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of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 26, 1996

The House met at 9 a.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(Concurrent Sections)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Order, please. 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. As I have said a few times, we are still on 1.(b) (1) on page 34. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Chairman, I am delighted to see the—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Before we get started, the minister had been answering a question, and I was wondering if the minister would like to finish it.

Hon. James Downey (Deputy Premier): Most certainly.

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to thank you for last time for being flexible on that time and that seemed to me very appropriate. I am delighted to welcome the fifth Minister of Education that we have seen in this department, particularly glad since I was at the end of last time talking about rural Manitoba and reading into the record my summaries—and certainly they were selected summaries—of the responses in rural Manitoba to the Boundaries Commission. I know that the cabinet is aware of these responses, but I was not convinced that rural Manitoba had heard their voices back, that they had not had, it seemed to me, a response to their concerns about the kind of maps and the kind of proposals that Mr. Norrie was drawing.

There were many meetings, many discussions, the whole sort of panoply of democracy in rural Manitoba—very, very active—which took the time to respond to the map that Mr. Norrie proposed, and it was

my sense that overwhelming arguments were being made against amalgamation on a forced basis. There were certainly—and I included these in my remarks, the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) should be aware of—there are certainly areas, and I specified them, where there were concerns or a desire to amalgamate. There were areas where they thought they might be involved in pilot projects and I believe the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism's own riding is one of those areas that suggested it might be involved in pilot projects, but the rural municipalities and the school trustees themselves, in the majority of areas, expressed themselves as opposed to the kind of forced amalgamation that is being suggested in the Norrie commission.

I would say on many of the issues the old Scottish verdict of not proven is really what people would argue. It is not proven to them that savings can be made and I was able under freedom of information to get two of the reports of the government that they commissioned for this and one of them based on rural Manitoba by Dr. Rounds is very clear that in fact there are not the cost savings there that the government had perhaps anticipated.

Secondly, I think it is not proven that there are educational advantages. I do not think Mr. Norrie made the case adequately for anybody in rural Manitoba, including those who are already ready to amalgamate, where the educational improvements are to be made. Where are the opportunities for improvement of professional development? Where are the improvements that are possible as a result of this supposed larger tax base?

I think every division said, you have not shown us how this is going to make a difference in the classroom, and I know that is the minister's concern. I assume it is the concern generally of the government, and it is also our concern. I think the government has a much bigger case to make for those changes and improvements in the classroom.

The minister spoke in her response of pilot projects that could be started. The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) has talked of best practices and how the government in fact should be the lighthouse for best

practices. Other submissions to the Boundaries Commission talked about choice. They talked about transport problems, wondered how, in fact, the actual changing of boundaries was going to make a difference.

One of the things that I noted of interest, and it is a theme that runs right through the submissions to the second Norrie commission, is the issue of amalgamating, or at least—justifying, I guess would be the word—justifying municipal boundaries with educational boundaries in rural Manitoba. That was one of the principles that Norrie said he was going to abide by, and he continued in that in his second or final report. Many, many school divisions said this is not the way to go, that is not the right principle, so I am drawing it to the minister's attention as a particular principle. There were many, many school divisions and rural municipalities that said, our community of interest, our community of transport, our social communities, our trading communities are not the municipal boundaries anymore, if indeed they ever were in parts of rural Manitoba. So I think for Norrie to continue, or the minister to accept that principle in Norrie, I think is one that would be going against the grain of the changes that rural Manitoba would want to see. So I draw that to her attention as an underlying issue.

I think the whole issue as well of forced change is one that people addressed in that second round. I do not know, the minister may be familiar with I think it was Prime Minister Laurier in the Laurier-Greenway compromise. He talked about his sunny ways and he had a little childhood story about the difference between the power of the sun and the power of the wind, and it is the sun which persuades the man to take off his overcoat, not the wind. I think that is what rural Manitoba is talking about: Find us the best practices; find the right principles; support those who are ready to amalgamate; create the kind of pilot projects that will demonstrate to us, that will show us where the improvements are to be made.

So I think my question really is for the minister—\$700,000 I think is approximately what was spent on this commission. The minister I think feels that it perhaps posed questions to people that they would not otherwise have faced, and that may be true. But is the minister proposing as a result of this \$700,000 another whole range of changes that are going to be forced upon

people, that are going to be the wind rather than the sun, and which are going to bring about change on the wrong principles and which will force, as they said in many submissions, rural Manitobans to choose between community and school.

Those, I think, are my concerns that arise from the presentations that I read.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Before we go to the Minister of Education, I would like to recognize the honourable Deputy Premier, who is kind enough to sit in for a few minutes.

* (0910)

Mr. Downey: Just a brief comment, and I know how disappointed the opposition members are that they cannot chew me up in this, but I will tell you the minister who is there now is very capable and will carry out the responsibilities.

I would make one comment, if the minister would permit at this time, as it relates to the boundary review. I acknowledge what the opposition member has said, but I do want to compliment our Minister of Education whom I believe has been very sensitive to the comments that have been coming back, particularly from rural Manitoba and the whole issue of boundary review, that there has not been an aggressive—saying this is absolute, and has moved without being sensitive to all the discussion and particularly some of that that has been put on the record. We are aware of the Rounds report. So I just wanted to put that on the record, that I believe our Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) truly is sensitive to the feedback that has been coming since the Norrie report has been put out.

I would also say, though, I think there is an acknowledgement out there that it is appropriate to assess where we currently are at, because the status quo sometimes, although we think it is working to the best interests of education and the movement of our students and the activities, there is a lot of activity going on, whether it is through distance education, whether it is shifting of populations, so I think it was an appropriate exercise to go through and I have all the confidence in the world that the Minister of Education is fully aware of all the concerns and will deal with it appropriately. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Chairman, I thank the Deputy Premier for his comments and, as well, I thank the Deputy Premier for sitting in for the first few moments in Estimates for me this morning. I very much appreciate his doing that for me and for the committee.

I, like the Deputy Premier, indicate that we have heard these indications of concern through representation to me as minister and to the local MLAs from rural Manitoba, and I appreciate the Deputy Premier's comments about the number of people I have been talking to and listening to across Manitoba on this issue and I wish at the same time to compliment local MLAs for the diligence with which they have put forward their constituents' views and opinions and ideas on this whole issue of boundary review and of indeed the many recommendations contained in the Norrie report because, as members know, the Norrie report was not just about boundaries. There were 43 recommendations in the Norrie report, and the vast majority of those have already been accepted by government and are being acted upon, one being schools of choice, very obviously being acted upon in the field.

So of all of the recommendations put forward by Norrie, I believe only some eight actually apply to where lines were drawn as boundaries around divisions. Those eight have been examined in depth. I believe it is one of the most thorough and in-depth examinations that I have been through in terms of the quality and quantity of feedback, and local MLAs have been key communicators in that feedback being made available to the minister. I have met, as I indicated the other day, with almost every board in Manitoba at this point and with innumerable parent groups and taxpayer groups, too many for me to count or retrace, but they have all been very forthright and thorough in their comments. They normally come accompanied by their local MLA. I think the research and the communications provided to this minister by local MLAs is very deeply appreciated, because they have helped me gain a very much in-depth, much broader understanding of this issue than would have been possible without their representation.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I am delighted to hear that the government is not going to be aggressive, that it is not going to be absolute, and I am quoting the Deputy Premier on this, in its pursuit of the changes that Norrie had suggested in rural Manitoba. So I want to ask the

minister about the manner and the nature of the changes that she wants to see or is considering, I should say at this point, is for the city of Winnipeg.

I read into the record the concerns of rural Manitoba. I had read them in the submissions to the second Norrie report. Similarly, the city of Winnipeg in its numerous divisions made many of the same kinds of arguments. Obviously there are not the same issues on municipal boundaries, although in the case of the north end of Winnipeg that is certainly an issue.

