have dealt with this under general curriculum earlier in the Estimates.

If the minister needs additional staff to deal with this at some point, this is as it applies to the French programming, but it is equally as applicable here as it is to the English perhaps unless it was developed under different criteria completely. If that is the case, well, then it is not as relevant to this section as I perhaps thought it was.

But I want to, under Support to Schools, indicate to the minister that I would like to explore that a little bit further as to what curriculum it was based on and whether Manitoba students were given a fair chance in that test.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chair, the testing and the test which was administered was field tested, and, again, with that field testing and with the piloting, there were adjustments made to the test. The test was developed in Quebec—the Francophone test, the français test; however, there was input by all provinces, and the test was not based on any one provincial curriculum. It was also not used to evaluate specific students or teachers. It was based on expected skill level and performance expected at that age, and we were looking for levels at which students of that age were able to achieve.

We believe that the match was really very close, but we know that not all students would be able to complete all sections of the test. The test was in seven concept areas with five levels of competency, and so it is true that some students would not be able

to complete the whole test because their level of competency or mastery of certain skills would not have had them reach that particular level. We are aware that each student's achievement level would not have allowed them to complete the test. We are looking to see, were some students able to complete the test in Manitoba? How did Manitoba students do on this particular assessment?

Mr. Plohman: Did immersion students write this test as well?

Mrs. Vodrey: Yes, they did.

Mr. Plohman: Just to comment about the overall comparison to see how Manitoba students did in relation to how students did in other provinces, the minister would have to admit, though, that if the test was not as relevant to the curriculum being covered in Manitoba to all areas as it is in some other provinces, it does tend to distort the results through no fault of the students or the teachers. Would the minister admit that?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think that the member has made an assumption that, if our students were not able to complete all areas of the assessment, it would somehow only be Manitoba students who would fall into this particular category. That, we do not believe, is accurate. Across Canada all students would not be able to completely complete the whole of the assessment. We would not see Manitoba students as in any different position as other provinces across Canada.

As we said, the test was not developed based on any one provincial curriculum that should provide a specific advantage to any particular province. All provinces had a part in developing the assessment. We looked for skills and mastery of skills that would be achieved by students at age 13 and 16, and the assessment was presented, as I said, in seven concept areas of five levels. Our students were asked to complete the test, to do the best that they could, and then we will have a look at the results. As I have said also, this was not meant to be a way to measure teacher performance specifically or individual student performance.

Mr. Plohman: Yes, but it could reflect negatively on Manitoba schools if we were at a disadvantage in any way. I am not saying that other students, relatively speaking, would not have the same difficulties if the test was as relevant to their curriculum as it is to our curriculum, but that is an assumption in itself.

I understand that at least in the English test there were math concepts that are traditionally just not part of the curriculum in Grade 11 that were being tested; therefore, teachers and students have told me that put them at a distinct disadvantage. It bothered them, because they want to do as well. They feel some pride in this, even as irrelevant as the comparison is, in my mind, between provinces, because it is very difficult to have relevant comparison because of all the other factors involved.

* (0030)

I am making the assumption that it did not fit the curriculum as well, yes, based on information I have. It may not, as I indicated, be as relevant for the French test. I am not saying that. But I want to discuss this further with the minister when we get to the public schools area. So I just wanted the minister to know that, because I will give her specific information on where the testing did not fit with the curriculum.

I think that is serious because we have to question the motivation of the minister to participate in a test where, in fact, it could place Manitoba students at a disadvantage. If the minister thinks that did not happen in this case with the French test, that is fine, I accept her word on this with the officials here from that division, but I do not accept that it automatically applies to the English test that was given.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am not sure if the member would not have participated. As he knows, there has been a great deal of work which has been done on behalf of the development of the safe assessment. We were looking at skill levels and mastery of concepts. As I said to him in the House in an answer in the Legislature, some concepts are also covered in the areas of geography and science. Our students did have the opportunity to have studied the concept areas that were tested.

For some reason, the member wonders if Manitoba is somehow at a disadvantage. My comment would be that the pilot testing did not show that Manitoba was at a disadvantage. The feedback we had did not indicate that Manitoba was at a disadvantage. We are looking to see how our students' concept development and mastery of certain skills relates to students of a similar age in other provinces across Canada.

Mr. Plohman: With age not being the relevant criteria, because it should be what curriculum they

have been exposed to. The minister does not have to use a national test to determine whether her curriculum is the same. She merely has to look at the curriculum to determine if it is the same or not. You do not need a test to do that.

I am saying to her that there are areas where the testing did not reflect the curriculum, and that is the part that I do not think is fair for Manitoba students and teachers and raise it with the minister.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 3.(d)(1) Official Languages Programs and Administrative Services: Salaries \$404,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$345,600—pass; (3) Assistance \$486,000—pass.

3.(e)(1) Library and Materials Production: Salaries \$369,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$192,200—pass.

RESOLUTION 16.3—RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,189,800 for Education and Training for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994—pass.

The hour being 12:33, what is the will of the committee?

An Honourable Member: Committee rise.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Committee rise.

ENVIRONMENT

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

We are on item 1.(a) Minister's Salary, page 50 of the Estimates manual. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Chair, I move, seconded by the MLA for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that this committee regrets that the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) did not contact his federal counterparts to request a joint federal-provincial review of the environmental impact of the Assiniboine diversion.

Madam Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question, or do you wish the motion repeated?

An Honourable Member: Repeat it.

Madam Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable member for Radisson, seconded by the honourable member for Swan River, that this committee regrets that the Minister of Environment did not contact his federal counterpart to request a

joint federal-provincial review of the environmental impact of the Assiniboine diversion.

Is the committee ready for the question?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Is it a debatable motion? I would like to speak to the motion.

Madam Chairperson: It is a debatable motion.

Mr. Cummings: We had considerable discussion on this last week about whether or not there was some federal responsibility that was not being discharged or whether I or this government had not been approaching the federal authorities at the appropriate time about a federal involvement in the Pembina Valley diversion project.

I have to indicate, with some considerable amount of umbrage, that there have been ongoing almost weekly, and certainly at times daily, contacts with the federal authorities about where they are heading with this project, but it is not the decision of this little minister to tell the federal authority that they must have a joint review. In fact, their indication is, to us, very clearly that they are not prepared to enter into their screening process until there has in fact been a trigger. Those triggers are primarily whether or not there are dollars involved, even though one would anticipate that there might be some federal dollars involved. The fact is, that decision has not yet been made. The federal authorities refuse to enter into the screening process and provide an answer until that has occurred.

The member might well want to have a little fun, at my expense, with this predicament, but this is what I have been saying for years is wrong with the federal guidelines, the interim guidelines, and the way they apply to environmental law across this country.

One only needs to look at most of the court cases that have ended up over questioning whether or not the federal authorities have exercised the correct jurisdiction. It seems to me that they almost all have come down to a matter of process, not so much weighing on whether or not the environmental concerns, one way or the other, were properly taken care.

The cases that ended up in court very often were cases of procedure or whether or not the federal authority did or did not adequately respond by simply making a decision in what were seen to be their areas of responsibility.

Let me put it on the record again. There is one thing that I would prefer, that we not end up with federal authorities coming in behind, if you will, and attempting to run a second process. I would much rather that that was tidied up and dealt with up-front, but I find myself in the most bizarre of situations where I cannot cause that to occur.

This province is one of the leading provinces in the country in terms of co-operating with the federal authorities and, in fact, running joint environmental processes. We started the Conawapa process under that agreement. We started the North Central Transmission Line, and it is ongoing. It, in fact, will probably be the one example of where a completed and successful joint federal-provincial environmental process has been carried through.

So I find it a little bizarre that at this juncture I am being chastised for not doing whatever it is the opposition thinks I should be doing in terms of federal co-operation. The authorities, even to exercise their screening program, whether or not it is in or out of the federal screen, simply have to make a decision. They will not make a decision until the trigger has actually occurred.

It seems to me, Madam Chair, that we have looked after the best interests of the environment, the best interests of the public in attempting to begin the process at least under the provincial environmental assessment process because the information garnered there will be open, unfettered, as I have said before.

That may well provide some of the information that the federal authorities will want to assume in terms of making a decision, but I cannot predict what that decision will be, nor can I predict how they will respond to the information that may be and, I believe, probably will be provided adequately in front of the Clean Environment Commission.

This is not unlike this predicament that we were faced with in Oak Hammock. It is not dissimilar to the situation that we faced regarding the Pelican Lake Diversion, a situation where federal dollars were involved, where there was a matter of concern about whether or not we should issue a licence prior to the federal screening process being completed.

That, in fact, is the crux of my problem, the reason why, in my opinion, there are an awful lot of things about governing and running environmental processes in this country that are wrong, that simply

are going to have to be addressed and, I hope, addressed through the new Environment Act.

Madam Chair, I think all I wanted was the opportunity to put a few words on the record in defence of the position that the province finds itself in. I am not sure if the opposition intends to have a vote on this motion but, whatever their will, let them proceed.

Madam Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

All those in favour, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): I request a recorded vote.

Madam Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

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(Concurrent sections in Chamber for formal vote)

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. In the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in the Chamber considering the Estimates of the Department of Environment, the following motion was moved by the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), that this committee regrets that the Minister of Environment did not contact his federal counterpart to request a joint federal-provincial review of the environmental impact of the Assiniboine diversion.

A COUNTED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas 19, Nays 23.

Madam Chairperson: The motion is accordingly defeated.

Order, please. The two sections of the Committee of Supply will now continue with consideration of the Estimates.

ENVIRONMENT (continued)

Madam Chairperson: This section is dealing with the Estimates for the Department of Environment.

Item 1.(a) Minister's Salary \$20,600—pass.

Resolution 31.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,581,900 for Environment, Administration and Finance, \$1,581,900, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994—pass.

This concludes the Estimates for the Department of Environment.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INNOVATIONS FUND

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): We will now be dealing with Resolution 32.1, page 148 in the Estimates manual.

The minister's staff, please enter the Chamber.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): In going through the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, I have distributed information to both of my critics. I would like to thank Bob Sopuck and Ann Didur for having assembled this information. Presumably that will make things go a little quicker.

Ms. Marianne Cerlill (Radisson): There are a number of issues that we could raise with respect to this fund. It has been a fund that has grown substantially this year, and there are a number of concerns about the uses for this fund.

* (2030)

I am glad to see that there is a report this time that has a little bit more detail. I have not yet had a chance to go through that to look at where in fact some of the money has flowed, but I want to start off by just inquiring about the difference that appears between the Estimates document and the main budget document.

The money that is indicated in the Estimates for last year, \$1,171,000—and then in the budget it says that there is \$836,000—some approved and only \$680,000—some spent. How does the minister account for the difference?

Mr. Cummings: Some approvals arrive late in the year. We also have holdbacks, 50 percent in some cases, for approval of the project in progress. Very often, we are waiting for information.

One of the conditions of any of the grants is that reports and information come back, so there is a holdback. That can be as much as 50 percent. It can be less, but that accounts for carry-over from one year to the next. That carry-over is not carried-over dollars, but it is carried-over liability and

it is taken from the second year's allocation if it is not spent the first year.

Ms. Cerlill: So it seems that there is a deferral of some \$300,000.

Mr. Cummings: That would be correct.

Ms. Cerlill: What is accounting for the large increase? Where is the money coming from for the increase for this year?

Mr. Cummings: The allocation from the revenues of the removal of the exemption from provincial sales tax for disposable diapers in 1992-93 would return a million. It is estimated that for a full year, it will probably return a million and a half.

Ms. Cerlill: Have there been changes in the criteria for the fund with the change in the name and transferring it to the Department of Natural Resources or under that department?

Mr. Cummings: Well, the same basic criteria apply, but I think we also make it clear that this would allow for, well, for example, some projects that the Department of Environment and the Department of Natural Resources have encouraged people or projects that they wish to get moving to apply to the fund, but they still have to meet the same criteria and, basically, what we have found is that we are getting a large number of smaller projects as opposed to a small number of large projects.

I think in that respect we have reached an increasing number of projects and we have been able to leverage other dollars. Smaller grant allocations are generally as a result of the project being able to obtain some funds from other areas. It might well be the federal Partners Fund. It might be private dollars, it might be existing programs, for example, in a community that has an existing tree planting program and wishes to put a special emphasis on some expansion, and that is sort of an imaginary example, but that is the type of thing the fund seems to be reaching more to.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): I wonder if the minister could indicate to me—I cannot seem to find any provision in his Estimates for the salary arrangements for the director of the sustainable development units. Where could I find them in his Estimates, please?

Mr. Cummings: I will not pay him. I mean, I do not pay him.

Mr. Enns: Well, Madam Chairperson, I think it is important for the record that it be noted exactly which minister in which department does pay him.

Mr. Cummings: I blush to admit that it is the Department of Natural Resources.

Ms. Cerilli: I know that this fund is being audited, and I think that is necessary. The minister himself has made some derogatory comments about having slush funds. There are many people that would view this fund as a slush fund, particularly with the vague criteria that has been used with this fund.

I think that, as has come out with the Estimates for the Department of Environment, the money has also been used extensively for government departments which was initially not the intention of the fund. There has also been some concern about the fund being not used in a way that is evenly dispersing the money throughout the province. There is concern about the agencies that are actually doing the work for various regional associations or groups that might be listed on the material that goes out indicating who gets the money.

I would simply indicate that I think we are going to look forward to getting the report from the auditor on the fund, and I am not going to spend a lot of time during these Estimates going through some of the details, even though we have concern about a number of the projects that were done, Enviro-Oil, the Reclaim magazine, and some other agencies. I would simply ask if the minister has any kind of breakdown of the percentage of money from the fund that has gone to work being done by the government departments and government agencies?

Mr. Cummings: I do not think the member should pass off a couple of comments such as she did regarding Enviro-Oil, and I forget what the other comment she made was. I particularly picked up on Enviro-Oil because there is an amount allocated here that is referred to in the heading for Enviro-Oil. But she should take the time, and I presume she will, to look further into the project listings.

I believe it would be made clear in there. I have to look at what the notes say, but the fact is I am well aware that what that is, is tax relief for the sale of the product which is recycled oil. It was done purely to encourage and enhance the sale of that product so that we can have some assurance that is an industry that would continue and expand. In fact, they are looking to expand in the Virden area.