What I think comes through in the city of Winnipeg presentations is, again, the sense of community, and I think that has been conveyed to the minister by a number of my colleagues here, from the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) who spoke about the Fort Rouge School; the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), who each of them came to speak about different aspects of boundaries. The member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), I believe, has already talked to the minister at length about the St. James' responses to this particular commission and also about some of the concerns, the very serious concerns, that Winnipeg 1 has in the kind of proposed fragmentation of its programs and its history, and a very strong and proud history in education as an educational leader that Winnipeg 1 has had. I do not think any government would want to lose that.

I do not think any government would want to lose the kind of programs, such as the minister, I think, was very proud to show to the Prince of Wales yesterday, the Children of the Earth School, Niji Mahkwa, the tremendous impact that Winnipeg 1 has had on aboriginal education across the province because it is one of the two divisions which, in fact, does do an enormous amount in aboriginal education. That involves a great deal of work and an enormous amount of resources that have been put into early childhood education as well.

So I think what the minister has heard from Winnipeg divisions is a great sense of pride, a sense of community, a sense of history, and a concern that fragmentation and division are going to change that. I want to add to that some of the considerations of Mr. Nicholl, a former deputy minister who was commissioned by the Norrie commission to do a research report for the commission on the proposed changes in the city of Winnipeg.

One of the concerns that he has, and it is put in perhaps cryptic terms, shall we say—he puts his points in point-form whereas Richard Rounds wrote in sentences—one of his concerns about the changes in Winnipeg is the creation of an elite school division. Now that is his terminology, not mine, but I think when you look at the map, what I see as a historian is a map that is very much a recreation of the old lines of 1919, using the rivers as boundaries. In fact, Mr. Norrie enunciates a principle of trying to keep the rivers as boundaries, which is something he has always favoured in city politics, but he goes against that in his own report.

To create this elite division—this is what it looks like on paper—in order to create an elite division of St. James, Fort Garry, River Heights, Tuxedo, Charleswood, in fact, he ignores one of the main principles that he sets out at the beginning. I think that is one of the things that has led to a great deal of puzzlement and a lot of concern about the social implications for Winnipeg, not just for changes in school divisions.

So I want to draw that to the minister's attention as something that obviously people are very concerned about. At the very obvious level, what you see as a result of this, and Norrie is very clear about it, is an increase in taxes in Brooklands and in Transcona, the poorer areas of Winnipeg, in some cases, and you see, of course, a decrease in taxes in what is clearly one of the upper income areas of Winnipeg, River Heights, and you have that area taken out of Winnipeg 1 and placed into what now appears according to Mr. Nicholl to be an elite school division.

* (0920)

So my concerns are for the social divisions in Winnipeg and for the abandonment of a principle that Norrie had expressed in his report. What I want to ask the minister is how she intends to proceed on this. I know that she has met with a lot of people. I know she has heard a lot of these concerns. I do not think any of this is new.

Many people are concerned that the changes to boundaries can be done very quickly by regulation. What is the next stage? Is there a process for those people who have made the same kinds of concerns known to the minister as I have tried to put on the record today? Is

there going to be a process where they will know that their voices have been heard, their concerns have been addressed and that there will be a public process for the next stage?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, there were several points raised in that question. I will attempt to respond and I hope that I do not overlook any one. If I do, then I ask the member to refresh my memory.

I acknowledge that change of the magnitude of amalgamations with divisions the size of those within the city of Winnipeg is not something that can occur overnight. We have said all along that any changes that might occur because of amalgamation or because of changes to boundary lines would be changes that would be made with the time made available for school divisions to adjust. We have also indicated, as Norrie recommended, if amalgamation does proceed in either the form that Norrie presents or some other, that implementation committees and people whose duty would be to assist divisions with amalgamation would be put in place to help with some of the many intricacies that would be involved in an amalgamation process.

We realize it is not something that could be done overnight. It would be a multiyear process because of the magnitude of the changes. We do know, as the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) indicated in her comments, that the merging of policy manuals is not a task that could be lightly done, and we are aware of the comments that were made the other day about trustees having difficulty deciding which programs to retain and which to not retain in the backroom deals that get made between trustees, and I will support your item if you support my item, or vice versa. We see that, as has been indicated at city council, kind of backroom dealing, and we are aware of the types of problems that occurred when Unicity was created.

We are aware of those things. We have seen those as red flags that do need to be watched. In implementing any plan that might come forward, we look at the Norrie commission report on page 156 when he talks about the implementation committee. I would invite the member to look at that again to see that he recommends a small group of permanent staff throughout the implementation period that would be supplemented by appropriate departmental staff that would be a multidisciplinary

committee and that would work with school divisions involved in the amalgamation process.

They would, of course, have to be working with the four education associations. Norrie suggests that they be invited to be full participants in fact on the implementation committee, that is being MAST, MASS, MASBO and MTS. As well, they know that they will be needed to deal with any union or nonunion school division staff who may be involved in such a process. There will be decisions to be made surrounding those that we recognize will require a lot of energy and a lot of time, and therefore we would not be looking at this as an overnight process but one that would take a couple of years to complete and would require strong support systems from the Department of Education, both in terms of people and time. We would expect that a lot of departmental time would be devoted to ensuring that any implementation was not done, you know, by the snap of a regulation but that was carefully thought out.

I acknowledge something that the member indicated at the beginning of her comment that the issues for city divisions are just as real and just as heartfelt as those in rural or northern areas of the province. I also indicate that the possibilities for co-operation and collaboration and the forming of partnerships are just as real in the city, maybe in some cases more easily achieved because of proximity and the concentration of population. So that double-sided coin that exists in rural Manitoba I acknowledge exists as well within the city of Winnipeg.

As was discussed the other day, you can flip the coin back and forth in terms of comments that have been made about rural Manitoba where you have the two opinions being brought forward, depending upon who it is to whom you are talking. You will have one person say, well, do amalgamate in rural Manitoba because they have small numbers of students in their divisions, relatively speaking, compared to the city of Winnipeg and they could benefit from larger consolidated schools.

The other side of the coin or the flip side of the coin is that, well, yes, they have a smaller number of students but they have greater geographical distance. The converse, of course, we know to be true in the city, that people will say, amalgamate in the city because you have too many divisions in a small geographical area. The other side of that coin is, yes, the geography may be proximate but the

numbers of people in each division are quite large and they have differing program thrusts.

* (0930)

So the case for and against, I know the debate that is going on back and forth with the case for and against. I appreciate the member's perspective and the comments that she has made. If I have neglected to answer any part of the question she put forward, perhaps she could refresh my memory and I will attempt to come back.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I think the minister has covered most of it. I did ask I think about pilot projects and about the possibility of expanding some of the suggestions for co-operation across boundaries for service agreements. For example, I know that is the way that Saskatchewan is going. I think probably they started at the first step, which is those kinds of service agreements, and they are having some success in voluntarily bringing people together on a co-operative basis.

So I think my criticism of this whole issue has been, first of all, one of process. That \$700,000 was spent on an extensive review which certainly led to a lot of very, very concerned citizens feeling that they were going to be pushed into something that was not proven to them, for which they had no evidence that there were savings. In fact, they had evidence to the contrary.

So the minister's acknowledgement of this, that she is going to proceed slowly, that nobody is going to be dealt with, I think it was the Deputy Premier's (Mr. Downey) word, "aggressively" on this, I think is very welcome and that sense of that there will be a longer public process is also welcome.

But again, I want to underline for the minister that I do not believe there is consent either in rural Manitoba or urban Manitoba to the kind of final proposals that we saw from Mr. Norrie, and I think the government has a considerable distance to go in many areas of Manitoba to gain that consent. Method is one of them; pilot projects is another; the enhancement of voluntary movement, I think, is another one.