The fact is that this province and other jurisdictions have a history of encouraging the use of environmentally friendly fuels by using the tax system. Certainly the Mohawk gasohol plant in Minnedosa is a perfect example. It has been in place for some 20 years or more, I believe, and has received a considerable amount of tax relief in terms of provincial motive tax, and that is what this is, quite simply. You will note in this year's budget that it was referred to officially in the budget as being now handled in a different way. That money will no longer flow out of this fund. This was done as a one-year bridge to make sure that Enviro-Oil was able to keep its recycled oil, recycled into No. 2 diesel fuel, keep that fuel competitively priced, continue to remove the used oil from the wastestream.

* (2040)

That is the kind of thing that I make absolutely no apologies for, in terms of the fund responding to what some people consider departmental initiatives or something the department might better have budgeted for.

In fact, these dollars are not large, and they allow response more directly to the kind of pressures that come on companies like Enviro-Oil, in this particular instance, or for proposals that come in—and I look just above the Enviro-Oil proposals. For example, the Manitoba Department of Environment, in putting forward our beverage container program under the WRAP program, we did not have to bring staff on board to deal with a beverage container program.

We were able to strike a contract with Arthur Andersen. In fact, they run beverage container programs in some other jurisdictions in the country and have developed a computer program that is easily adaptable to our program and others. For a very low cost we have a contract in place that allows us to, by the 1st of August, be in a position to regulate the beverage container industry in whichever way we see fit, whether it is deposits or whether it is other means. We now have the regulations fully implemented and a record of sales for that product in the province.

I look at the top of that same page and look at zebra mussels and recognize that this is something that is an immediate problem, but one that cuts across a number of departments. We work very closely with the ministry of Natural Resources. In this particular case, some small amount of money

was able to be put forward for warnings and border crossing signs and, I believe, some information materials to supplement what was printed the year before. At the same time, we used a half-year staffperson out of Natural Resources to be on the trail, as it were, this summer doing promotions. At the same time, the Department of Environment, internally, is doing a lot of water quality monitoring, which includes monitoring for evidence of the zebra mussel in the critical areas.

All of that seems to me to combine very nicely. With a small amount of money with this fund, we were able to enhance the program that was already underway.

Ms. Cerlilli: I am just going to ask about the one project, the other project that I mentioned then, if the minister is going to comment on that one, and that is the Reclaim magazine. This is a project that I think that got \$25,000. The charge for the magazine is, I think, \$24 per magazine, plus they also had a number of advertisements in the magazine, some of which were also government department advertising.

I would just ask the minister, who put together the magazine, and if there was a budget that is available on this project that we could see, and if there is any information showing about how that \$25,000 was used in this project?

Mr. Cummings: Madam Chairperson, this is an example of where we were able to use some small number of dollars out of the fund to encourage an initiative that, hopefully, would have a permanent and lasting opportunity within the province. It is a one-time proposal. This was handled through a combination of this fund and, I believe, was allocated through Industry, Trade and Tourism, through the Environment Industries Development Initiative.

Frankly, one of the first things that I have found, and I think other ministers and other members to the ministry would confirm, is that in the business of environmental industry, whether it is reclamation, whether it is new advances in technology, whether it is bringing in people to do consulting for cleanup, one of the more difficult things for the average citizen out there, or the average businessman, if you will, who may not have ever been faced with finding this type of service before, one of the more difficult things that they have had to do is to know whom to ask.

Then, when they found out who to ask, then they are not sure how competitive the type of information they get is. So any kind of information that can be added to that process is useful. There are a number of other useful processes out there. Certainly some NGOs have undertaken to provide directories of different lists, and we are all well aware of that, but this took a little bit of a different approach and, as far as I know, was quite successful in its first launch. I would anticipate that now that they have gone forward, we will see more of their paper in the future. It will serve as a directory that might not otherwise be available. I am not talking so much about it only available in Manitoba, but the fact that Manitoba industries, through this type of a vehicle, will be able to expand their horizons as well.

In terms of the original project proposal, they did provide a business plan and projected cash flows, and we followed the same procedure on this as we do in others, that the dollars were not allocated carte blanche, that there was follow-up and a certain amount holdback on the original money.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (River Heights): I wonder if the minister can, essentially, give the criteria for approval for many of these projects? It seems to me that many of the projects that are here would have been formerly funded out of Natural Resources or out of Agriculture in any case. What makes them particularly eligible for funding for this particular fund?

Mr. Cummings: Well, I am glad to put the criteria on the record. I would just make a general observation; I would think one area that the member has probably picked up on is the number of weed control districts that have received grants under this. Let me assure her that it will probably be an increasing number this year, although I think that in the overall sense of things, after this year, there may not be so many.

The fact is that most of them have been working on biological control. In fact, Manitoba has had success to the point, with biological control of leafy spurge, that we now have bugnappers coming up from across the line. Some of them have been stopped at the border carrying clandestine packages of the beetle that we use here in this province in order to take them back into North and South Dakota.

So, in a general sense, it is correct. There are some of those things that might have been funded

through the department, but these are the types of small projects which require a lot of local initiative. Very often the local weed districts are not manned the same way as a departmental program would be.

Let me put the criteria on the record and see if the member agrees that what I have said coincides with the objectives.

The fund is to promote innovations that will change the future behaviour of individuals, households, businesses and institutions in keeping with the goal of environmentally sound and sustainable development. The fund encourages the creation of partnerships to make a contribution to improving the environment.

Projects qualifying for support must be consistent with the principles and guidelines of sustainable development and must clearly demonstrate environmental benefits. Projects of an ongoing nature must demonstrate financial self-sufficiency after funding expires. Projects must be unique and innovative. One-time assistance will be considered for community groups, organizations, service clubs, youth groups, businesses and groups working with local governments. There must be a demonstrated need for the project, a high level of community support and stakeholder involvement.

I think the example I used earlier of some of the biological control has community support and is an example of an extremely high level of stakeholder involvement.

The final line is that preference will be given to projects involving funding that also receive funding from other contributing sources.

So I guess the fund is broadly based, but the process of being reviewed and scrutinized by the appropriate departments as the requests come forward and then receiving from them recommendations to the committee as to whether or not there should be approval does provide a pretty fair screening process.

* (2050)

Mrs. Carstairs: Who does this screening process? How many levels are there in the screening process, and who has the ultimate approval?

Mr. Cummings: First of all, the proposal would be sent over to the sustainable development co-ordination unit headed by Mr. Sopuck, sitting in front of me here, and then the proponent receives

acknowledgment that it is being considered and the proposal will be sent to the appropriate unit of a department for technical assessment. In other words, there are a number of them that are attached to Agriculture and Natural Resources. Environment has a large number but, nevertheless, a lot of them are directly related to things that the Department of Environment would have someone of the capacity that would be related to an assessment of that particular proposal.

Once that assessment is completed it is reviewed by the Sustainable Development Committee of Cabinet, which I chair. The approved project funding is then administered by the implementing department. In other words, once approval has been made and if the Department of Environment had been the scrutinizing or the assessing department, they would then be responsible for making sure that the project was properly completed, in other words, doing some follow-up with the proponents.

Then the ones who are rejected at any one of those levels are sent appropriate letters of rejection. We sometimes also send out letters of deferral where there is not enough information or where we are short of funds or, for whatever reason, there may have been other projects of a similar nature underway and we need more information. I should point out, I do not have the figure right in front of me. I will get it in a minute, but there are a significant number of rejections as well.

Mrs. Carstairs: My final question: How many applications did you receive? How many acceptances? How many rejections? Approximate—I do not need it down to the—

Mr. Cummings: Madam Chair, 115 applications, 79 approvals and 36 rejections.

Now there is a further category within this that the member will see as she goes through the information that I have sent over, and that is the Environmental Youth Corps. It is block funded to \$200,000 per annum, to a total obviously of \$1 million over five years, but within that \$200,000 per annum, a fairly significant number of applications came in.

The member for Radisson raised earlier the question about whether or not there was an even distribution of funds. In fact, one of the things that we try to aim for is as even a distribution as possible. I will give you the figures in a sec as to this past year,

but the year immediately previous to this had a different blend than the following year.

It is simply a matter of interest that we noticed that two years ago a lot of the northern groups did not receive approvals. I think it was perhaps because they did not understand that the plan was mainly to involve voluntary people and some small amount of capital and supervisory dollars, and they saw it as a source of working capital for wages. There is an element of that, but not to the extent that some of the applications were demonstrating.

Then, when we came into the second year of the program, the situation completely reversed, for the highest number of awards were in northern Manitoba, as I recall; and, certainly on a percentage basis, their hit rate, if you will, or their percentage of success went up very rapidly.

Now the figures for last year for a total number of youths that were involved was 8,720 and there were 279 projects—that cannot be right—no, 79 projects. This is smudged here. Am I right? Seventy-nine projects there as well, but the distribution of the dollars were to Winnipeg, \$28,000; northern Manitoba, \$26,000 approximately; Interlake, \$26,000; South-Central, \$35,000; and Park-West was a little over \$40,000.

Now that seems Park-West might have received more than its share on a regional basis, but there were more applications that came in from that area. We very carefully looked at this to make sure there was not something that we could be accused of having skewed the process or whatever. Obviously, one thing we did find was that what you call the Park-West region does accommodate darn near a third of the province regionally. It happened they had some very active environmental programs in the schools, and that is the way they broke down.

Ms. Cerilli: I just want to ask one final question. One of the concerns about this, as the minister is aware of, is that all the money maintain its place in the fund even if it is not allocated that year. I went back and got notes—

Mr. Cummings: No, that is not quite what I said. I can clarify that.

Ms. Cerilli: Well, maybe I will finish my entire question, and then you can respond to it. I think the intention of the fund is that there is the money raised through tires, the diaper—removal of the exemption from the tax—and then the liquor bottles. I wrote down the numbers that I was given during the

Environment Estimates under the WRAP section. The numbers given to me were \$2.2 million generated from tires; \$1.8 million generated from diapers; and \$1.2 million generated from the liquor bottles and then that was halved, I believe, for the amount that should be in this fund. So do we have a commitment that all of that money is in fact going to this Sustainable Development Innovations Fund?

Mr. Cummings: Yes, but let me speak to the numbers a little bit more. I have the exact numbers in front of me. The numbers that I gave during the WRAP Estimates, you will recall, I said were my best memory of what the numbers would be.

First of all, the alcohol or beverage containers for '92-93, I believe I said it was \$1.5 million. It was in fact \$1.7 million. Out of that, about half of that goes back to the Liquor Commission for running their program. In '92-93, the diaper tax, the figure that I gave you was the estimated for '93-94, and I had given you \$1.8 million. The fact is, the Department of Finance is estimating \$1.5 million which is a little less than I had indicated.

Tire revenues were \$2 million. The tire revenues have not yet shown up in the fund, because they will go through the fund to a specially dedicated fund for administration and reimbursement to those who are disposing of tires in an environmentally sound manner, recycling them in an environmentally sound manner. Those dollars will show up in the fund before the year is over, but they will be transferred on through to a fund that will be nonlapsing, similar in fact to the ACRE dollars.

* (2100)

The management of the dollars under ACRE, as you will recall, the money went directly from the industry to the entity once the province had set it up. Under the tire levy, the province will look after the levy but the dollars will go directly to the tire fund to be managed for the removal of tires and the management of waste related to the problems associated with tires. Licence fee from beverage containers, in 1992-93 we collected \$130,000 and '93-94, \$190,000 is estimated to be the manufacturers and distributors licensing fee for beverage containers. This is in the lead up to the regulation of the beverage container industry.

So the information I provided under the WRAP Act as I indicated was my best recollection. I think I

was out a little bit but very close to the averages that I indicated.

Ms. Cerilli: Just to clarify then, what is the amount from tires?

Mr. Cummings: In 1992-93 it was \$2 million. At \$3 a tire, obviously, if we had a million tires sold annually, it would be \$3 million less administration, but it will be a little bit—it is \$3 million in total. Recall that this levy was not implemented until the 1st of August 1992, and it expires the 1st of August 1993. So there is \$2 million revenue in last year's books and \$1 million in this year the way it breaks down on the April 1st split between the two years.

Madam Chairperson: Resolution 32.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,471,000 for Sustainable Development Innovations Fund for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1994—pass.

This concludes the Estimates for the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund.

HEALTH

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

This section of the Committee of Supply is dealing with the Estimates for the Department of Health. We are on item 1.(b), page 77 of the Estimates manual. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber?

Item 1.(b)(1) Salaries \$529,000. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Madam Deputy Chairperson, did the minister want to introduce who his staff is at this point, where it is somewhat different than last session, when we ended here on Thursday?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): I want to introduce a couple of my corporate veil participants, Mr. Fred Anderson, Assistant Deputy Minister, who was here Thursday last—and my honourable friend's memory must be as short as his—what did he say in the Estimates: But I am really surprising them. My train of thought is really not that lengthy.

He proved it tonight in forgetting one of my staff—and Mr. Frank DeCock, Associate Deputy Minister.

Mr. Chomlak: I am pleased to see that the minister is in his usual form and frame of mind as we enter these Estimates.

During one of the Question Periods, the minister talked about the fact that he was considering or had suggested or alluded to the fact or in his roundabout way made mention of the fact that he would like to send a brochure or a pamphlet talking about health reform to every citizen of Manitoba.

I am wondering if the minister could outline whether in fact that is a possibility under the government in terms of a status report to be delivered around the province

Mr. Orchard: Yes, Madam Chairperson.

Mr. Chomlak: Sorry, I missed that response. I wonder if the minister might repeat the response.

Mr. Orchard: Yes.

Mr. Chomlak: Is the minister considering any kind of an update of his May 1992 Health Action Plan?

Mr. Orchard: That is a possibility, Madam Chairperson.

Mr. Chomlak: Is the minister saying he has not thought about it, like so many other areas of health reform, or is the minister saying that he is considering it? Has he thought about it? That is the first question.

Mr. Orchard: Yes, Madam Chairperson.

Mr. Chomlak: We have certainly moved a step forward. We have the minister thinking about it, and I thank the minister for that response.

Can the minister give us an update as to the status of various health reforms in his blue document? Does he have a document that he is prepared to table that would update the status of the various proposed reforms as outlined in his May 1992 blue document?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairperson, in essence, I would refer my honourable friend to the substantive discussion we had Thursday last.

* (2110)

Mr. Chomlak: I presume that is no, the minister does not have an update, because he was unable to provide it Thursday last and he is unable to provide it today.