I also wanted to put on the record one of the city of Winnipeg concerns which I think is in a sense a very

typical one, but it is the kind of neighbourhood which has very strong neighbourhood ties and which has been able to come together and to make very clear statements on it, and I know that they have made them to the minister. That is the district of Elmwood. Elmwood has long been part of Winnipeg, a very important part of Winnipeg's educational community, and the Norrie commission, at the same time as it removed River Heights from Winnipeg No. 1, at the other side of the river, it also removed Elmwood.

Elmwood is very concerned—the parents of Elmwood, the parent advisory committee. I know the minister is very committed to listening to parents, and it is the Parent Advisory Council of the Elmwood schools which has led, I think, the protest in the city of Winnipeg in organizing rallies and speaking to the minister and trying to get that point of view across that the kinds of changes that are available to people in terms of school choice—Elmwood is in an area where there is transportation certainly for high school students and others. There seems to be no educational benefit to the kinds of changes that Elmwood is faced with. At the same time, what Elmwood is saying on the record over and over again is that there is considerable community loss; that they will lose something that is very, very important to them. They see no benefit.

So it is again in the public process that needs to happen. The minister will have a long way to go in a number of communities across Manitoba to establish the evidence that there are savings to be made in the long run, that there are educational benefits to children in the classroom and that there will be no weakening of communities, whether in the city or in rural areas of Manitoba.

The minister may want to respond to that, but I also wanted to move on to some final questions on Enhancing Accountability and that is to look again at process, and to ask the minister what is the next step in that? The minister has said that there will be, and I am not quoting exactly, but if all things come together, if things can be put together in time, there will be legislation in this session.

I am asking the minister at this time, how extensive that range of legislation will be? We do have a very short time period. It is one of the criticisms that people have

made over and over again, from superintendents, to trustees, to teachers, that the process for Enhancing Accountability was very brief and it was dealing with some very, very fundamental issues, from teacher education, teacher remuneration, to the role of trustees. The minister has emphasized this in her comments, a system which has been in place for 40 years, and yet, in a whole range of areas was purporting to be changed in less than six months, and to be changed in an atmosphere where there was not perhaps the best kind of communication going on, where all the partners were not at the same table, as they had been over the past—certainly 40 years ago they were when these changes were introduced.

So, again, my concern is process. How fast is the minister going to move? What will be the range of that legislation? Does it intend to cover all the questions which were raised in that paper, or is the minister proposing to focus on a narrower range of topics for the legislation?

Mrs. McIntosh: There are two components to the question put forward. The first component being the questions on boundaries, and the second component being the concern about the arbitration Enhancing Accountability document.

I would just like to indicate that the member refers to the Saskatchewan model, or to pilots in terms of boundary changes. Certainly I think it is well known that this option has been put before government on many occasions in the past few months. Certainly, we have, as the member knows, some areas of the province that have indicated they are ready to go, so to speak, and would have offered to serve as a pilot. I think that is known. I indicated to the opposition members and observers at the last sitting that all the ideas that have been put before us are ideas that we are examining. It is one of the things that has taken so much of our time because I think there is no other issue that has had such a degree of response and valuable feedback from people who live in this province. So we are looking at those.

I indicate, just to make sure that I have not inadvertently misled, that when I say that the implementation of any amalgamation that might occur would take a very long time, that it would probably take a couple of years, that we need to give divisions a lot of

lead time for that. In talking about that, I was talking about an implementation period. An implementation period, of course, normally comes after a decision to do something has been made. So when you see implementation committees being set up, unless they are being set up to deal at somebody's request, to deal with how would it look if we did this, which we are also quite willing to consider, if we had a division, for example, saying—the member will forgive me, I have a slight head cold. So if I am coughing and sneezing and sniffing. I apologize.

The request has been made by some to say, you know, we are looking at it, we are not certain. We would not mind having somebody come and work with us to see what we would look like if we got together. That kind of request has come forward on a couple of occasions. So, if we went with that kind of request then, of course, it might be that an implementation committee would go and work with the group even though no decision to amalgamate had been made as an exploration, like oil exploration, and so the full-fledged introduction of an implementation committee as suggested by Norrie or some modification of that type of committee would be developed once knowledge of whether or not amalgamation would occur or exist. So you would start with a statement of intent as to where amalgamation might occur and then have the implementation committee work with the divisions to assist.

* (0940)

So I just wanted that type of process to be understood. I feel the consultation process has been, as the member indicated, fairly lengthy. A lot of people have been talked to. I think we have a fairly good sense of what the people are feeling, and we are exploring all options. We come back again to our central concerns of taxation, equity and quality, communities of interest and the need to address certain items that are for the benefit of students.

The member indicated the cost of the Norrie commission and indicated something to the effect that it was a lot of money and it has got a lot of people upset. I am paraphrasing because I do not recall the exact wording. I have indicated before this, and I would like to emphasize again that the recommendations as to where

boundaries are are only eight of the recommendations in the Norrie commission report out of 43.

Many of the others were recommendations that had great worth and did not upset people. I again use the example that is the obvious one, which I used earlier, which was schools of choice. Norrie talked about that and people liked that. The government has already indicated it is going to do that so there is one recommendation, piece of advice, that can be examined as something that did not upset and that has met acceptance. There are others, of course, in the Norrie report.

The other value that comes from the Norrie report is that it has divisions and division personnel and the people who live in the divisions talking in ways that I have never heard them talk before. It has been absolutely amazing to witness the creative thinking and the degree to which divisions have begun to co-operate, not reluctantly, but eagerly with each other. While we have always had some divisions that have worked together and done joint purchasing, or put joint initiatives together, such as South Winnipeg Technical Centre which is another obvious example that I have mentioned before, we now see and hear them talking about a wide measure of partnership arrangements. I believe absolutely that a number of those conversations and explorations and discussions of partnership have come about as a direct result of the stimulus that the Norrie commission report provided. I find it a very enlightening and pleasing offset or effect to the type of criticism that the member indicates is out there for Norrie.

Yes, anybody who has been listening to the issue knows there is a lot of criticism, but at the same time there is this increased and renewed co-operation in partnership that I think is very important. We do know that decisions made by boards, whether they be the current boards or new amalgamated boards, will still rest with trustees. I agree that it is difficult to predict what trustees might decide to do.

One can make assumptions and one can pass laws and one can encourage or inspire or mandate, but the way in which any new amalgamated divisions would ultimately govern themselves in terms of programs they choose or what items they would delete or add is as yet unknown. I think this can be said true. We talked about the loss of schools and small schools possibly being closed because

of amalgamation and that too could happen. It does happen today that where the boundary line is drawn has not changed, for example, in my home division, the need for that local division to close schools if they are not viable. So I think that school boards will ultimately wish to please the people who are in their constituencies by making good decisions and not want to see towns closed because a school is small, and we have, as I said, many things in the funding formula to support the continued existence of small schools.

If I may, Mr. Chairman, yesterday there was a little bit of extra time allowed the member. If I could take that now to respond to the second part of her question, and I will do it briefly. The member had asked about the Enhancing Accountability document and is interested in knowing, as I appreciate she would be, where do we go from here and what is going to happen now that the hearings are finished.

We have indicated that if we are able to bring forward some legislation this June to correct some of the problems in the field around this issue, we would attempt to give as much lead time as possible so that people would have ability to influence and shape the final shape of proposed legislation, and we had indicated this before the panel hearings. We cannot indicate that the legislation will be this way or that way if and when it comes forward because we are still working with not just the trustees but also the teachers, and we are soon to receive the summative report and attach suggestions, if any, from the small group that went and solicited feedback for me in the province. I received papers and listened to the explanations and rationale for those papers from Manitobans.

Legislation in this particular area, depending upon its final intent, need not necessarily be complicated legislation. It is what the legislation sets out to achieve that can have an effect that could be small, moderate or extensive depending upon its intent. So it need not be complicated legislation, but in some way would need to address the concerns that one of the parties to the bargaining process feels. I think the continued dialogue that is being carried on with teachers and trustees is a very good dialogue that occurs and hopefully, if the best of all worlds could be achieved, one could find those two bodies coming to some agreement with each other, and

the best of all worlds is not always achieved in this very real place in which we live.

* (0950)

I guess what I am indicating to the member is that it is difficult for me at this point to indicate the exact nature of potential legislation or even to confirm that legislation would be coming forward, although it is our desire to correct this imbalance as quickly as possible. Introducing legislation this spring for hearings and passage in the fall would be my personal preference as minister. I think the expressed urgency proclaimed by the trustees would also assist in the field, because implementing legislative change on arbitration would take a full year after the passage of such change so, when we have trustees feeling an urgency, I think that moving quickly but wisely is better than delaying and repeating over and over concerns that are unchanging. I think we need to see, it is not enough just to hear the same things repeated over and over. We need to see some solutions coming out of discussions and presentations and thinking presented to government.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Okay, I think that we did a little bit of, like yesterday—I would hope that the committee would allow me to do that once in a while if I see that somebody is trying to, as yesterday, read a summation that they had into the record, I will try to do that, if that is okay, and I will show that leniency as much as I can but not to encourage you to go over the 10 minutes. So I will try to make that ruling at the time.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, yes, I think that is appropriate and obviously you are being very even-handed about this and that is what we appreciate.

I wanted to ask one last question. That is almost a cliché around here.

An Honourable Member: Just as long as you do not say, I will resign.

An Honourable Member: Is your name Sheila?

Ms. Friesen: No, it is not even my middle name.

I wanted to ask the minister about something that she has raised and which obviously people are beginning to

turn their attention to as a result of the Norrie commission, and that is the issue of schools of choice. We have talked about this last time, and I noticed by the way in looking over the Estimates for last time, we were suffering through 35 degrees, was it, in Estimates last time, and the minister says that she has a head cold. I am surprised we are not all sort of laid up as I look out at the snow and the floods. Anyway, it is quite a difference from last year.

I want to talk about schools of choice. Obviously in the city of Winnipeg and I believe parts of Brandon as well, there has been school choice for a considerable length of time. The Norrie commission had some interesting tables that he prepared on school choice and on the number of students who used it and how the money flowed back and forth. I would think, in the vast majority of cases, it has been well organized, well run. There are not the kinds of concerns that perhaps there were 10 years ago in the administrative aspect of that. There are not overall in the province, and he does actually take his numbers right through the province. There are overall relatively few numbers of students who are moving back and forth across boundaries for whatever reason.

Studies, I think, from other jurisdictions show that that is not likely to change at the elementary school level. High school level might be something different, and that is where I want to address my concerns to the minister—I have raised this in the House with her—and concerns, I think, as they are being expressed, particularly in rural Manitoba and in those urban suburban school divisions where there is a changing population. In some areas it is growing, in some areas it is declining, and those are the areas and parts of rural Manitoba, particularly the Interlake and southwestern Manitoba where people are very concerned about the loss of small schools.

The prospect for having a school—and this would be I would think schools from K to 12 as well as high schools—the prospect of having one or two families withdraw from a school one year going through all the right motions, putting things in at the right time but taking two or three children, maybe two or three families do this, they move to another division, and it is enough to close down the school. It is enough to make their existing home school not viable. If they are not happy, if they are not satisfied, if transport routes change, if they

find that the transport issues are too much, if there is a change in family circumstances and those families then might need to go back to their home school, but it will no longer exist, that is my concern for all the opportunities that choice may involve.

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

I think we have to be very careful about the guidelines, the democratic participation that there will be and should be in those kinds of decisions, in the length of time that schools are allowed to be given that kind of flexibility before there are decisions which have to be made, and what kind of financial support is the minister considering for schools who may find themselves in those kinds of precarious situations as a result of a provincial decision to encourage and to enhance choice in this way.

The Acting Chairperson (Mrs. Render): Up here one minute and I am sneezing.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairman, it is dangerous sitting next to me, you know. You will all start to sneeze.

I have to indicate the chuckle I got out of the member's comment when she said, I just have one last question and maybe she will get a similar chuckle if I say that I shall try to be brief because we do have these sorts of statements that always raise eyebrows.

I know yesterday—this is for the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), we might as well get all parties in on this one—I was talking to one of the federal MPs and we were discussing the very weather conditions the member for Wolseley just referred to and he said, well, this is happening in Manitoba, we will have to do something. We will complain to the provincial government, and I pointed out that Environment Canada was responsible for doing things about weather. It was a federal issue, so we can start passing things back and forth. We both immediately looked around for the city councillor, who was not there, and figured that is who should receive the phone calls on it.

* (1000)

At any rate, I thank the member for her question. It is a good question. Whenever you put together an idea that

has really strong advantages for people, there are always peripheral issues that need to be addressed. I think it is important that we enable the choice that Norrie has recommended, that the government accepts, and it is something the government has long talked about with or without Norrie in terms of what could we do to provide more choice for people. So I hear what the member is saying as a caution, that as we proceed we be conscious of the peripheral issues that could have some negative side effects, good medicine with some potential side effects.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

We have said we want to enable choice but not unfettered in the sense that it is a loose cannon kind of choice. We have put three conditions. One is that a parent can choose any school of his or her choice. It does not have to be within their own school division, any public school, and presumably it would be a division close by, because logic would dictate that they would not want to live in Churchill and attend a school in Winnipeg because of families wanting to be together and so on. But if they choose a school, the school that they choose must have room to accommodate the student who is being sent, and that is a statement of principle.

One could then discuss the details of, well, what does that mean? What does having room mean? Does it mean if they put on a portable classroom and could accommodate them because there is space in the schoolyard, is that room? So there are a variety of questions around that, but the principle is that the school should not have to alter its configuration or dramatically alter its way of delivering because of extra students in the school to accommodate students who are making a schools of choice decision. So there must be space in the receiving school.

The second condition or principle is that there should not be any new program or policy changes required by the receiving school to accommodate the student. In other words, you choose a school because of the way it is, not because of the way you would like to see it changed to be. It is kind of like getting married. It is the old dictum, I will marry him or I will marry her and change him or her to suit me after we get there. [interjection] The deputy has made some comments and we will not put them on the record.

What I am trying to say is that you choose something because you like it the way it is and, therefore, you should accept it the way it is and not get there and say, now that I am here I am going to change it to be something that was not the thing I had chose. So they should not have to put in new programs or change school division policies to accommodate the student who has chosen. They need to apply by a certain date so that proper notice is given so that schools in both the receiving and sending divisions have a good count on their student population and can plan their staffing and timetabling appropriately.

The other thing that we have indicated is that if there are to be incurred expenses in transportation that would be beyond the norm for a school division to provide that the parents would be asked to accommodate that themselves. I think those kinds of restrictions, particularly the latter, where parents would have to pause and consider, is the program and milieu offered by the school I wish to send my child to worth my going to any degree of trouble to get there, is one that would force a clear commitment and not a frivolous, oh, what the heck, let us just go there because Johnny is going there kind of decision making. So I think those kinds of things will still provide the choice but not unfettered choice, and be thoughtful, rational planning around that choice.