I will repeat the question in another form. Does the minister have in his briefing book, that he would be prepared to share with us, any information with

respect to an update as to the status of the various reforms as outlined in May 1992?

Mr. Orchard: Which area would my honourable friend wish an update on?

Mr. Chomlak: To start with, I wonder if the minister might provide us with a status report as to the bed closures at the various institutions as announced in May and November subsequently of 1992.

Mr. Orchard: Yes, Madam Chairperson.

Mr. Chomlak: Is the minister prepared to share that with us during this sitting of the Estimates period?

Mr. Orchard: No, Madam Chairperson.

Mr. Chomlak: Is the minister prepared to share that information with us during the next sitting of this committee?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairperson, that would be a distinctly better possibility.

Mr. Chomlak: Is the minister saying he will or he will not?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairperson, I indicated that that would be a distinctly better possibility than this evening. This evening's Estimates are starting at 10 past nine. I had staff here this afternoon that might have been able to accommodate my honourable friend's requests. I made the executive decision of having my staff leave waiting in this building to return to their regular jobs, and I suspect tomorrow, if we get into Estimates, I will have the appropriate staff here to provide those answers, providing nothing unforeseen happens to delay Estimates again tomorrow.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, the minister indicated that he would table a number of documents during our last sitting on Thursday. I wonder if he is prepared to table those documents at this time.

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chair, I think we can do that tomorrow as well.

Mr. Chomlak: During the last session when we met, during the minister's opening remarks, he talked about a sixth principle of medicare as envisioned by the minister. He talked about effectiveness.

I wonder if the minister might provide me with an outline as to what he terms effectiveness in terms of

his sixth principle of medicare as mentioned by the minister in his own opening remarks?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chair, again I would refer my honourable friend to the essence of my opening remarks wherein he will find answers to many of his requests, particularly that one.

Mr. Chomlak: I can take, therefore, from the minister's answer that he does not have a very good definition because, in reference to the Hansard comments, it is pretty clear that the minister does not have a clear definition of that.

I would like to now go through some of the specifics of the health care package. The member for The Maples is now going to take that line of question now, Madam Chair, please.

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Madam Chair, I missed the last part of the first day, I think it was Thursday, the Health Estimates, but I will certainly go through some of the remarks that the minister and the member for Kildonan made.

Certainly, I would like to welcome again Mr. DeCock and Mr. Anderson. This is probably the sixth time we are seeing the Health officials. I must say that during my experience within the department I have certainly learned from them and I think that has helped me to perform my duties in a much more organized fashion.

Madam Chairperson, I just wanted to ask the minister then: Has he received any written objections from any of the major health care providers groups in Manitoba who are opposing this Health Action Plan, in writing?

* (2120)

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chair, to the best of my knowledge and recollection, I do not think any major organization has communicated with myself and with senior departmental officials in writing that they disagree with the Health Action Plan that was tabled May 14. I think, without taking too much liberty with some of the statements made at the announcement, all organizations, with the possible exception of the official opposition, endorsed the Health Action Plan. I think they were unique in not knowing what position to take back in May of 1992.

Most other organizations indicated that they agreed with the principles outlined in the Health Action Plan. Some of them indicated their support in writing but, to my recollection, none indicated opposition to the Health Action Plan in writing.

Mr. Cheema: Madam Chairperson, my reason was to ask a very specific question because this is very satisfactory when you are receiving support from all the major groups, because that has not been happening in other provinces as we have seen in the health action reforms in Newfoundland or in British Columbia or in Ontario or in Saskatchewan. That did not happen. I read somewhere, I think it was in the Medical Post about three months ago, that the major organizations in Manitoba did say the plan was reasonably good, and they agreed with the basic principles. I just wanted to confirm: Even after one year, are those organizations still on the side of the Minister of Health's Action Plan or have they changed their mind?

Mr. Orchard: Again, without wanting to speak for those organizations, we have not received any formal communication where any of those organizations who either indicated in writing formally or in terms of public pronouncements agreement with the Health Action Plan back in May—none of them have reversed the position. I will say, however, that all of them have provided objective criticism, if that is the appropriate phraseology, over the past 12 months as varying issues and changes have emerged out of the Health Action Plan. Some of the constructive criticism we have been able to accommodate and work into the process to obviously meet a real concern. Some of the concerns expressed have been because their particular organization or professional discipline maybe was affected by a given decision, so there have been individual criticisms that have surfaced.

But in general, again, I say, with the exception of the official opposition—the NDP have not taken a position on health reform to my knowledge publicly. They are the only group that has not believed that change (a) is necessary, (b) must happen and that the changes, as outlined in the health reform document, are sound in principle, I guess, would be the fair way to say.

Mr. Cheema: Madam Chairperson, can the minister tell us if his office has received any communication from any hospital board across this province objecting to the Health Action Plan?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chair, again, no board of either hospital or personal care home has communicated a position in opposition to the reform package and the plan as outlaid in the Health Action Plan. There has been, as one would expect, communication from a number of boards asking

questions about the process, trying to get a better understanding of what the process means, because I think it is fair to say that in the political debate that emanates from this Chamber from time to time, there can be varied messages going out which cause undue concerns and confusion amongst the observers.

As I mentioned to my honourable friend the member for Kildonan, in terms of our discussion around the children's pediatric services, where he indicated that emergency services for children would close at the hospitals, that caused a lot of concern. It was not accurate information that the member for Kildonan put out, but it caused a lot of concern amongst the public at large who were worried about where they could access emergency room services for their children.

That, of course, causes individuals to phone the question not only to my office but to the ministry staff to get clarification, because there is still a certain amount of belief attached to statements when they are made by elected people who theoretically have (a) knowledge and (b) positions of integrity, and there is some believability to them. When the information is not accurate, it does cause confusion.

Mr. Cheema: Madam Chairperson, I just wanted to make sure, because the basic thrust the government took, that was last year, and as far as I could remember, we did not hear anybody who was opposing the Health Action Plan.

Now it is almost one year that we are into the Health Action Plan, and I just wanted to make sure that the organizations, that individuals who are going to read this Hansard know that there was no opposition from any major group. There has to be some criticism on a few things here and there, and that is very natural. That is going to come. But we want to make sure that people out there know that the Health Action Plan is still being supported by major health care providers as well as the hospital boards.

I think if you combine all of those groups, which are very, very critical power lobby groups, if they are not opposing the Health Action Plan, then I think we are on the right track.

My second question to the minister is, what kind of communication has been going from the minister's office to these various groups in terms of either inviting or in meetings or any other kind of

communication to make sure they are being properly notified about the Health Action Plan?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chair, there is ongoing communication with the stakeholders in the health care system from professional groups through institutions and organizations involved in care delivery. Those communications are primarily direct in terms of meetings, updates which happen every three to four months.

About a month ago, five weeks ago we had the retreat. My honourable friend was not here Thursday afternoon, he had other commitments, but the member for Kildonan asked about update on a number of the surgical committees. We are expecting reports to come in from them over the next range of weeks and for the balance of this calendar year.

What we did to attempt, for instance, to bring some knowledge to the stakeholders was we had the university, faculty of medicine, we had the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the MMA, MARN, MNU and then the CEO's board chairs and a couple of other senior officials from our major institutions, our Urban Hospital Council at a retreat where we shared preliminary findings in direction of the surgical committees so that they would have some advance notice as to the thinking process of the expert committees to date. It was an opportunity to basically say, no, this is not going to work or you should consider a slightly different approach.

I think that all of the committees left that retreat basically with the same focus, is that fair to say?—without major flaws being identified in the process. That was one of the more recent forms that we tried to not just explain what the Health Action Plan meant and what its goals were, but to give an update in terms of where we were in a number of different program areas that were under study and review.

* (2130)

I have got, Madam Chair, a list which is almost two pages long, and I will share that with both my honourable friends if I can get copies made. If I cannot get copies made tonight, I will have it for tomorrow. This is a list of meetings that have been held by my ADMs and others closely attached to the health reform process and to the various groups and, just to give you a flavour, the advisory committee on geriatrics, Altona high school

students, for example, the Francophone community, the long-term care committee, Manitoba Blue Cross, the physician resources group, the Pharmacy Round Table, the Shoal Lake Health Centre, the Urban Hospital Council naturally, Tache and Foyer, the lab boards.

A number of these presentations have happened over the last number of years and there have been anywhere from as few people at the presentations as two, I can see on one presentation to the Red Cross CEO, to in excess of 250 in attendance.

I will have copies of that made for distribution to my honourable friends, because one of the points that was attempted to be made by the member for Kildonan on Thursday was that there was no consultation, there was no public presentation, there was no opportunity for public discussion.

That list that you will see clearly indicates that my honourable friend the member for Kildonan's premise is not based on fact. It is that political rhetoric that sometimes consumes us from time to time.

There has been more public information attempted to be shared in this process of reform leading up to the May 14th health reform document and certainly after that in communicating the direction and the intent in bringing groups up to date in terms of what the reform process means.

I think that that maybe in part is the reason why I can say that even a year later, the major organizations have not said that the general direction of health care reform as outlined in The Action Plan and in what we have been doing in terms of expediting the directions in that reform plan are wrong and ought to be abandoned.

They are all, as you say, still supportive of the process. They may not like every aspect of it and they certainly do not agree with some of the areas which may affect their institution or their professional discipline in some fashion but, in general, they understand the challenge of restructure and reform in the health care system.

Let us remember that every single one of those organizations, whether it be hospital CEOs, personal care home CEOs and their respective board chairs or whether it be the College of Physicians or the MMA, whether it be MARN or MNU or any of the support workers or any of the professional groups supporting health care, are attached to a national organization.

Their attachment to the national organization leads them to a greater understanding, for instance, than the member for Kildonan has in terms of what is happening in other provinces. They know that the process in Manitoba is probably one of the more informed processes of change in Canada.

I think that is why you find them—as I say, I make no bones about it. None of them are jumping up and down with joy on every single aspect of health care reform, but they understand that for the agenda not to change will be more damaging to medicare and its ability to exist and provide services into the future than making changes to assure it is preserved and protected. I think that kind of attachment to a national forum is most beneficial in terms of two aspects.

First of all, creating an understanding that the process in Manitoba has integrity and has a plan and has good founding principles underpinning the restructuring in the reform process. Secondly, it lets those leaders in the respective institutional fields or professional fields know that this is not a process of change unique to Manitoba, that it is happening right across Canada.

From that I think they have some—how would I put it best?—grudging security that the process is a necessary one and is probably being undertaken in as open a fashion as possible.

Mr. Cheema: Madam Chairperson, as I said on Thursday, during this Estimates process this year, we are going to focus mainly on the policy issues. Those policy issues are based on the Health Action Plan. That is where we are starting the basic outline that the minister gave, how was the reception in May of 1992, and how that perception has changed in '93.

It seems from my consultation with the various groups, and we have met with many groups, most of them are saying that the government is still on track, although there are many deficiencies and that is going to come. We never said the process is going to be perfect. We never said everybody is going to be happy, but as long as they are being notified the communication is there. Certainly, if they have met with so many groups, and I will go through their list and that will be helpful for us to understand when we get communications from those groups, then we can at least tell them that you had been meeting. What is the outcome of your meeting? Are we

really achieving what we said in the Health Action Plan?

Can the minister tell us, are we on target in terms of the basic plan? We are into almost one year—one year and a few days over—are we on exact target as far as the Health Action Plan is concerned?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairperson, I am going to answer that in two fashions. In terms of the downsizing at the two teaching hospitals, in essence, that is on track. Although not extensively mentioned in the Health Action Plan of May, because we had dealt with it quite extensively in terms of a January '92 mental health reform package, but it is all part of the shift that we are making. I think it is fair to say that we are now on track with what we intend to do in mental health reform. We are delayed by probably upwards of six months, I suppose, or maybe even a year in some areas where we might have been able to move a little quicker but basically on track, only slightly delayed in mental health.

We are finding that some of the surgical committees and some of the program committees that had been studying the various program delivery issues in our hospitals are probably delayed through a whole combination of factors from agendas of reporting, some of the reports we were to have already. In essence, the only report that has been accepted and acted upon is the pediatric consolidation in terms of our acute-care programming.

The balance of the reports, as I indicated Thursday afternoon last, have right now perspective completion dates and presentation to myself ranging from maybe four weeks out to maybe December. That is going to change some of the second-year shifts and the time frames for those, but I cannot say as how, except for maybe a few months of delay, there is any fundamental change from where we think we can be, if that answers the question appropriately.

Mr. Cheema: Madam Chairperson, the reason I specifically asked that question is because so much credibility is attached to this plan. There are factors: first of all, if everybody is onside; secondly, whether we are having communication; third is whether we are on target.

From my observation, it seems it will not be unreasonable for us or anybody to expect that there could be some delay in some area, if that is going to

happen. I mean, we have seen in the mental health care, it was supposed to be—and it took about four to six months of delay to make sure that everything was all in place. That was the basic outline of the plan.

We saw the next phase was Westman Region, and that plan came out.

Now it seems like we have a plan for across Manitoba, but to implement that plan, it may take some time. So we are dealing with the one section, which is very crucial, but the framework was done four years ago, actually, in October of 1988, when the minister made the announcement.

At that time, we had the framework, and it was the understanding that this could go within two to three years. At that time, we said, probably, it is going to take four to five years, and then we could at least have some plan of action.

I think it will not be unreasonable to expect that. We are just asking the minister to prepare from that point of view. Otherwise, you could be accused very easily that you are not on target, because there are reasons why such an action plan could easily go six months this way or that way. It is going to happen because you are dealing with a very, very complex system.

* (2140)

You have experience with the mental health care system, which is a major, major change, and now when the plan came out and everybody said it was the best plan, as far as I can tell. We have read from all the news articles and the various interested groups, so everybody liked that we have the community services put in place.

That was the one promise, and that is going to be my next question. The one promise was made over and over again in this Health Action Plan and at some of the meetings I have attended in terms of just an observer or through the various other groups we have, one commitment was given, that there will be a community placement in terms of the community placement commitment to make sure that you do not cut a single bed without putting in any alternative services.

It may be the minister has answered those questions, but I just want to make sure that those things are put in place because, as far as I know, for the mental health care system, there was bridge funding. Then also you are going to close beds

over a period of time; that will give some time to shift some of the dollars.

The problem comes when you are shifting them in the middle of the budget year. You already gave the money to a given hospital, so there could be a problem because the hospital may spend money in terms of if they are given—for example, for 20 beds or 30 beds, they have given the money. Then if you are shifting the beds out of the hospital to the community, you have to take those funds.