There may be others, as well, and as we go through this issue, I appreciate the member's comments because they have validity and merit. As we go through this process, if the member spots anything else in this that we should be conscious of, we would appreciate knowing because we want it to work, and as with anything new, close examination sometimes can reveal things that you thought you had noticed but had not. So I just leave that answer, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): First of all, to follow up on the discussion that was just occurring, I was not going to ask questions in regard to it but it just raises a question in my mind. In every change, there are always benefits and there are also some detriments. There is the possibility of some inequities with this schools of choice.

I will give you an example. In the Seven Oaks School Division, there is no international baccalaureate program. In River East School Division, Miles Mac Collegiate, there is one. So under this schools-of-choice situation, if I wanted my daughter to go to Miles Mac and there was

space there and they would not have to change their policies and there was room, she could go. I would then have to pay for the transportation, whether I sent her by cab or whether she took the bus or she bought a car or whatever.

In the Maples, we have some public housing. A student from that public housing who could not maybe afford that cab, could not afford the extra transportation, there is the possibility of an inequity. I will grant you that, if it is that important, that student could possibly take a bus, get up at five o'clock in the morning or whatever, if that was necessary. But in some families, even a bus pass for a month for a child would be a hardship. So has the department looked at the possibility of that inequity in schools of choice?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, we believe, first of all, that a simplified system of residual fees will be the ultimate equalizer in terms of providing opportunity that is not there right now. I appreciate what the member is saying, and the full, total, equal access that would occur if the taxi fare or the busing or whatever costs were covered is one scenario that, if offered, would lead more quickly to the scenario described by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen). So you weigh one against the other

* (1010)

The opportunity for schools of choice without having to pay a residence fee enables far more students to access a particular program. It may not be available for every student if the member is describing a situation where pennies are really tight and transportation costs are genuinely a problem, and while I think that would not happen too often, I acknowledge that the possibility exists. But as with so many decisions made, you try to maximize the opportunity for as many as you can, and certainly schools of choice opens up opportunities for vast numbers of people who hitherto had no such opportunities made available to them. You cast the net as wide as you can and recognize that it may not capture everybody, but it certainly addresses majority need.

It does not necessarily negate student need either because, depending upon the school division busing policies or transportation policies, there sometimes are and there certainly is the ability for arrangements to be

made for impoverished students in a wide variety of venues. They have not always been done in the past because in the past the distances to be travelled may not have been as far as they might be under this particular model.

I can recall as a trustee, and the member may or may not have had similar experiences where, with French Immersion, for example, we would have occasional requests made to the board because of a family's particular financial stress, either temporary or permanent, and the need to access transportation to a school within the division that was beyond walking distance. Trustees can make decisions to assist or to have a policy that would allow assistance for those individuals that occasionally find themselves in dire straits like that.

I still believe that we do have to have some parameters and criteria around choice for it to be structured and workable. I hope that is a satisfactory answer for the member.

Mr. Kowalski: When this policy is implemented, the schools of choice, possibly the Minister of Education could communicate with the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) to give direction that there is funding for those on social assistance for special needs, that this may be coming forward a number of applications or a number of requests for special needs funding for students to have bus passes so that they would be enabled to take advantage of schools of choice and possibly that could be part of the implementation of that policy.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, that is a suggestion that is a good one to consider. I will pass that on to the Minister of Family Services. It may be something that, again, when we look at the relationship that is being built between the two departments, the Child and Youth Secretariat might be interested in those kinds of suggestions that overlap jurisdictions.

I just wanted to add, Mr. Chairman, while I am in control of the microphone, just a follow-up comment to what the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) had asked earlier. I have been thinking as we were talking here, the member for The Maples has sparked some thoughts in my mind about this whole issue of schools of choice. The member for Wolseley had indicated concern, would this lead to school closure? I had indicated the parameters.

The member for The Maples then said, those parameters may be too tight in terms of full and complete access. The way the argument goes back and forth is very instructive because the downsides and upsides get examined this way.

I did want to indicate that we are attempting as diligently as we possibly can to preserve that balance between ensuring choice and at the same time ensuring the sustainability of small schools in communities. It is a tricky balance, and we are working hard to make sure that we can keep that balance good. We still give financial preference in our funding formula to small schools and that will continue and we also recognize that in the end it is only boards and school boards that can, in a case-by-case basis, close schools. They have to abide by school closure guidelines. We are placing faith in the accountability of school trustees to be cautious and careful, particularly in small communities, to make decisions as to school closures or the examination of school closures with care, knowing that they wish to see their constituents advantaged as opposed to disadvantaged.

So I just wanted to indicate that we are aware of the balance between the two points raised very clearly by both opposition parties, both valid points, each displaying one side of the coin that is opposite from the other and both of those perspectives are ones that we are highly conscious of and very sensitive to and are working hard to achieve the balance. So I thank them both for those questions.

Mr. Kowalski: Just moving to another area. Dr. Rounds' report, we had talked to Dr. Rounds and asked him for a copy of his report and he indicated that it was not appropriate for him to release it at the time. I understand now that the NDP Education critic has received a copy of the report as a response to a Freedom of Information request. I am wondering if it is possible to request a copy of it from the minister without going through Freedom of Information.

Mrs. McIntosh: I think what we could do, if it is of assistance, would be to table that here in Estimates this afternoon. Just checking with staff, I believe that we could have a copy up here for after the lunch break, and then that could be made available.

Mr. Kowalski: Okay. Just a couple of further questions in regard to the Enhancing Accountability: Ensuring Quality document. Many of the questions that I had have already been asked. I have not been in the committee room at all times, so if any questions I am about to ask have already been asked, I do not want to waste valuable time in these Estimates. Let me know, and I will read the parts of Hansard that I missed.

* (1020)

The Manitoba Teachers' Society put out a document entitled How to Make a Herring Red that had some criticisms of the document. I would like to put some of those points forward to get the minister's response to them. First of all, in regard to the table on page 7 of the document, in regard to Canadian teachers' salaries, one of the criticisms from the Manitoba Teachers' Society was that the Manitoba salary figures for '93-94 and '94-95 do not show the impact on teachers' salaries of the Bill 22 days on that table. Can you respond to that criticism of that table in the document, if it has not already been done in Estimates?

Mrs. McIntosh: It is a new question, so I will be pleased to try to provide an answer. The salaries that you indicate there are the base salaries. They do not include either Bill 22 days from Manitoba, which some divisions but not all took, and they do not include the rollbacks that occurred in other provinces. They are the base salaries agreed upon and not any subsequent divisions made in whole or in part to teaching groups in various provinces across the country.

Bill 22 days were not taken by half of the divisions in Manitoba so it is something that was not picked up by school trustees as a cost-saving measure by half of the province. It could not be applied equally in the first instance since so many people did not receive Bill 22 days. Secondly, the rollback of teachers' wages that occurred in other provinces were not applied to their base rates. What was kept was the base rate, the base rate being the foundation that stays in place because even with those divisions that took Bill 22 days, their base rate did not change. They did not have a rollback per se that would change their foundation base. They were still earning \$50,000 a year, if you like to put it that way, but they just were not working some of the days.

It was not like them coming back the following year with their base rate only being 48. They come back the following year, their salary base has not changed. In fact, that was the complaint that some trustees put forward when they said, we are not going to bother taking Bill 22 days because it does not get at the heart of the problem for us as a school board. It does not get at the base rate. It just enables us not to pay them for some days we give them off but next year we will have to pay them for that plus any raise, and we are not any further ahead. It is just a temporary one-year relief. So school boards said, we do not need a temporary one-year relief, we need a long-term solution to the problem, and we are not taking Bill 22 days.

I do not know if that provides the answer the member is seeking but that is the reason they used base rates and not any subsequent adjustments by Manitoba or any other province.