I remember the line that money will go where the patient is going to go. So I just want to ask the minister: Can he tell us or can he give us assurance that that promise is still being kept?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairperson, my honourable friend asks the appropriate question, and I am going to take a few minutes to answer in a little greater detail.

The downsizing at our two teaching hospitals, in essence, was a significant bed for bed replacement, and the other downsizings were accomplished in part by pediatric consolidation because I think St. Boniface had the most active pediatric ward and I think the occupancy was something in the neighborhood of 33 percent or 38 percent, something like that, I forget the exact number.

But I want to reiterate two quotations that I used in my opening remarks, because I tried to indicate in my opening remarks that this process of restructuring and reform in Health has not been undertaken before, and we have established some underpinning principles, and we have established some direction and some course of action in The Action Plan from May 14 of last year.

We are constantly adding to the information base which can help us to make those changes in the system, not compromising the principle of putting the patient at the centre of change and moving budget with the patient, but to learn from other investigation as we proceed down the path of reform. Subsequent to the release of the Health Action Plan, the reform document of May 14, and my honourable friend might recall this, the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation completed another one of their research documents entitled An Assessment of How Efficiently Manitoba's Major Hospitals Discharged Their Patients, commonly known as the Efficiency Study.

There are two quotations that I think bear repetition at this juncture. The first one is, quote:

We estimate that a significant portion of the days currently invested in treating acute care patients could be eliminated without decreasing access to hospital care.

And the second quote, beginning: The hospital system appears to have the capacity to handle more patients or to absorb a sizable number of bed closures without rationing access to hospital care. The hospitals and the government have tended to assume that every bed closed should be replaced by another service, possibly less intensive and less expensive, but nevertheless a replacement. These data suggest that at least some of the bed closures could be accommodated simply through more efficient treatment of patients in available beds. End of quotation.

I realize that the mental health system is unique, in my humble opinion, in that we really did not have a lot of good services in the community. There were a lot of services in the community, and I am not downplaying the integrity of them and the commitment to them of the staff that were working in the community, but by far our concentration was on the institutional side. In terms of changing the mental health system, you could not do that. Previous attempts at changing the mental health system failed because they did not create the supports in the community prior to downsizing the institutional capacity.

If you think about it, often people, who are in institutions having mental illnesses professionally assisted, do not have a home environment to return to. That is their home in a lot of cases, or certainly a major portion of their life is represented in that institution. If you are going to replace the service in the institution with the community, you have to create those supports ahead of time or else you simply run the risk of having people fall through the cracks. That is why, in terms of the mental health system, we knew we had to create the infrastructure in the community first and, in essence, we did that before we closed beds.

Let me contrast with the acute care system. The acute care system, by and large, and I will talk specifically acute hospital system here, not long-term care, but the acute hospital system, in essence, has as their inpatient census individuals who generally have a home to return to and quite often, not always, but quite often family or support systems to return to. We did not necessarily have

to, in all cases, have to reinvent the support services for individuals accessing our acute hospital system.

That makes the process of downsizing and shifting resource easier in the—I use the word “easier” with poetic licence because nothing is easy in health care when you are making those kinds of shifts—but less challenging to undertake because you did not have to create the housing infrastructure and some of the living and support infrastructure as you had to do with a lot of programs dealing with mental health.

When the Rooses, at the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, analyzed the relative effectiveness with which hospitals admit and discharge patients for a pretty consistent patient group in each of eight categories, they found a wide divergence and they found that there was no improvement of health outcome by having a longer length of stay. They made their analysis that upwards of I believe 200 beds could be retired across the urban hospital system simply by bringing the average length of stay for any of those eight procedures not down to the lowest or most efficient and effective hospital but to the second lowest.

In fact, that is happening. St. Boniface, just as a small example, not a small example, it is a pretty significant example, this fall I think will be retiring some 39 surgical beds from their complement of surgical beds by implementing across their surgical admissions and procedures planning a different admission procedure and an earlier discharge procedure. They have tested this and they are absolutely confident they will not compromise quality of care outcome of good quality surgical delivery. The individual will be in hospital less and they will require fewer beds. Now, that is a significant improvement in the effectiveness of the system if undertaken.

I want to close off by—I know my honourable friend probably followed this in the paper, but I was absolutely intrigued. I have asked staff to follow up on this. The Toronto Hospital did a very rapid discharge of by-pass surgery patients. It is almost phenomenal. Apparently, they are at one of the lowest lengths of stays in North America using better patient management techniques. Apparently, it is working exceptionally well so that therein lies an opportunity to commit less inpatient resources to the same outcome of surgery and health status improvement post-surgery.

* (2150)

I do not want to tell my friend that we are not going to be building community-based services. We are. We have added budget. We have reallocated budget within the home care budget to provide for additional service demands as we shift away from the institution.

We have also provided, and it is on page 83 of the Estimates book, the Health Reform \$15-million fund, which is designed to fund programs as we shift. As appropriate programs are identified in the shift, we have some ability to access up to \$15 million so that that process is part of the ongoing identification of needs as we shift this system from institution to community.

I want to caution my honourable friend. I think he is quite cognizant of this, that we cannot get trapped into thinking that every time a surgical bed, for instance, is closed, we necessarily have to create a new layer of community-based programming. Some of that can be done simply through more effectiveness, and therein I guess is in part, and I hope my honourable friend from Kildonan was listening, an explanation of the effectiveness definition that he missed hearing on Thursday last.

Mr. Cheema: Madam Chairperson, actually, the reason I ask the question is precisely for that because the—out there in the community, the perception is somewhat that every bed is going to close, then you are going to get the same dollar flow.

As you have said very clearly, and I think that message has to go across, that is why I separated both things, the mental health services and the other ones. I mean, if you are going to go through all the studies, definitely you are going to go through all the effectiveness and various programs in each and every hospital, you are going to cut down the length of stay.

You are going to have their preadmissions done early. A lot of those services are going to be provided and not necessarily are you going to need all those beds. That is a fact and that is true. But the question is, how do you convey to the patient and the public? That is the problem here because for them, the numbers are \$5 million. They will not talk about a saving, but effectiveness they will talk in terms of cuts.

Actually that is not a cut. That is basically efficiency and being reinvested somewhere else and they are going to benefit eventually. Our

concern is always on this problem and when this came last year and we thought of that, I said, this is after one year going to be somewhat changed because that is not what it is going to look like because we are going to examine each and every issue and then you are going to hear from all of these groups.

Certainly each and every one tries to protect their turf, but when they are competing against the same dollar, then effectiveness has to be improved. Based on the scientific data, you cannot run away from that. So that is why each one of them, by coming to grips with the reality that this has to be changed, but not necessarily every dollar saved in acute care is going to be spent somewhere else. That is not possible. It is not going to happen.

We would like the minister to convey that message to the patients. Somehow, I think the whole thing is going to be workable as long as the public is going to be notified. It is a very complex issue. It takes a long time even for somebody who is a health care professional to understand and even try to really come to look at the issue in long-term planning.

But for the public who is going to read newspaper stories or see a 15-second clip, they are going to understand only cuts. So when I go out and I try to explain and it takes time it really gets across, but how do you do as a Minister of Health, as a Department of Health, how can you convince the public that the Health Action Plan is really a good plan? It can work and it is already working, but those few things have to be explained because each one of us is very, very attached to those beds.

I mean, the beds were supposed to be the health care system in the past. You provide a bed because you are going to get transfer money from the federal government and you are going to get money from the provincial government, and then you are going to have a power base there. Ultimately, you are creating some of the things which were not needed in the first place, but nobody had the courage to say what was right because basically it was a trap. The whole thing was a trap.

You get 50 percent of the money from the federal government, and it was all tied to the whole transfer payments. So I think there are many individuals to be blamed in the whole medicare system. It is not the present, it is the past which has caused many problems. That is why I think, if you are going to

correct the future, then we are going to have more problems, but I must say that this can work. I am, more than ever, convinced that this can work, because for the last one year, nobody has really come out and said this plan is not going to be workable.

My next question to the minister is: How many jurisdictions—your department, either yourself or ADM or deputy ministers—have made presentations to the various other governments, in our other organizations, when they are asking to look at this Health Action Plan as a blueprint for themselves?

Mr. Orchard: I am only going to go partially from memory here.

I have presented, on several different occasions in British Columbia, the essence of the reform plan and where we are heading. I have presented in Ottawa, and I presented at the 25th Annual Convention of the International Employee Benefits Foundation. My deputy minister has presented on health reform in Newfoundland and has, I believe, presented in Alberta. I know he has presented in Ontario. Mr. Blais has presented in Ontario, I know. I am not sure of other Maritime province presentations. But, yes, we have had the opportunity to discuss the Health Action Plan and have provided copies across Canada.

Similarly, I have to say as well, though, that as other provinces move in terms of their reform agendas, they provide us with information as well, but I think we had the benefit maybe of more consistency at the minister and deputy minister level and senior staff level so that we have basically worked as a team.

My honourable friend, when he opened his remarks, he noted the familiar faces. I mean we have had some changes at the senior level in the department, but mainly additions. A lot of the same people are there and have been consistently working with government to develop this plan, and I think that adds maybe an integrity that other provinces did not necessarily have because of the dynamics of change in provincial government, et cetera.

I was thumbing through my notes, and, Madam Chairperson, I know this is entirely out of character for me, but I owe my honourable friend the member for Kildonan an apology because I indicated that the New Democrats did not support the Health Action

Plan. I was thumbing through—I have some notes here. One of them is from the former critic of the New Democratic Party. Although the current critic, the member for Kildonan, has not stated whether he is in favour or not in favour of health reform, I have to apologize because Ms. Wasylycia-Leis did say on May 24, 1992: "We have no disagreement with the health reform plan that places major emphasis on shifting from an institution-based illness treatment model to a community-oriented wellness-focused system . . ." and furthermore went on to say there is no question that our health care system needs an overhaul. That was in May 24, Winnipeg Free Press.

She also said on March 28, there is no question that health care reform is needed and that we need to move from a institutional illness model to a community-based wellness model.

Then the final endorsement from Ms. Wasylycia-Leis came on May 19 at the Portage Herald Leader Press, philosophically, we cannot disagree with it, it being the Health Action Plan.

So my apologies to the member for Kildonan. I look forward to his endorsement of the reform process as well.

* (2200)

Mr. Cheema: Madam Chairperson, as we are passing more time, things are getting more and more smoother. That is positive.

I think it was very important for us even to ask the minister and put those things on the record because the credibility of such a major plan, if it is being appreciated in other provinces, that should tell you something because each and every province does not have the same political ideology as the minister has. So that tells us the Health Action Plan, right across this nation, is being dealt as a very important social policy which is at the juncture of a very major change. The change has to come in what we have today and based on those five principles, but also developing some new guidelines which are going to be sustainable in the long run.

So I would ask the minister now, and I am just going to give you a hypothetical example in terms of what in the minister's own views is going to happen, for example, if in 1994 things do not work out? Do you have a backup plan or do you have a process of continuity, because it was something very irresponsible and now everybody knows in this nation that it was a very sad part to change the

ministers of Health in six months time, one year's time. You have a few beds being closed. The opposition makes noise, you get bad articles, and the Premier comes and changes the minister. But that has not happened here. That is one advantage. With five years of continuity and with the staff, you are giving credibility to the whole process.

So how are you going to ensure that, if things do not work for your government, the Health Action Plan is going to be workable in the long run?

Mr. Orchard: I am going to deal with that hypothetical question hoping it never is one we have to face necessarily.

My honourable friend asks a very important question because there is absolutely no question that the way we approach service delivery and health care has to change and change rather significantly from Newfoundland to British Columbia, if we are going to maintain the integrity of medicare. There is no question. That is not even an issue regardless of whether it is a Liberal government in Newfoundland or a New Democratic government in British Columbia or a Conservative government in Manitoba. The politics of party affiliation are left outside the meeting room door when the ministers of Health sit down and that has been the case for the five years that I have been there.

Now in terms of continuity of the process in Manitoba, let me deal with it in the context of the mental health reform. I am taking a liberty. I am going to share with you comments of my ADM of Mental Health, Mr. Toews, because this building thrives on rumours. If it were not for the latest rumour, there would be a lot of media would not have anything to do because they skulk the halls looking for the latest rumour so they can track down their latest front-page story. The rumours are part of this building and government, but the rumours always come around at certain times of the year that there is going to be a cabinet shuffle.

I guess about 10 months ago there was the rumour that there was going to be a cabinet shuffle. Of course part of the rumour mill was that I was going to be moved out of Health to somewhere else. Mr. Toews asked me about that at the time, and he was quite concerned because he did not believe we were far enough along on the process of reform to the mental health system to give the process integrity.

Sort of as a snowball rolling downhill gaining momentum, we had not quite started rolling downhill yet. We had a lot of our plans maturing but none of them had received the seal of approval, if you will, and been announced for implementation.

Change is a very sensitive dimension of policy to try and expedite because, and I do not say this critically, but everybody who is part of the system looks for government to blink or to hesitate or for there to be a change so they can sit back and not necessarily change even though they know that change has to come. I mean, that is a natural reaction to the system. That is the way the system has sort of worked, not only in Health but right across government.

Now we have the process moving in mental health reform. I had a discussion just about three or four weeks ago, two or three weeks ago even, I cannot recall now, with Mr. Toews, and he is quite relieved. He thinks that the process of mental health reform now has that integrity of process that regardless of what happens, government, minister, the community of caregiving in mental health is behind the process of change and it has a momentum of its own. So I think we are all right there.

I also think we are all right in terms of the acute care system, and I will tell you why I think we are all right there in terms of process change.

My honourable friend the member for Kildonan makes a great to-do about the APM contract with Connie Curran. You know, I cannot stop the disinformation campaign that my honourable friend and his party has engaged in but, you know, you cannot avoid the basic fact that government did not go out and pick APM, Connie Curran to do this contract and impose it on the two hospitals, St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre. It was the other way around.

Those two hospitals knew they had a significant challenge facing them. They were impressed with some of the discussions they had heard about the restructuring process that APM had undertaken with about 100 hospitals in the United States. They contacted some of those client hospitals. They found out that the process was real and the results were real and that it was something they should investigate.

Upon investigation they were urging government and, I mean, we were willing partners because we think there is integrity to the process of restructuring

in our major hospitals, and we think it will offer a lot to maintain longevity in acute care health delivery in the province of Manitoba if we have this restructuring process successfully undertaken.

The hospitals themselves asked to engage the consultant. We agreed and provided the money to do so, and they are providing the expenses that will support that yearlong activity. I use that as an example to indicate to my honourable friend that I think the same kind of momentum is building in terms of change in the acute care hospital side as well.

I think that we will see the system reorganize itself, with leadership from the ministry, yes; with pushing from the ministry, yes; with hard decisions from the ministry, yes; but with an understanding that the changes have to be made and that the system will in fact be better able to deliver services after the changes than a system which might emerge without change.

So I think that realization is becoming more firmly embedded at the leadership level outside of government in our health care community. That may well give the kind of integrity to the process of restructuring and reform in the acute care side that I think we have on the mental health side to give the process life after current personalities or current government is gone.

The second thing I say to my honourable friend in trying to answer that question, let us theoretically deal with a new government. If the new government was my honourable friend's party, there would not be a change because I think there is understanding in the second opposition party, the Liberal Party of Manitoba, of the need for change. You may change some of the approach but fundamentally the direction will remain intact.

I am not so certain how the New Democrats might approach, and of course that is what we are going to find out in these Estimates, because that is where the New Democrats have got a brand new critic who is going to really give us some of the background thinking of the New Democrats in terms of health care reform and where they go.

We may not have the openness of sharing of information from the member for Kildonan—I hope we do—over the next number of weeks, but what gives me some sense that the process will carry on is Ontario, is Saskatchewan, is British Columbia.

* (2210)

Now let us deal with Saskatchewan briefly. I have got the figures in the office, and I will bring them for debate later on. There is discussion in Saskatchewan about the number of acute care beds, and apparently right now they have currently about 7,300. They believe they can operate an acute care system which meets the health care needs of the Saskatchewan population of just under 1 million with 4,000 beds. Think of it, 7,300 to 4,000 beds. That is a significant reduction in acute care capacity.

But they believe they can meet—and I am saying this not to be politically critical but to be objective in terms of where they are heading in Saskatchewan—the health care needs on the acute side of health care with some 4,000 beds in the system.

British Columbia, with I think the fastest-growing population in Canada—and if seniors are the driving force behind the necessity for more acute care hospital services, British Columbia should be the example because, quite frankly, it is a retirement haven for a lot of Canadians—they are moving their acute care bed ratio down, which is going to see a downsizing of their acute care sector with a growing population.

And in Ontario there has already been a several thousand bed reduction in terms of the acute care system.

Now if one translates the sort of criticisms we get from New Democrats in opposition in Manitoba over bed closures and their decrying that issue, one must always remember, all they are doing is decrying the closure, they are not saying what they would do in government. Because if they are decrying the closure of the beds as compromising health status of Manitobans, then surely, ergo, there should be people dying on the streets of Toronto, dying on the streets of Regina and Saskatoon, dying on the streets of Victoria and Vancouver. But that is not happening, because the issues my honourable friends the New Democrats raise here in opposition are purely political design to try to get them in the back door, into government.

What gives me confidence is that New Democrats, once in government, turn into, as one political writer in the Saskatoon Daily Journal described them, neoconservative socialists. You have heard this neoconservative stuff all the time.

Well, the New Democrats in Saskatchewan are now neoconservative socialists.

I do not know what that means, but it means that they are using policies that are pragmatic, that are not dissimilar to policies of Conservative administrations or Liberal administrations. In other words, they have come to their senses when they are in government and they do not tend to deliver on the wild rhetoric they promised from the luxury of opposition.

From those two standpoints, I think the process may well have integrity in the province of Manitoba, because there is an understanding by leaders in the health care community that change is necessary and that they can be part of the change to the benefit of their respective part in health care delivery as well as be part of the process of change to help move it along in an appropriate fashion.

Mr. Cheema: Madam Chairperson, I think it was in September of this year when we had two by-elections, one was in Portage and one was in Crescentwood, and in both by-elections health care was the No. 1 issue from all three parties. In both by-elections, and I was in Portage but I spent most time in Crescentwood, and that was the major issue, because the candidate from the New Democratic Party is a health consultant and a very respected individual so that was a major issue.

What happened was most constituents rejected that notion and they said, no, the health care plan has to come. We have to work with the Health Action Plan, and I think that was a good test. I think if you combine two parties' votes in that area that should tell you, about 70 percent of people really approved the Health Action Plan if that was the No. 1 issue, as we all said that was the No. 1 issue. I am sure when the new by-elections come, that issue is going to come up again.

My question the minister has answered very quickly, and I think in a very organized fashion, that we have to have continuity of the process. If you have a process gone long enough it will work, but I am sure there are people in the health care sector as providers as well as users of the system. If they are both going to co-operate, then I think it will function in the long run, but there has to be a decision from the government point of view in making sure that they are going to continue to have those basic principles which were outlined in this Health Action Plan and the government is going to

act as a unified force to make sure those things are implemented.

I just wanted to reinforce that and make sure that if the Premier (Mr. Filmon) could read those comments, because I think it is very essential from my experience in this House and also as opposition critic which has seen the official opposition party and the third opposition party and met with many people, and I learned. I think it will be very, very unwise to change ministers every second or third year, specifically in the social policy when you are making changes which are going to be very essential for the long run. We are hoping that the process will continue, because otherwise it will take another few years to teach people and educate themselves to try to make sure they understand what is required.

Madam Chairperson, my next question is: When all these changes are happening, who is making sure, other than the minister's office, that whatever was said in the Health Action Plan, somebody is monitoring the whole process?

Mr. Orchard: I know my honourable friend is going to make the suggestion again in that if we wanted to ensure the integrity of the process, we would have to seriously consider an independent group or individual that would do the status update in terms of where the process is going, and how it is proceeding.

I accept my honourable friend's suggestion in that regard. We have not moved on that suggestion directly, but we hope to be able to provide some information update as to where we are at. That will not answer my honourable friend's concern, I recognize that.

I guess I have to sort of go back to some of the things my honourable friend said. We have gone through some by-elections, and certainly we have gone through the process of Question Period now since March. If there were major flaws that compromised the citizens of Manitoba and their access to quality health care through the changes that have been happening, I am quite sure that my honourable friend would agree that in the by-elections, health care would have been the central issue, and it was an issue but certainly not a central issue.

My honourable friend is correct when he notes in essence, if I recall it correctly, on May 14 when the Health Action Plan came down, as candidate for the Crescentwood by-election, Mr. Sale indicated, well,

I think it is patient and quite friendly. I mean that shows an understanding of the process that was rewarding.

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

In terms of an individual who was reporting to Manitobans, no, we have not got that. But in terms of a process of Manitobans having full access to any glitches or any compromises of process that may occur in the change in the reform process, I think this crucible of daily Question Period is as good an indicator that the process—I am not for a moment saying it is without flaws and is moving perfectly and smoothly—has not had the major impact that some outside observers and the New Democrats to a degree attempted to paint it as a disastrous sort of process. That has not happened, and it has not happened because there has been a lot of co-operation, a lot of good will around the changed process.

I accept my honourable friend's observation that to make the process have the sort of continuity and longevity so that it achieves the end goals, we have to have better public communication with the citizens of Manitoba. My honourable friend is right. I want to tell my honourable friend that I have been in government before, and I have watched another government from opposition, and that was the Howard Pawley government.

* (2220)

I think if there is one observation that government always has, it is that they can never get their message out. We always blame the media as not being particularly friendly to what is going on. You always run that very delicate balance as a government and as cabinet members of where do you draw the line between public information, which is genuine information designed to inform, versus partisan communication with the public of Manitoba, using government resources to advance the objectives of the governing party. That is a very delicate balance.

I know, when I was in opposition, I have seen pieces go out that I thought were partisan from the then-government, and I am sure they could make the same accusation of us when we are in government, both now and before. It is a delicate balance. We hope to achieve a real information process in the next, I hope, month and a half in terms of an update that we are trying to put together for

communication with Manitobans at large. But that will not, I fully acknowledge, meet my honourable friend's long-standing suggestion to government of an independent individual or group of individuals who would report quarterly or whatever on the status of change.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I am just going to be somewhat philosophical here, because I have sort of grown up with this process. For my own mental peace, for my own satisfaction in the long run as a health care provider and also as a public servant, I want to make sure when I am going to sit back somewhere in five years time that I was part of the process which really achieved the goals besides the politics, which can change.

For many factors, it is so essential, I do not think there is any more risky thing that your government can do than the Health Action Plan; this is the most risky thing. It is very, very risky politically, but it is already one year, and things are functioning, other than some problems here and there. We are just reinforcing those points, that we do not have the exact plan, how that could function, but it can be developed in terms of somebody who is monitoring the thing, whether it is the minister's staff or through an independent body in terms of establishing a group of people, not necessarily from the minister's office, but we could see that even the former Minister of Health, on Peter Warren's show he said he could have done the same thing.

Those individuals, there are many professionals who are past presidents of associations and many individuals who are past presidents of these organizations or past Deputy Ministers of Health. Those individuals have real insight to what was happening then and what they will expect. If you can combine something like that, it will increase the credibility of this plan.

I think it will help the government, it will not diminish the credibility. It will really help the process move along, because it is very essential that people should be part of it. We are not saying they are not part of the process, but they should feel that they are part of the process. There is a difference in being part and being really involved. These meetings are very helpful; Question Period is very, very helpful. At the same time, there are other forums which would be helpful, like putting ads in the paper.

I know some provinces are doing it. The Northwest Territories is doing it, you know, an ad in the paper, a simple ad is: How much is it costing when you go and see your doctor? How much is it costing per Manitoban per year for health care? When they will go through all of those figures—they only see the billboards which are totally, politically motivated but, if they do not see the reality, and when you are driving a car on Notre Dame Avenue you see those billboards.

If you are not educated enough about the whole system, you are scared, you know: Somebody is taking away my health care system. That sticks in their mind, and it is not very positive. So I think those things will help all of us because, ultimately—I will repeat it again—somebody else may enjoy it, but that is a risk you take when you are making a change.

So we are asking the minister to consider and come up with something, give it a different name, whatever you like, you do not have to take credit, do whatever is necessary to make sure the credibility of this process is not only maintained in this House, but outside this House. I think that is more important. It is not important for us to impress you or for you to impress us or the other opposition party with the news stories of day.

I think, ultimately, people have to feel that they are part of the process. It is their health care, and they are being involved. Doing those few things, I think it will go a long way. It is helpful to go on the campaigns and try to convey the message, but then it is taken as a political message. They think it is coming in as the minister has said. It is very clear, it does not matter how you put it. Still, it is coming from a given political party.

The way we have done it in this party for two years now on the health care reform, almost two, we started out with the 1990 campaign, we made a decision on what we are going to do. At least we should have a few policies going into 1994. One of those policies was to make sure we have a Health Care Action Plan. As I said, anybody could simply come here, put their picture and put the whole plan, and it could fit into any party's philosophy right now, and they would love it—but to make sure that people really know it and they understand it and they will feel at ease and that will help all of us.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I appreciate my honourable friend's openness and

the suggestion he has made. We may well move in the direction he suggests. I have not taken my honourable friend's suggestion because I did not want the credit to lie with the part of—that does not bother me a bit.

I have given my honourable friend credit publicly and privately and at meetings where a suggestion has come from him which showed an error in the process we were undertaking. I have been willing to make those kinds of changes and give my honourable friend credit. That is the strength of this forum that we are in right now.

If we cannot, as elected officials, take good advice, regardless of where it comes from—it makes sense. You do it and you do not hesitate to give credit for it. That is the purpose of us being here.

My honourable friend's question is a twofold one. One part of it is the public communications aspect and sort of the independent monitor of the reform process so that it has a disattachment, or not an attachment to government, so that it is not the minister or someone from government saying that this is what is happening. That is one aspect of it, to neutrally inform the public of Manitoba. That is an important aspect.

Equally as important is the simple undertaking of monitoring the changes that we are undergoing currently in the system and make sure that they are doing as we expected, in other words, that they are working, they are not compromising an individual's access to health care, they are not compromising outcome of procedure or process in health care delivery.

The latter part is ongoing almost on a constant basis with senior staff and Bernard Blais and the reform committee. I mean, part of what they are doing is making sure that when we make the shifts that they are made in a fashion that has not endangered or compromised quality of care to individuals and, when completed, that they are working effectively. That aspect of it is going on on a regular basis.

That is part of what my honourable friend wants to make sure happen. I can give him the assurance that that sort of analysis of the change process is ongoing constantly by my senior staff, by the partners in change, be it in our acute care hospitals or other areas. That is ongoing. What we are missing is sort of that independent stamp of

certification, if you will, that says, this is what has happened and in general we believe this, thus and such happened appropriately, but here were some weaknesses in the system. That sort of independent communication is not part of the current reform process.

We are giving some concern or some serious consideration on how to open up that process, and we have not come to a conclusion that is worthy of announcement at this date.

*(2230)

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the minister made mention of the fact that a weekend seminar was held with hospital administrators and all of those involved in the process, et cetera, where in general but not carved in stone, if I can extrapolate from what he said, certain directions were outlined as indicated on Thursday. I was made privy to, just briefly, some of those basic announcements through attendance at some meetings that I was attending, and I quite accidentally heard some reference to it.

I wonder if the minister could outline for us today in the House and through us to the public—generally, without tying his hands in terms of the specifics—if he could outline for us today generally the direction of some of those changes and directions that were outlined to the various people involved in the process at that weekend seminar.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I would not be able to provide my honourable friend with a great deal of detail for two reasons. Firstly, I only attended the opening session of the retreat to give a general outline of the challenge before us and to attempt to engage an understanding and a co-operation around the issues of change. I did not attend the balance of the retreat, and I did that very deliberately. I think my honourable friend can understand that if the Minister of Health is there and is taking notes and listening—and some people are of the opinion that I never forget anything—it would have compromised the open discussion that we wanted to encourage amongst the stakeholders to say what could be done, what could not be done, and appreciate.