Mr. Kowalski: I think it just shows that possibly we are comparing apples and oranges. I do not think we need to get into that debate any further because as the minister has indicated, in other provinces there were rollbacks. We do not know if they were less or more than Manitoba. It is an average. It is not the reality of what maybe the majority of teachers received in Manitoba or the minority of teachers. So I guess we go back to Mark Twain's quote about statistics: There are lies, damn lies and then there are statistics, and they are always open to interpretation, comparison and that. So I think we can move on from there.

The next criticism found in that document that I referred to, How to Make a Herring Red, is the table on page 9 that indicates the number of students versus the number of teachers. What the Manitoba teachers know—[interjection] Someone at the table says that a number of educators know—this table is entitled: The number of students versus the number of teachers. The Manitoba Teachers' Society have on their document used data from the FRAME final budget reports and from professional school personnel database analyzed by the MTS research office. Their indication is that combined full-time equivalency of certified personnel since 1996 has decreased by 4.2 percent and actual number of persons has decreased by 2.8 percent.

Can the minister respond to the differences between the government's document and what is in this paper put out by the Manitoba Teachers' Society?

Mrs. McIntosh: I harken back to what the member said about the Mark Twain quote, which I cannot quite recall, but it was a humorous quote that applies to the red-herring document very well. Let us keep flipping this thing back and forth, because the red-herring document could be referred to as, how to build a mountain on a plateau or on a prairie. I am not talking about making mountains out of mole hills, I am talking about building mountains on flat land that has no mole hill even to begin with. Because a lot of the things that are in that document, the red-herring document, are deep crimson in colour and could be the granddaddy of all red herrings.

However, what the teachers have done for their own purposes, and I am not questioning what their purposes are, but they have chosen the year 1990, when teachers numbers were at their peak in Manitoba. I cannot imagine why they would have done that for their start as they are starting their countdown.

I can tell you what we have done. We have started with the year 1988-89, which is the year that we came into office and, as the member knows and is probably sick to death of hearing this side of the House say whenever we stand up, when we came to office in 1988, things were this way, since 1988, when we came in office, things are now another way. So 1988-89 is a benchmark year for this government, and it is frequently, maybe not in every instance, but frequently used as the starting date for comparisons between things that happened before and things that happened since.

So we started with the year we came to government, and we show a 2.5 percent increase in the number of teachers, and that is correct. Those are full-time or full-time equivalent teaching positions, signed to a Form 2 contract in the schools in Manitoba. That is up 2.5 percent, and that is correct. The teachers started from the peak; they started from 1990 when teachers were at their peak numbers and the teachers have only counted classroom teachers. They have not talked about the other Form 2 teachers that might be in schools such as resource teachers or teacher/librarians who teach full-time but do not register a class. They have not counted vice-principals, all of those people who are educators and signed to a Form 2 contract who have a teacher's salary cost applied to them by the school division. I am not talking about secretaries or custodians or staff units, I am

talking about teachers and only teachers sign Form 2 contracts with school divisions.

* (1030)

The teachers in their red-herring document threw out their own red herring and counted only classroom teachers, as if resource teachers and clinicians have no value in a school in terms of the education of the students and as if clinicians and resource teachers have no impact in the classroom. While they may not register a class, they have absolute impact on a classroom. Just ask any school that does not have a resource teacher or that for some reason cannot get a clinician on the day they want them what it is like for a classroom teacher not to have those other teachers in the school, even if they do not register a class.

Yes, statistics lie—whatever it was that Mark Twain said. The sword cuts both ways. The red herrings in the red-herring document turn the ocean a bright, bright hue of red.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I wonder at this point if it is the will of the committee to take a 10-minute recess.

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Ten minutes.

The committee recessed at 10:33 a.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 10:45 a.m.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Kowalski: Just to get some clarification. I am looking at the MTS document and on their table for 19—

An Honourable Member: Gary, can you pull your mike closer.

Mr. Kowalski: Yes, I am sorry. I keep doing that. I apologize to Hansard and the committee for doing that.

In the MTS document, they show that in the 1990-91 school year, they show 11,889 full-time equivalency of instructional teaching personnel assigned. They show another 160 full-time equivalency of clinical personnel assigned. They show 655 full-time equivalency of principals and vice-principals assigned for a combined full-time equivalency of these certified personnel of 12,705.

The government's document shows the number of teachers as 12,703, a difference of two. Now, if the minister is saying their methodology was wrong, how do they account that their 1991 figure is within two people?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I do not believe I indicated the MTS figures were wrong, but I am saying that the figures do not compare apples to apples. It is like the old half-full, half-empty argument. Their figures are not wrong, but they are based upon a different year and different types of teachers. So when we say we are starting with the year that we took office and we are including for our calculations all those people employed in a school who are assigned to a Form 2 contract, which is the contract given to teachers, we are counting in terms of cost then, the true cost to the school division to employ teachers. Some of those teachers may not actually register a class but are in the schools to provide support to the classroom teacher and specialized services to the students in the school. They are, nonetheless, real teachers truly employed, truly paid, truly in the schools providing services to students and teachers and, therefore, their existence cannot be denied.

To not count them is to dismiss them as being irrelevant and of no consequence unless, of course, you are wanting to do a study on classrooms only, like the structure of an individual classroom only, without counting the whole service provided to the student body. So if you were using only instructional staff and you left out the clinicians, et cetera, then you will arrive at one figure which will be correct if identified, as the MTS document does, as only being the teachers who register a class. If you include all the actual teachers in the building who work with and for teachers and students, then you will get another also correct figure. One reflects only the classroom photograph; the other reflects the school photograph. One reflects only partial true cost to the division for those employed by a Form 2 contract; the

other reveals actual true cost to the school division for those employed on Form 2 contracts.

So the figures in either case are not incorrect, but they are not comparing apples to apples and they are not talking about the true cost of hiring educators for schools in the teachers' document. They are in the accountability document, and that I think is part of the trustees' concerns. The member has been a trustee and probably understands the fact that the cost of Form 2 contracts is not a cost that can be toned down because some of those holding Form 2 contracts do not register a class.

* (1050)

So, I guess with a lot of these things where you have equally valid statistics being used to prove a point, that we could argue back and forth over the stats used by the teacher, which exclude numbers of Form 2 contracts, and the stats used by the accountability document, which includes all Form 2 documents, are differing statistics.

But I am wondering, if when we do that, we are entering into the red-herring area that the teachers are working hard to create, and I am wondering if then, that draws the focus deliberately or unconsciously away from the issue at hand. I might be interested to know if the member acknowledges or agrees with the difficulties stated by MAST.

I have not heard from either opposition party as to whether or not they acknowledge that trustees may have a difficulty with trying to contain escalating costs. We know, for example, that this year we are beginning to finally see some zero settlements. Many of those zero settlements this year will be offset by the fact that a lot of teachers will still be getting an annual increment anyhow and are offset in some cases by the fact that it is a multi-year agreement, which sees a raise coming in the subsequent year.

If the member could indicate to me in his next commentary whether or not he acknowledges that whatever statistics are used, the cost to division for teachers' salaries rises, and that trustees' complaint that sometimes their ability to control that cost of escalation is taken away from them, is a valid concern or not.

Are we looking to address something here that really is no problem?

Mr. Kowalski: At the beginning of the last answer, the minister indicated that maybe I was not recognizing the fact of the years being taken into account. I do acknowledge in the government's document—they started in '88-89, and in the MTS document, they started '90-91—there is no question that there is a difference. But when I look at the year 1990, where they start, the number of teachers in the government document is 12,703 and the number of teachers in the MTS document is 12,705, so there is only a difference of two teachers.

Now, what I understand from what the minister is responding to that, when you go to 1995 where the government document shows 12,643, and the MTS document shows 12,354, the extra 289, she is indicating to me, are not classroom teachers. So that means between 1990-91 and 1996, there have been 289 nonclassroom teachers added into the education system. This is what she is telling me that the MTS document does not account for. Is that what the minister is saying?

Mrs. McIntosh: That can be the only conclusion that can be drawn from the difference in the figures. The figures that we have drawn from come from the actual contracts signed by MAST, like signed and verified through the Manitoba Association of School Trustees. They are the employers. They know which contracts they have signed. They also are figures that are available from our school finance branch. I have been assured that both of those sources are reliable. They are the funding and governing bodies of teachers in Manitoba. So the difference has to be then that there are more clinicians, resource teachers, those kinds of people in the schools which would reflect in some cases the entrance into the school of special needs students of differing types and would also perhaps reflect the number of people required to offset increased prep time in schools and so on.

Our inclusion of tables on pupil-educator ratio, teachers' salaries, number of employees were put in the accountability document to provide information to describe the major component of school board costs. If we used Manitoba Teachers' Society figures, the essential matter is still the same; board costs for employment costs attributed to teachers is still around 65 percent. I am rounding off to give just a vision. That employment cost is real, verifiable and there. So, however you wish to describe it, and our figures are sourced from reliable sources, are confirmed to be accurate, do use different

years and differing groups, then the Manitoba Teachers' Society's very selective statistics do. Ours are encompassing statistics.

But the matter still is the same. Boards are indicating they need some better control over their costs for future decision making. I am wondering if the member feels that is a legitimate concern that government needs to examine or if government should not be examining that particular issue.

Mr. Kowalski: On the next page, page 6 of the red-herring document, there is a comparison made of Manitoba teachers' salaries percentage change in comparison to Manitoba average weekly earnings. The point that MTS brings forward is that it is comparing apples and oranges in the fact that it, for the teachers' salaries included in that percentage, is increments for experience. They are indicating that the government's figures for Manitoba average weekly earnings do not include that. It is on base salaries.

Mrs. McIntosh: What page?

Mr. Kowalski: Page 6 of the MTS red-herring document. What you compare is page 9 of the Manitoba government paper. And can the minister indicate the differences in how this is presented?

Mrs. McIntosh: I am somewhat hampered. I do not have the red-herring document in front of me. Maybe if we could kind of trade documents for a moment. I have got the Rounds report here now which we had indicated to the member we would try to table. If I could just pause for a moment, I have three copies, so there is one for each group here at the table, and I will provide that if it is possible just to get a quick look at the page the member is referring to. The three documents. Mr. Chairman. Need one more? Here.

* (1100)

I thank the member for sharing the document with us for that particular page. Indeed, it is true that in the average teachers' salaries that the annual automatic raise is included. The annual increment is included because that is real money that is given to teachers automatically on an annual basis because they have been in the classroom another year. It is a very true cost.

The other costs that are shown with the average Manitoba weekly earnings is also the true amount of money that people take home, and you cannot compare—if you are going to make a comparison, you have to say, if this year you took home \$110 and last year you took home \$109, then you have actually taken home more money in your pay cheque than you did before. Your neighbour, who may be in a different occupation or a different field of endeavour, last year maybe took hyear, but the difference between last year and this year for him may not be as great as for teachers. Obviously, looking at these figures, it would appear to bear out that the average Manitoba weekly earnings have not had as high a percentage change as the average Manitoba teacher's salary percentage change.

To say that the annual increment does not count because it is given automatically for experience is to deny that there is any extra money given. School boards writing the cheque know the money they are writing on the cheque is real money that has to come from someplace.

The inherent assumption in the member's question is that all those who do not teach receive raises every year automatically on an incremental basis. That is simply not true. There may be some sectors of society that do, but I can assure you many people. and I think the member may know many people as well, are employed with various occupations or industries where there is no such thing as an annual increment, that wages reflect the profitability of the firms for whom they work, or wages reflect the employer's ability to pay, or wages reflect the quality of service given.

Commissioned salespeople, for example, do not receive an automatic raise because they have been working in the sales field a year longer. In fact, if they are not producing they receive lesser money because their efforts have not been able to produce enough to generate the commission that might have been received the year before.

I am not for a minute suggesting that commissioned salesmen and teachers be recompensed in the same way, because that would be absolutely impossible. But I am just using that to indicate that, yes, the annual increment is included, and yes, it is absolutely proper and important to include it, because it does reflect real money and it is a valid comparison than apples to apples, with the

average teacher's salary and the average weekly earnings earned by Manitobans who may not be fortunate enough to receive a raise because they have been in their jobs an extra year.

As the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) pointed out so eloquently on behalf of the NDP the other day, one more year's experience could be a very bad year of experience, could be a year in which bad habits are reinforced and make the teacher absolutely worse than before. The member for Burrows, the NDP critic that day, put that on the record as the NDP position: that a year of experience does not necessarily make a person a better teacher. A year of experience could, in fact, reinforce bad habits. That is the NDP position, and we acknowledge that many trustees concur and are worried about that question.

I believe the vast majority of people, and I think that the NDP also would agree, that the vast majority of people, as they gain experience, do improve and become better, because of that experience. But the point made by the member for Burrows is a point that trustees have asked, for some cases, for, I hope, exceptions and anomalies, not the rule.

But still and all, in most cases, with very, very few exceptions, the annual increment is an automatic increment given regardless of performance, but simply because another year of experience has taken place.

Mr. Kowalski: Just a brief comment on the value of a year's experience in many professions, and I will refer to my profession on police work, how many times the old senior cop has been around for 20 years. Maybe he has never been promoted, but he remembers a similar crime that happened 20 years ago and he has something of value. Yes, sometimes, it is a bad year's experience in any profession, but, in the most part, experience does add some value and knowledge. So I will just make that general comment about a year's experience. It is a common practice in many professions and occupations. I believe right here in the government service that if we look at our caucus staff, if we look at our civil service with experience, they get automatic increases.

* (1110)

Mrs. McIntosh: Just a quick correction, first of all, I indicate I do agree. I believe that in nine cases out of 10

experience does add value and knowledge. Particularly in police work, which is the member's background, you will see those whose years of experience are bad very quickly weeded out. The police force is one area where people who have successive years of bad experience do not traditionally remain, because the police force is pretty stringent about applying those.

I just want to indicate though that in the civil service there is a provision for a merit increment, an automatic increment as the member indicates, but it is not automatic. It has to be provided and I know because they come across my desk. Before anybody can receive their annual increment, the supervisor has to submit a signed approval form indicating that the performance has been evaluated and has been deemed to be meritorious and worthy of an increment. I believe the member may have received a copy of that so that it is not automatic by any stretch of the imagination, whereas in school divisions it is given unless somebody intercedes to say, hey, do not give that which, if you check the record, very seldom happens, very seldom happens in education.

Mr. Kowalski: On that same page, I do think that the teachers make a good point in that form. The teachers in my community or my neighbours and the ones I know through different committees that I have been on are always taking courses, are always continually improving their knowledge of the field and that, more so probably than any other occupation I know of. Professional development is part of the culture in education, and that is a culture they try to pass on to their students. I do think they make that point very well in that when you are comparing percentage increases in pay, one of the reasons is that teachers do make the effort to continually upgrade their skills more so probably than many other professions. I do think they made that point very well on page 6 of their red-herring document. That is just more of a comment than a question.

The last area in that document that I would like to give the minister a chance to respond to on record here is in regard to the comparison of starting salaries, university graduates, where they show a teacher with four years university, \$32,860, and then they compare that with someone with a masters degree making average \$32,500. In their document, MTS notes that the engineers, for example, a survey report in 1994, the starting salary for engineers in Manitoba was \$33,600. What they are

saying is that amongst professionals, many professionals, that figure that teachers have as a starting salary is not out of line. Does the minister want to comment on the MTS document?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the member had two points and I will address the last one first because it is fresh in my memory, but I would like to go back and talk about the professional development and the training and so on because I think he has raised an important point that warrants discussion.