There is a good attitude towards change and the necessity of change and expediting change in Manitoba, but when I am at a forum like that I can sometimes, by my presence, stifle the openness of discussion. So I cannot tell my honourable friend

what presentations were made. They were updates and verbal presentations of the status to date on a number of the programs under investigation. They were shared so that if there were any very obvious and serious flaws in direction and process that the opportunity would be for the stakeholders to point out those flaws and to suggest alternatives. As I indicated earlier, most if not all of the processes were accepted as information. Comments were made which might have, if I can use the language, fine-tuned the process but did not suggest a major overhaul

As with all other investigations by committees, I do not make public comment on any of the investigations in the interim stage. I will only comment on the report as received in the process of announcing the changes, if any, that are being contemplated and accepted and offered by government as a result of those committee investigations. Again, I think my honourable friend can maybe see some consistency to the pattern of dealing with major issues in that fashion. I do not interject myself into the debate before a committee has had the opportunity to make final recommendations. That is the whole process of open consultation and discussion that I think has served us exceedingly well to date. I am not in the process of commenting on any interim reports such as were shared with the health care stakeholders and leaders in that reform and that retreat.

I am not hesitating to provide my honourable friend with that information from any motivation of trying to deny my honourable friend information. It is simply the pragmatic approach to issue development that we have used, I think, to some degree of success over the last five years, and I see no benefit, even if I had the information, to share it with my honourable friend in an interim stage.

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Acting Chairperson, on a related matter also discussed previously in one of the minister's previous answers, he, in a discussion with the member for The Maples, talked about a third-party monitoring system or a third-party system that would account for changes and be an independent source.

One of the areas of concern and one of the reasons we brought forward the private member's bill was the fact that there does not seem to be any kind of a—how shall I put it?—an appeal process or any kind of a third-party ability to deal with questions and decisions that have been made,

notwithstanding that political and policy decisions are made by expert committees and the like.

Having said that, one of the concerns that I have is when individual problems arise at the various institutions, et cetera, that the final area of recourse is through the minister's office. In principle, I recognize that that happens in all departments and is the nature of government and the political process.

I am wondering if the minister or the department has thought about any kind of a third-party intervention in matters of that kind. Because of the nature of health care problems and the serious natures of them, et cetera—and the minister has mentioned many times how often these are perceived to be made political—I am wondering if the minister has or if the whole process has in fact evolved or has any kind of anticipation of some kind of a process being put in place for those kinds of difficulties. I do not know if I think them fairly clear.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I am a little bit at loss to give my honourable friend a specific answer because that was a very general and unfocused question. I do not say that critically, but I mean it covered a—you could almost have anything covered in that topic, but let me give my honourable friend an example.

About three years ago I guess now, and we have only engaged the services of them on a couple of occasions, but for specific instances where an issue, and generally some of these issues are individual issues and involving an individual, we have three or four individuals who I think are respected for their independence of opinion and view called the quick response team where they will go in and analyze a given issue at a, particularly an acute care hospital, and sort of get the—how was that described on one of those radio shows, sort of the fact behind the story or whatever it is?—and we have used that quick response team twice.

The one instance that I can remember was, a young teenager had his leg broken in, I think, a hockey game in the Interlake, through a series of circumstances, was prepped for surgery, I believe, three different times and was cancelled at the last, and it caused quite a controversy. Of course, the readily arrived at conclusion by some was that it was because of "cutbacks" in health care. In fact, the quick-response team identified that was not the problem, that it was a problem of lack of

communication between facilities and co-ordination of service delivery on an emergency basis between hospitals, between physicians.

* (2240)

Subsequent to that, I think there has been a little better, not perfect, but a little better organization around some of the emergency services so that kind of a circumstance does not happen. As I recall on that particular instance, the evening the young man arrived from the Interlake by ambulance and was admitted to Health Sciences Centre and could not be operated on that evening—this is an oversimplification, but wheeling the cart down the hall several floors could have seen the surgery done at Children's Hospital that evening, and a phone call to one of the other community hospitals could have seen the individual admitted and operated on that evening in another community hospital, but the communication was not there.

The easy accusation in the system is to always when you have a problem say, well, it is because government has not given us enough money. You know, we fight that perception constantly in this province as does every other Minister of Health and that, in essence, is what we talk about in part with effectiveness in health care. It is nothing to do in that particular instance with having a larger budget at the Health Sciences Centre. That would not have helped the individual that night unless you maybe doubled the capacity to do emergency surgery at Health Sciences Centre and built a capacity there that was unaffordable and unsustainable in the long run. But effective use of resource across the system would have seen that leg set and operated on that evening in two other hospital locations, if there had been an effective communication between the hospitals, between admitting physicians.

There are a lot of effectiveness examples that we are coming to grips with through a number of the study groups that we have with players in the system coming around the issues and aided very expertly by the independence of the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation because they do not owe anybody anything in terms of developing their reports. They are independent scientists, independent researchers that take on, project by project, an analysis of the facts as they are presented.

I want to tell my honourable friends that the Health Action Plan, yes, was a popular document, but a

more popular series of documents at Health ministers' meetings and when the senior staff are out of province are our Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation documents. They are considered to be some of the best scientific analysis of health care delivery that is available. They have been gaining substantial credibility in observing how we can build more effectiveness into health care delivery.

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the minister was right. It was not that specific a question. I agree with most of what the minister responded to in terms of the effectiveness issue.

However, as tangential to that, I just wonder whether there is any move toward the establishment of some kind of institutional approach to dealing with these kinds of problems as they occur on a daily and a regular basis, because the minister gets the calls in his office, I am sure the member for The Maples does and I do as well in my office. I do not know if it has been discussed at a higher level or if it is even instituted in other provinces, but it would strike me of some benefit to have a kind of institutional—well, that is the wrong word, but a kind of a response team on standby that could cut through some of the difficulties and provide some of the answers that would take it out of the “political” arena.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairperson, yes, there is no question that might be an appropriate undertaking, but I think my honourable friend would have to provide some examples where there was an inadvertent wrong perpetrated on a citizen of the province as a result of some process of care delivery. We receive a lot of complaints. That is not unusual; that is not unique.

I sat in opposition and I had folks phone me on a regular basis and write me letters on a regular basis complaining about the system. I have some pretty awful looking photographs in my files from opposition. That is not going to ever end, I would suspect and humbly submit.

The process that we have undertaken within the ministry is, upon receipt of a complaint, to initiate an investigation or a response around the complaint. If it is internal to a program of the ministry, initiate the response to that complaint internally and to reply to it as quickly as possible either in writing or with direct staff contact.

Secondly, where it is a complaint that emanates from one of our institutions, to call upon the institution to quickly investigate and provide a

response as to the veracity of the complaint and the allegation, and any course of action that is taken, that was needed to correct maybe a problem in process or a problem in perception if there was no remedy in the existing system, and that nothing had been done in an inappropriate fashion.

We also have similar processes of complaints that come in about professional conduct whether it be physician, nurse or other caregivers. When we receive those in our office, either written or through telephone calls, we attempt to have those investigated by the respective organizations. I am not certain that at this juncture the system would be better served by a formal investigation process of some of the complaints on service delivery that come in.

I think the system may not be as rapid in terms of getting a formal response back to the individual as one might wish, because currently we are over a thousand pieces of correspondence of all types into my office per month and probably up to in excess of 2,000 phone calls per month. That is a significant workload and sometimes the delays may not be as rapidly turned around, but in the five years I have been here, I do not think anyone can legitimately make the case that their health status was compromised by the process that has been in place over the last five years.

Similarly, I do not think prior to my being the Minister of Health, that similar and that same process was used. I do not think anybody could make the case that prior to five years ago, under the previous government, the previous administration, that anybody's health concerns or health status was compromised by that response process.

I have to tell my honourable friend that in absence of that kind of proof of necessity to change the process, I really do not have the resource to commit to another sort of an independent process of investigation where we have intractable problems presented by individuals—and my office has several of them. Some of them are around a specific disease entity, and my honourable friends have probably received communications from the individual because we see you carbon copied with their letters to us.

When you exhaust all of the investigative procedures, there is the Ombudsman and there are other processes of investigation to assure that there has not been an improper response by the system

to the individual's concerns and complaints. Again, I have to say to my honourable friend, I do not know, in the five years, I cannot think of an individual who we have not taken every step possible to attempt to get to the bottom of the problem that has been brought forward by that individual, and to give a full investigation, to take corrective action where corrective action was warranted, and to give an explanation that the process could not have done anything additionally.

* (2250)

It is unfortunate, but sometimes the answer—it may not be the answer the individual wants—but the answer is that under the system, we have done all we can do and there is no more action we can take to try and assist, that we have exhausted the specialist referrals or whatever has been undertaken. In those cases, we have had some investigation go to the Ombudsman and basically the same kind of conclusion.

Now, if the Ombudsman had, in general, taken every one of the complaints referred and come to an entirely different conclusion, that would demonstrate to me that maybe our processes were not appropriate and were not serving a beneficial decision-making process for the individuals who chose to raise the issues. That has not been the case, and having that experience, I have to conclude that without its flaws, because nothing is perfect, without some of the flaws that are evident in terms of the investigation process, it generally has concluded and acted upon complaints in an appropriate fashion. From that standpoint, I think we would probably maintain that approach to handling complaints and disagreements within the system.

Mr. Chomiak: My final question is general on this theme, and I appreciate the minister's response. Given the admitted change, the dramatic changes going on in the system, has any thought been given to something like a patients advocate or advocates at various levels of institutions in the health care system?

Mr. Orchard: Not from a formal standpoint of having someone appointed as an advocate for patients but, for instance, in amendments to The Mental Health Act, I think we have significantly improved an individual's ability to take circumstances to an independent committee, if you

will, which I think by and large has worked quite successfully.

We started with quite a flurry of activity, and now it has settled down to where there are not as many issues brought before the three-person panels as was the case in the first six months of their institution.

Each facility, for instance, has people on staff dedicated to try and get to the bottom of patient complaints. One might say, that is not good enough. That is sort of the judge and jury all being in one room. Well, that may be an appropriate criticism, and it may lead to the accusation that people tend always to protect themselves and to cover their tracks, and that is a natural accusation but, again, I harken back to the opportunity that a number of circumstances, individuals have taken and gone to the Ombudsman, who is genuinely that kind of an independent investigator and, with few exceptions, there have not been conclusions that the complaint was improperly or inappropriately handled by the respective institution or professional group.

In terms of professional groups, most of them, as my honourable friend is well aware, where their professional acts have been amended in the last two years beginning with the pharmacists of Manitoba, who were the first to bring in progressive changes to the professional legislation, all of them have a much more open disciplinary process for complaints against professional misconduct, the opportunity for even public hearings of those complaints.

I think the process has opened up quite significantly, and I genuinely do not see at this stage of the game a compelling necessity to create a patient advocate position within the health care system. I think most of the processes for investigating complaints are responding reasonably and effectively and are taking appropriate remedial action where warranted and explaining process where that has been the cause for concern.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I had occasion to attend the open public forum held by the St. Boniface Hospital which other members of the Legislature also attended, and I am not certain if all institutions at present are undertaking those kinds of forums. I am wondering if the minister is encouraging of that process or aware of that process taking place by major institutions with respect to the reform process. I am talking about

widely publicized meetings that allow the public to be apprised of changes and offer suggestions and the like.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Acting Chairperson, the two teaching hospitals are both undertaking a fairly extensive internal-external communication program. That commenced with The Action Plan from May 14. They actually had a number of investigations prior to that, or open meetings prior to that. But my honourable friend will note that part of the contractual arrangements and the process that both the teaching hospitals have engaged in to date with APM, Connie Curran group, have been a specific commitment to wider public consultation around the issue of restructuring within those respective institutions.

(Madam Chairperson in the Chair)

I think if the open public meeting that my honourable friend indicates he attended that was sponsored by St. Boniface Hospital, I think that was as a result of the APM Connie Curran restructuring initiative that is ongoing as we speak within that hospital.

Mr. Chomlak: The minister made mention previously of the process of community resources being put in place prior to bed closures and the discussion and commitment to do so. The assistant deputy minister responsible for Health Reform made it very clear at several meetings that I attended that it would not be a bed for bed replacement. It would be something with an equivalent service, and I made mention on Thursday again of the fact of a meeting that I attended wherein Sue Hicks—I cannot remember her exact title at this point—had made reference to the fact that the department was just beginning to look at community resources and community services to be put in place. That is post significant changes in terms of the acute care beds and the like. I wonder if the minister might elaborate about what the process is for community services to augment those changes.

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairperson, my honourable friend might have not heard my statement in my opening remarks which I repeated for my honourable friend the member for Maples earlier on tonight, but with the indulgence of my honourable friend, the member for Kildonan, I will attempt to answer his question.

First of all, my honourable friend, I take from his question and the premise under which he posed the question that in the acute care sector in our hospital sector that every time a bed closes, there must be a replacement service created somewhere in the system, preferably in the community.

* (2300)

If my honourable friend has that as an underpinning belief that that is necessary to achieve reform and restructuring within the acute care system, then with all due respect, Madam Chairperson, my honourable friend has not been reading some of the literature and some of the discussions and has not been talking to some of the key stakeholders in health care and health care reform.

Let me give my honourable friend a couple of examples. There was an announcement approximately four, five or six weeks ago, St. Boniface General Hospital. If my honourable friend was at the meeting in the last three to four weeks that St. Boniface had, if that is the meeting he attended, I think the issue of the closure of 39 surgical beds would have come up.

The closure of those 39 surgical beds is being undertaken at St. Boniface because of a better management of how they admit and discharge those patients who are receiving surgical services at St. Boniface. They will be able to maintain the level or the volume of patient services, is my understanding, using 39 fewer surgical beds by a pre-admission procedure which is streamlined, by a length of stay adjustment which was identified as possible through the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation study, and through the own experience of St. Boniface Hospital because they have been testing this new process under the guidance of Dr. Ross Brown and, of course, the new CEO, Jack Litvack. They have every confidence that they can maintain quality surgical service delivery with fewer beds.

That does not imply, as my honourable friend seems to conclude, that those 39 beds have to be replaced with other services. Those 39 beds are being replaced because of a more effective method of patient management within St. Boniface Hospital in the area of surgical services.

I made reference earlier on this evening to a Toronto Globe and Mail article out of the Toronto General Hospital last week, wherein they are able to

significantly reduce the length of time that open-heart surgery patients spend in intensive care. Basically, they move them directly from the operating theatre, bypass intensive care right into a surgical ward where they have certainly a high level of care. They are discharged much earlier and every bit as healthy.

They are replacing intensive resources through better management of the patient without compromise of patient care. They have not taken and put community services in place at the Toronto General Hospital; neither will St. Boniface with the surgical beds.

I want to quote the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, page 3803, in my opening remarks. I think the second quote is the one that probably touches it as good as anything. I will not bother with the—well, no, I will quote both of them.

The first quote: "We estimate that a significant portion of the days currently invested in treating acute care patients could be eliminated without decreasing access to hospital care."

The second quote says: "The hospital system appears to have the capacity to handle more patients or to absorb a sizable number of bed closures without rationing access to hospital care. The hospitals and the government have tended to assume that every bed closed should be replaced by another service . . ."—this is kind of the assumption my honourable friend premised his question with—. . . possibly less intense and less expensive, but nevertheless a replacement. These data suggest that at least some of the bed closures could be accommodated simply through more efficient treatment of patients in available beds."

As we have more scientific analysis of the data and of how the system spends and how the system is managed, we find that we can significantly reduce the level of activity, the size and the cost of institutional care, without decreasing the volume of that care or, particularly and most importantly, the quality of that care. Now, I believe that if my honourable friend thinks about it, that is an appropriate goal, that is a laudable goal for the managers of our acute care system to attempt to achieve.

Why would we not in today's fiscal environment, the challenge that is being placed on all governments, this one not an exception, why would

we not encourage the managers of our health care system to utilize existing resources in a much more effective manner to maintain the volume of service, the quality of care, the outcome of procedure and to do it with fewer beds and less cost, ergo, and without having to replace those beds with alternate services if you can do it through simply better management of the patient whilst undergoing that surgery? That is what we are finding we can do, and the system is finding they can do that, and that has changed in part the premise that my honourable friend used in his question that if you close a bed you have to create another service.

In today's changing environment that is almost old-think, and it is not old-think that is inappropriate. It is old-think that has taken the outcome, the care of the patient, the quality of service, well into consideration before those changes are advanced or initiated.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, the minister mentioned better managed system, and if in fact the system were managed on that basis I would tend to agree with him. I could also relate back to the minister statistics that are offered by Bernard Blais at every one of his seminars about spending whatever number of days in the hospital for gall bladder surgery and now spending, you know, X amount of hours in the hospital because of new techniques, et cetera. Fair point.

The problem with all of that is that we know patients are being almost forced out of hospitals for weekends. We know that there is a two-week waiting list in at least one hospital to get home care, where patients who were supposedly discharged are not being discharged because resource co-ordinators at the home care system are not being replaced when they go on holidays and therefore there is a two-week backlog. That is the problem in the breakdown in the management of this system that causes patients to be distressed, families to be concerned and for discredit to fall upon the entire reform process.

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chair, I am intrigued with my honourable friend's preamble to the questions. My honourable friend is saying that some hospitals are having patients stay for up to 14 days longer when they could have been discharged, and the reason that they are 14 days longer in their hospital stays is because they have not had their home care co-ordinator. Is that what my honourable friend is saying?

Mr. Chomlak: That is what I am advised.

Mr. Orchard: Well, Madam Chair, I would very much appreciate when my honourable friend receives that advice, if he believes it is serious, to pass those circumstances on to my office and we would undertake an investigation and see whether the advice my honourable friend gets is accurate and, if it is accurate, how we can resolve it, because those are the kinds of circumstances that anecdotally come forward and from time to time they have substance, but some of the times they do not.

If my honourable friend had the opportunity, he could certainly share those instances with my office and we can investigate and expedite any remedy if any remedy was required.

* (2310)

Mr. Chomlak: So is the minister indicating that he is unaware of those kinds of circumstances occurring?

Mr. Orchard: I do not recall making the statement. My honourable friend made the statement. If my honourable friend is being so informed, my honourable friend might want to pass that information on so I can do an investigation and advise my honourable friend whether he is providing information that is accurate and needs remedying.

I did not make the statement. My honourable friend did.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, I wonder if the minister might outline for us, since he made reference to it previously, the question of the consolidation of pediatric services both inpatient, outpatient, surgery, and the decision to move the process, to move the facilities all to the Health Sciences Centre.

Mr. Orchard: That process was one of investigation at the Urban Hospital Council as one of the suggestions for investigation that was before the Urban Hospital Council.

I am going by memory, but I think in approximately October, maybe it was November, I think it was October, we accepted a recommendation that there could be significant consolidation of pediatrics. At the time that that first recommendation was made, as I recall, there was some discussion about a phase-down of the capacity at St. Boniface Hospital.

In other words, a certain capacity was proposed to remain there and, within three to four weeks, as more information became available in terms of the

ability to accommodate all of the pediatric inpatient services, medical and surgical, at Children's Hospital, a subsequent decision that the Urban Hospital Council unanimously made was accepted by government.

It was that decision of complete consolidation that was expedited over approximately a three-and-a-half-month period of time, was completed, I believe, March 31st and is currently operating I think with a reasonable degree of success.

There are still, I think it is fair to say, discussions ongoing in terms of some admitting privileges, I think, amongst pediatricians that had admission privileges in other hospitals, community and St. Boniface, but not necessarily at Children's Hospital. A number of those individuals have already been accommodated at Children's.

Mr. Chomlak: The minister indicated there were some discussions ongoing. Can the minister give us an outline roughly of how many outstanding situations there are with respect to pediatricians and others who require certification at the Health Sciences Centre and when can that matter be resolved for both them and their patients?

Mr. Orchard: I will attempt to seek that information and provide it.

Mr. Chomlak: Can the minister outline what provision is being made for the accommodation of French and French-speaking facilities for those patients that were formerly at the St. Boniface Hospital? What ongoing provision has been made for the provision of French and French language services to patients who are admitted and also patients that require outpatient surgery?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chair, I think the process that was to be undertaken at Children's was to attempt that French language service capability was available with the staffing complement at Children's.

Mr. Chomlak: Is the minister saying the same staff that were at St. Boniface are shifting over to the Health Sciences Centre? I do not quite follow that answer.

Mr. Orchard: No. My honourable friend, I think, is well aware of the answer to that. There was an inability for direct staff transfer from one hospital to the next. That was one of the difficulties that has challenged the reform process because, as my honourable friend well knows, although there is central bargaining with MNU, there are local

contracts at each of the major facilities and within those local contracts there are the seniority provisions, et cetera.

Those seniority provisions are not transferable from hospital A to hospital B. As a result, the system, not through any lack of will to have it happen on behalf of the government, I mean, this was not a prohibition or an inhibition that we placed on the system, this was part of the governance of a number of structures, a union contract included, which precluded a significant amount of direct staff movement between the institutions. In terms of planning for consolidated pediatric inpatient services at Children's Hospital, a bilingual staff roster was prepared. It is my understanding that bilingual services are available 24 hours a day as a result of that roster identification of competency in both languages.

Mr. Chomlak: I wonder if the minister could advise whether an option was considered to maintain a portion of the pediatric ward at St. Boniface Hospital for a period of time during the transition to see whether or not it would be required, and if, in fact, that consideration was made, the reasons why it was rejected.

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chair, I indicated to my honourable friend that the second last decision made by the Urban Hospital Council contemplated some acute care capacity at St. Boniface Hospital. Subsequent to that initial recommendation, or interim recommendation, whatever my honourable friend might want to call it, within a four- or five-week period of time the Urban Hospital Council reconsidered the issue and, based on more current information in terms of the capacity of Children's Hospital and advice in terms of how the Children's inpatient needs could be met, the decision was unanimously taken by the Urban Hospital Council to do a complete consolidation and to abandon the original recommendation of leaving some inpatient capacity at St. Boniface Hospital.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, that is a very interesting decision. That is wherein I saw the policy weakness in terms of the decision that was made, because presumably the Urban Hospital Council, using the best advice, experts and statistical evidence, made a decision. Subsequent to that decision, a three- or four-week period of time, the minister's reform package went out and, as I read it, indicated that initial decision, and indicated that decision would take place. The minister's

press releases went out, and the public was informed, presumably.

Subsequent to that, the situation was reconsidered, and the minister said in his response, it was based on additional statistical evidence that came forward. But I find that an interesting policy decision. Let me juxtapose that with the decision in terms of obstetrics.

A decision was made on obstetrics, and then it was held back, as I understand it, and then Frank Manning came in to do an adjustment or something along those lines. But in this decision the government moved from an initial decision and then reconsidered. It is curious that a body of that kind would study and make a decision and then three or four weeks later would then completely reverse that decision. I guess it begs the question that there might have been other considerations.

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chair, my honourable friend in his question says, a decision was made in obstetrics and then was subsequently revisited. Is my honourable friend, in making that statement, saying that as Minister of Health I announced the decision on obstetrics—no, my honourable friend shakes his head, no.

My honourable friend, in his opening remarks, wanted to know who was accountable for decision making, because he seemed to find something confusing where Mr. Blais indicated that the minister makes all the final decisions.

* (2320)

Well, you know, my honourable friend cannot play loose and free with language, saying a decision was made in obstetrics, and then from his seat—and he will get up and acknowledge that he shook his head when I asked a specific question, who made the decision that he referred to? I asked him, was it myself as minister, and he shook his head in the negative, because he knows that to be fact.

I do not know where my honourable friend gets the ability to say a decision was made on obstetrics, other than to advance some case for whatever purpose, political or otherwise, my honourable friend wants to advance.

My honourable friend finds something difficult to come to grips with, to understand in terms of the pediatric decision of consolidation. Okay, I will accept my honourable friend's concerns about the process, but let us have my honourable friend answer a simple question. Does he believe the

decision was wrong to consolidate to Children's Hospital?

Furthermore, would my honourable friend, if he had the ability and the authority to do so, reverse that decision, and would my honourable friend reinstate pediatrics at St. Boniface or any of the other urban hospitals? Because that is the essence of the issue and my honourable friend has to decide whether he is ever going to get off the fence in terms of criticizing the process without having to comment on the result of the process.

If my honourable friend, with his knowledge as critic for the New Democratic Party, believes that decision is wrong, my honourable friend has the opportunity tonight to so state and, furthermore, to indicate what remedial action he would suggest to government based on his knowledge as New Democratic critic on the issue.

As I have said to my honourable friend the member for The Maples, from time to time he has pointed out where some of our decisions have not considered all of the information and he suggested a different course of action. We have taken that where it has made sense and we have acknowledged that we would have erred had we continued on the original course.

Now my honourable friend says he is not happy with the process. He cannot understand how we could have the process, give a decision and then have the decision revisited and recommend complete consolidation. I accept my honourable friend's concerns around that.

Having said that, will my honourable friend now indicate whether the decision was wrong? If so, would he reverse it? How would he reverse that decision and how would he change that decision should he be government?

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, the minister has evaded the question, has refused to answer the question as to the three- or four-week period.

An Honourable Member: What was your question?

Mr. Chomlak: The minister is asking from his seat, what was the question? I again ask it. What were the reasons behind the decision to change what was announced in his program?

I have the program in front of me, as well as the obstetrics announcement, which says, redirection of low-risk obstetrics, one program, two sites, one

director, one budget, et cetera, out of the minister's spread, the minister's overhead sheets in front of me but, notwithstanding that, what were the reasons behind the change of the closure of the beds at St. Boniface? One recommendation three or four weeks later, another recommendation completely changes it.

I think there were reasons other than new statistical evidence coming forward. Because I have not seen it, the minister has not provided me yet with a copy of that subsequent report, I quite naturally, based on evidence of information that has come to me that there were other reasons involved in it, I am asking the minister to state those reasons now. Why can the minister not defend that decision? Why can he not provide us with the information?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chair, I have provided my honourable friend with the information. A better decision was recommended by the Urban Hospital Council, that complete consolidation could occur to the benefit of the system without compromising the opportunity to access care for children.

I have told my honourable friend—he makes allegations about other reasons that he was informed of but yet he does not state them. Well, now is his opportunity to state them, if he has them in fact, if he has anybody who would give him these "reasons."

I am indicating that the Urban Hospital Council, in their collective wisdom and their responsibility within the system, said, we can do a complete consolidation based on information before us without compromising access or ability to deliver quality care to children in Manitoba.

Now my honourable friend says that is an improper decision, or does he not? My honourable friend just said that I have evaded the answer. I have given him the answer that he seeks. It is not the answer he wants, but it is the answer he seeks.

Now could my honourable friend give me the courtesy of an answer? If the consolidation to Children's was wrong, would he so state it, and would he tell us what the policy would be of a New Democratic administration in this area so Manitobans can know where you stand?

They know where this government stands, but all we hear from my honourable friend is the what-ifs, but we never know what you would do. Would you reverse the decision? Would you de-consolidate?

Would you distribute pediatric services to St. Boniface and other hospitals, and if so, what would be your justification for doing that?

So now is your opportunity not to avoid the issue but to be very direct with the people of Manitoba and tell us what you would do or, in absence of that, simply acknowledge tacitly without any suggestion as to what could be done to better the service of pediatric inpatient service delivery.

One has to assume in the absence of any better suggestion that you agree with the policy of this government.

Mr. Chomlak: Can the minister indicate whether the decision to consolidate the outpatient surgery as well as the inpatient surgery to Health Sciences Centre was made at the same time, who made that decision and why was that decision made?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairperson, all of a sudden my honourable friend is now changing questions without answering whether the inpatient services as consolidated was the right thing to do. Could my honourable friend give me the wisdom of his knowledge as critic for the New Democratic Party, government in waiting, as to whether that decision was wrong?

Mr. Chomlak: I wonder if the minister will answer the question. The question is, when and why was the decision made to consolidate inpatient-outpatient surgery at Health Sciences Centre? Was it made by the first Urban Hospital Council report, by the second one? Was it made by some separate other body? How did that decision come about?

Mr. Orchard: The same process, the same discussion forum and the same general timing. Having that knowledge, would my honourable friend now tell me whether both of those decisions are wrong and what my honourable friend would do to replace those two decisions?

Mr. Chomlak: Based on what the minister responded then, I have no choice but to conclude that the original decision was not to consolidate surgery from the community hospitals into the Health Sciences Centre because no mention is made of it in the minister's overhead charts, in the minister's PR productions for his changes. Subsequently, the decision was made I guess by a second committee report, just like the decision was made to close St. Boniface Hospital.

What was the data on the basis that that decision was made, Madam Chairperson?

*(2330)

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairperson, the information that led to the acceptance of that recommendation was in terms of capacity to undertake the needed services, and that decision has been made and has been in operation now for approximately two months, over two months.

Is my honourable friend, after having danced around on the head of a pin for the last 10 minutes, able now to tell us whether he agrees or disagrees with that decision by the Urban Hospital Council based on information they had at their disposal and recommended as being a feasible decision which I accepted after investigation by my ministry and have implemented?

Could my honourable friend now tell me whether he agrees or disagrees? If he disagrees, could he offer me the suggestion on how we could make a decision different which would in his opinion—and hopefully my honourable friend would have the statistical evidence to back up what he is going to recommend—make the service better for children? Does he agree with the decision or disagree with the decision? I still have not heard that from my honourable friend.

Mr. Chomlak: Any citizen or interested observer who would have the time to read Hansard I think would probably understand some of the frustrations felt by people out there in the community in trying to get a reasoned response from the minister to issues.

If one were to look at the discord and the discussions happening in the last few minutes—no less of an organization than the Manitoba Medical Association was concerned about this decision and was concerned at the lack of opportunity for input from the minister. I am wondering why the minister did not see fit to include that organization, that body, in discussions as significant as this insofar as it affected so much of the caregiving by members of the Manitoba Medical Association.

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairperson, my honourable friend is now expressing concerns about the consultation process. My honourable friend might, on behalf of the MMA, on that issue have a legitimate observation. But that still does not answer the fundamental question, was the decision wrong or was the decision right? I have shared in this House in Question Period information

about inpatient days, about surgical theatre capacity and the expansion of surgical theatre operating hours, about the commissioning of a new surgical theatre, all of which point to the ability that the Children's Hospital can accommodate inpatient and not-for-admission surgeries.

All that information has been given to my honourable friend in Question Period every time he has asked the question. My honourable friend wants to sit here tonight and make out as if he has never heard any justification for the consolidation, that it is all some Machiavellian plan of myself and this government, when in fact it is based on information from experts, from the people who manage the system, from the people who know the requirements, the needs in the system.

Now, the decision was made based on that information. My honourable friend now is into criticism of consultation and process. That is fine. My honourable friend will always have those kinds of criticisms about consultation and input because, in his opening remarks Thursday last, my honourable friend wanted all Manitobans to have an input on health care reform but, yet, disagrees with Total Quality Management in the workplace, which gives workers input into changes in the system.

So my honourable friend cannot have it both ways. You cannot say that all Manitobans need an input and at the same time to have his NDP ideology to be against Total Quality Management, which allows workers to have input, those same workers that my honourable friend claims to represent and speak on behalf of. He wants to deny them input into the system but uses this grandiose public relations exercise of, all Manitobans need input.

Now, my honourable friend has pointed out one organization that did not like the level of consultation and involvement as a specific organization on that process of decision making. Okay, I will accept that. My honourable friend has driven a stake through my heart, but now will my honourable friend stand up and tell me as critic for the New Democrats, as a party that if I listened to Mr. Doer, the Leader of the Opposition, says they are going to be the next government, will my honourable friend tell the people of Manitoba, was the decision to consolidate at Children's Hospital wrong and would the New Democrats reverse that decision if they are government?

Surely that is a fairly basic piece of information that Manitobans and the managers of the health care system might want to understand and know where you come from. I understand you are always going to criticize the process, but let us talk about the decision. Was the decision wrong? Do you disagree with it? What would you do to change it?

Be honest with the people of Manitoba and tell us.

Mr. Chomlak: Madam Chairperson, I am glad the minister was able to admit, and I admire that, that he was wrong in not consulting with the Manitoba Medical Association. I would go further and say that the minister should recognize for future reference that he did not consult with patients, with many other caregivers including nurses, aides and the like, with the organizations that represent a lot of the children.

They had to contact us in the opposition, who had to raise it and finally after raising it in the House and after the courage of many of these people to come forward publicly, and I give them much credit, because it is still a democracy, for them to come forward publicly and announce some of their concerns. The minister actually then was forced to bring information forward to justify the decision, although to this date we still have not seen the minister refuse this, does not have the courage to table the reports, the empirical data.

He still has not provided it to the Manitoba Medical Association as far as I know from the last correspondence that I see in the Manitoba Medical Journal that just came out in May. Perhaps if he has since, he will be kind enough to provide us with the empirical data and the statistical data.

I can tell you, Madam Chairperson, that even the data that I had, the initial data from the minister, was fraught with difficulty, which caused a certain amount of damage control to be made by the perpetrators of this policy to try to fix the situation. I think we did a good service to the public.

I admire the courage of the parents and the patients and the caregivers who came forward. It takes a lot in the system to do that, given the amount of insecurity in the system and given the amount of fear, frankly, that is in the system for people who actually come forward and criticize the government for a decision. I give them credit for that and, as a result, some information came through, but we still have not seen—will the minister simply table the

data upon which the decision was made, particularly the second decision, obviously the second decision, and to justify for us why that decision was made different from the initial decision.

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairperson, I realize my honourable friend has difficulty in attempting to politicize decisions in health care reform, and I realize that is his sole objective and agenda. My honourable friend now rolled in another series of groups that in his humble opinion ought to have been consulted. For instance, the nurses, I think, were one group that he mentioned.

Madam Chairperson, the Urban Hospital Council, in terms of its membership, has the opportunity to seek within their respective institutions, and did, whether it would be appropriate to undertake a consolidation of program, even though it was dislocating to the staff potentially, et cetera. Now, my honourable friend, de facto, is saying that the members of the Urban Hospital Council did not make a good decision, that they did not do their job properly, but yet he, the New Democratic Party critic knows more about children's pediatric service than the CEOs of all our urban hospital councils and the managers of the program and certainly more than the leadership and the administration of the Children's Hospital, who have said consistently without equivocation that they can handle inpatient pediatric services and the NFA surgeries for children at Children's Hospital. That was the original design of the hospital. My honourable friend knows that.

* (2340)

My honourable friend also knows that on several occasions in Question Period I have presented to my honourable friend the information in terms of utilization, in terms of commissioning of extra bed capacity at Children's Hospital which predicated this decision. All of that information has been made available to my honourable friend, but it does not happen to fit with his political agenda.

Now, Madam Chair, with regret, this is probably going to be the pattern of the Estimates process that my honourable friend is going to get up. He is going to criticize the decision. He is going to criticize it from the standpoint, well, you never consulted with this group, that group, or this individual or that individual, but I am not going to take a stand on the decision, because I do not want Manitobans to know what I believe in, in health care.

I only want Manitobans to elect me and I will surprise them as to what I will do.

This is not the game that I play or this government plays. That is the game my honourable friend is going to try to play, and this is now the seventh time tonight I have asked my honourable friend to do us the courtesy of simply saying, on behalf of the New Democrats and your position as health critic, do you disagree with the decision of consolidation of pediatric services to Children's Hospital?

Fairly simply question. It should not take too long to provide an answer. If it happens to be yes, then I realize your political case is gone. If it happens to be no, I am interested and I want to know what alternatives you would suggest. But in the absence of neither a yes nor a no, and just this constant dancing on the head of a pin, I quite frankly cannot help my honourable friend understand the system better, because when I provide him with the information he requests, as I have done in the past and as I have done tonight, that information does enable my honourable friend to conclude the political approach that he would like to take on behalf of the New Democrats. All I want is, just where do you stand? If it is the wrong decision, say so. If it is the right decision, have the courage to admit that it is the right decision and that you were in error in trying to thwart it. At least have that courage.

Mr. Cheema: Madam Chairperson, I want to get into this discussion because I think the issue is quite significant. It really has many aspects and I think people have to know from a different perspective also.

As the minister has pointed out, there is a 30 to 40 percent occupancy rate at that hospital and, ideally, if we want to say what services should be in each and every hospital, I will first tackle that part. That means we should have every service in each and every hospital. That would have been possible if everything was fine and there was lots of money here, and you do not have to go and borrow and you do not have to worry next year, you do not have to tax people.

That is not the case. That is not only in Manitoba and not only even in this province. If you look at, for example, somebody in Morris or Morden or Winkler, do they have access to everything possible under the sun? They do not. They have the

same kind of obligation and the same kind of rights and responsibilities, but people are managing.

It is a tough world out there. Somebody has to go sometimes half an hour even with a very, very serious illness. The question here is that if we have the resources, that would have been the ideal situation, but if you read all the statements that I have read for the last eight years about what has been happening, everyone was saying let us consolidate, let us be efficient, let us do things in a more organized fashion. This is one example where I think there is at least a demand from the public to know.

I would ask even the member for Kildonan, there has to be somebody else who knows how the services are going to be delivered. The question here is, if the primary health care services and their providers say at a distance of eight to 10 minutes, and if they can be effectively provided in an institution because of the circumstances—not because of the choice, but we are forced into those situations now. It is no more a choice.

If that is going to be very effective, and you do not have to spend the extra cents at Health Sciences Centre, and the services are provided in a way that Children's will get the same quality services and the pediatricians are going to get their privileges done there and they will have the same access. The outpatient services are still being provided in those hospitals. The emergency services are still being provided and even some of the admissions to the St. Boniface Hospital are not even directly coming from that area. They are outside Winnipeg, so those services can go directly to another hospital.

The question here is basic policy direction. One has to make those choices, and I think the time comes when you have to make those choices. So I will ask the minister now, out of the 30 to 40 percent admission rates at St. Boniface Hospital, can they provide us a breakdown that will probably clarify some of the misconceptions? That may help all of us to understand that some of the admissions done at that hospital can be directly made to Children's Hospital where the environment is, if not more suited but equally suited, and if you have the head of the department and department of pediatrics who have said they will be able to provide those services, so why do we have a problem then?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairperson, to try and answer my honourable friend's question, it is my

understanding that the transfer of surgical patients from our other hospitals and from St. Boniface in particular, because St. Boniface of the remaining hospitals outside of the Children's Hospital, I think the level of patient activity at St. Boniface was higher in pediatrics than at the other community hospitals that had pediatric services.

Those inpatient services were accommodated by two things. First of all, the funding of some additional beds at Children's Hospital—there were 118 beds in service at Children's. I am trying to find the right information here—118 beds at Children's—and since it was built, there were 11 beds that were never opened. We commissioned six of those 11 beds to bring the commissioned bed capacity at Children's up to 124. The occupancy rate on the 118 existing beds prior to consolidation was approximately 70 percent. By opening some new beds or some of the beds that were never commissioned at Children's and increasing the occupancy to 79 percent, they were able to accommodate the additional patient days across the system.

* (2350)

There was a fairly significant restructuring around the surgical theatres, and that was two initiatives. Prior to consolidation, there were four operating theatres that were in service Monday to Friday, eight hours a day. To accommodate the increased surgical activity, they commissioned an additional operating theatre which would be open five days a week and add 40 hours of surgical theatre capacity. The operating hours of the existing four plus the new one were extended by two hours a day to give an extra 10 hours of surgery time at Children's. So between the commissioning of an additional surgical theatre and the extra two hours per day, there were 50 hours of additional surgical activity.

The estimate was, in terms of the consolidation, that there would be just under 49 hours of additional surgery time required to consolidate both inpatient and not-for-admission surgeries at one location, that you would need 49 hours—48.8 hours was the exact estimate—of additional operating time, and they have provided for 50 hours in the consolidation. So that allowed the Urban Hospital Council to accept the recommendation of complete consolidation with some integrity that the capacity was there at Children's with the new beds and a higher occupancy rate and 50 hours more surgical time.

All of this is information that I shared in Question Period some time ago, that they could handle the inpatient, surgical and medical needs of children that were served at the other community hospitals and St. Boniface and also serve the NFA surgery loads which they were anticipating to transfer some 2,500 cases to not-for-admission from admission.

To all the latest reports that I have received, the process of consolidation has gone, I think, relatively smoothly. As a matter of fact, one might observe with very few challenges that were not resolvable in terms of the first couple of months.

Mr. Cheema: Madam Chairperson, can the minister tell us was there any opposition from the hospital board, from St. Boniface Hospital when this move was being considered?

Mr. Orchard: I think there was concern at the hospital board level and certainly at the hospital administration level that they were going to lose Children's services, and there was a pretty strong mission attachment to that at St. Boniface.

They expressed those concerns, but when a number of the issues were able to be addressed in a reasonable program fashion with indication, as I indicated earlier on, that language service could be accommodated on a roster system over at Children's, I think the decision was accepted as part of what was going to happen in terms of restructuring across the system. I received, at least to my knowledge, no formal opposition from the board of St. Boniface to the consolidation.

I think you have to appreciate, and I want to pick up on a point that my honourable friend made earlier on, that every hospital cannot be everything to all people. I mean, we are into a time when—and this is not new. The roles of hospitals have evolved and changed over a number of years, Municipal Hospital, Deer Lodge used to be acute care facilities, and they are now long-term care facilities.

My honourable friend will well recall that, what was it, about 1984 or 1985, obstetrics were consolidated from Seven Oaks General Hospital, Concordia Hospital to St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre. That was a decision that was made by previous administration in terms of focusing the program of obstetrics to the two teaching hospitals.

It was certainly a controversial one at the time and caused a lot of concerns. I can almost sit back and probably hear a lot of organizations say they were

not consulted, and as my honourable friend, the member for Kildonan is wont to observe today. I am not sure of the rationale behind that decision making back then, but I am satisfied in terms of the pediatric consolidation that a significant amount of study and investment of professional opinion was focused on this decision in recommendation to government, which we accepted, and the system has implemented.

Mr. Cheema: Madam Chairperson, can the minister tell us, has there been any expansion of the outpatient clinic at St. Boniface to make sure some of the work, which was done by the inpatient unit, will be maintained by some outpatient clinic? That was one of the proposals, I guess, that was given to the minister's office to make sure those patients will still have outpatient services, and they will also have the emergency services because that seems to have caused a lot of trouble at that time.

Mr. Orchard: Yes, Madam Chair, in terms of the transition of inpatient services over to Children's, there were the outpatient clinic services that are provided at St. Boniface and are still being provided. In fact, I think there has been some enhancement of their ability to deliver services at St. Boniface in the clinic to support the transition of inpatient services over at Children's Hospital.

The other area, my honourable friend mentioned emergency services, I think that is settling down now. There was a—I make no bones about it—significant amount of damage done when my honourable friend the member for Kildonan indicated that emergencies were going to be closed to children in the urban hospital setting. I think that has, by and large, settled down now that that has been established as incorrect information from the member for Kildonan. We are seeing the system settle into accommodating this restructuring in shift and consolidation over to Children's Hospital.

Madam Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to call it twelve o'clock?

An Honourable Member: Sounds good.

Madam Chairperson: The hour being 12 a.m. committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Deputy Speaker (Louise Dacquay): The hour being 12 a.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 7, 1993

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