The point that he has just raised regarding the comparison of starting salaries, I find it interesting, and the member should note, that the MTS document, their red-herring document, they have used the same KPMG survey study that we did. So in that sense we are starting—we both sourced a document that is identical. They cherry-picked the occupation they chose to highlight. I think the member knows the implications of that.

We chose not to cherry-pick. We took the average salary of all disciplines in a bachelor's degree and, according to the same study that the MTS document also sourced, we said—if you went to university and took a bachelor's degree in any of the disciplines available: a bachelor's degree in music, a bachelor's degree in law, a bachelor's degree in engineering, a bachelor's degree in science, a bachelor's degree in arts, a bachelor's degree in education, a bachelor's degree in psychology, a bachelor's degree in social work, a bachelor's degree in human ecology, a bachelor's degree in you name it, all of the disciplines—what is the average starting salary for all disciplines with a bachelor's degree, and the answer is \$27,200. That is the average. All of those people have been to university for the same number of years, studied, we would presume, fairly similarly to each other in terms of the degree of difficulty of task, and then went into the same world, Manitoba, to seek employment, and the average starting salary for them all was \$27,200.

The average salary for those who got master's degrees in all of those disciplines—psychology, human ecology, architecture, engineering, science, arts, education, biology, chemistry, pharmacy, all of those with master's degrees—the average starting salary is \$32,500. That is a fact. It is from the same study that the teachers used.

Teachers, in their bachelor degree—average starting salary, \$32,860. Now we did pull teachers out and

identified them specifically, because this whole document is about teachers' salaries and how the teaching profession is compensated and the costs to boards.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society, by pulling out one discipline only, civil engineering, have cherry-picked an occupation. One could ask themselves why and one may be able to conclude an answer—because the starting salary for engineers is higher than the starting salary for teachers by about \$800. So engineers start about \$800 a year more than teachers. We are not going to get into arguments about whether or not it is harder to be an engineer because you have to take 11 courses a year instead of five which you have to take in education and all of those things that people can argue about.

Is it harder to obtain a degree in engineering than a degree in education? Engineers would probably say yes. Teachers would probably say no. It is one of those things. But, they chose one out of all. We chose all and we did not choose to cherry-pick and look around to see if we could find a discipline that had a lower starting salary than teachers. We are not going to. We are not going to look to cherry-pick. We are saying the average of all disciplines is this and the reality is factually known that the teachers start some several thousand dollars higher, except maybe engineers, who earn \$800 a year more in their starting salary. So that is one aspect and I do not apologize for refusing to cherry-pick occupations.

* (1120)

By taking the average, I think you get the real place that—I would compare my salary against the average MLA's salary across the country. I do not like to, actually, because it ranks ninth out of 10, but that is neither here nor there. I would not compare it just to one province. If I wanted to get a real indication of where I stood as an MLA, to compare it simply to one province does not give me that true, valid comparison. To compare it against all does and that is what we have done here.

You had indicated about education and training and we absolutely agree that professional development is a very important part of the culture, and it must be ongoing. We know other occupations know this. Chartered accountants, for example, can actually lose their licence if they do not continue to upgrade themselves. Nobody

pays them to upgrade themselves. Nobody gives them the money to upgrade themselves. Nobody gives them extra credit for having upgraded themselves, but they are able to keep their licence and continue practising if they do.

Doctors regularly upgrade themselves at their own expense and then write exams to upgrade themselves, and some of the exams cost \$150 each to write. I have a good friend who is a physician who, in upgrading himself, had to fly to Toronto at his own expense to write an exam that cost him \$150 to write at his own expense, and they must do that. So we say this is also good. Teachers must also be relevant and upgraded and we applaud those who do use their summers to take courses relevant to education that will help them in their classes. We say this is a good way to spend the summer holiday. I say holiday, I maybe should take that back. I am told it is not a holiday, it is a period of unemployment.

It used to be that teachers were paid on a 12-month basis and then they were given a 10-month basis. I know in one division absolutely, because I was there when it happened, the teachers demanded the 10-month pay period as opposed to 12 months because, quote, unquote, it was really awkward driving in from the lake to pick up that August cheque. However, they asked for and received a 10-month pay period in some divisions so they are now paid their annual salary over 10 months. I understand that the two months in the summer is now referred to as a period of unemployment. That then has led some to say that the hourly rate for teachers has risen accordingly because they are only paid for 10 months of the year. We can quibble about that. I do not want to. I am saying, I applaud them, many of them, for using the summer unemployment period to upgrade themselves and earn extra degrees and so on. We believe that is important.

The question then comes, though, what benefits accrue to school divisions? In many cases they are dramatic. People who take certain courses and credits at university make a dramatic improvement in their ability to come into the classroom. Others will take courses that bear no relevance to what they are teaching in the classroom and could also receive compensation.

The question asked is, is there sufficient benefit in all the courses that are taken or in some and should any

course taken, if it is in a course unrelated to teaching, be granted credit and extra money as applied to the classroom? That is a question we do not have an answer for. It is a question we have asked and the member may have some views on which we would be pleased to hear from the opposition.

Mr. Kowalski: This will be my last question or comment, depending on the answer, of course. So I do not know how much longer I will ramble on. But I thank the minister for her response to this document. I do not find that much value in debating the different points unless I have a real expectation of being able to change the minister's mind on some of these arguments and, other than that, I do not want to use up Estimates time other than to get information and get the minister on record.

In that light, the minister has asked me to put some things on the record. The minister has asked, do I think trustees, if I could paraphrase the question, if I remember it accurately, are concerned about rising salary cost and it is a need that needs to be addressed? I think that was the minister's question, that school trustees in Manitoba are concerned about salary costs.

I would say, yes, they are concerned about salary costs, but they are also just as concerned about funding of education in Manitoba, they are just as concerned about teacher morale, because all of us have stated here at the table how important it is for teachers to feel valued because of their importance in the classroom. We have all said it, that the most important element in the success of a student in education is the quality of teacher.

I will not repeat what I said early in these Estimates about this document about, what is wrong with asking the question? I have already talked about that. But I know, my niece, Shelley Kowalski, is graduating from the faculty of education next month. Out of her class of 40, not one of them anticipates having a job in education in Manitoba. Whether that was the government's intent or whether some other people tried to create the impression that this document was attacking teachers, many teachers feel that way, and that has been passed on to students.

I asked the question in the House that the first minister responded to yesterday about, what future do teachers have in Manitoba as a career? As a result of decisions

made at the Winnipeg 1 School Division, as a result of their funding from the province, they have indicated that 27 first-year teachers may be facing layoffs. They will be added to the 600 graduates from the different faculties of education that will be looking for work in education. This document has made many teachers, many people considering teaching as a profession wonder, question whether teachers and educators are valued in this province and whether teaching education is still a good career to be in.

That was my main concern about this document that—you know, we have all read the history of how teachers retreated in small towns in early Manitoba, that quite often if they failed a school trustee's child they were out of a job, that their working conditions were poor and that they had to band together to be treated fairly. This document has made many teachers feel that they are under attack, whether that is correct or not.

I remember at the hearings in St. Boniface, there was one Grade 12 student who had come forward and said that she had changed her mind from entering teaching as a career after this document was put out. I will not repeat what I said earlier, but I am concerned on what this has done to the morale of teachers in Manitoba, how teachers feel they are respected by society, by the government, by the public, that teaching is a good profession, a respected profession, and it is a good career to be in. Depending on the answer, that will be my last comment on this line in the budget.

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not know if the member was in the Health Estimates this morning, or here, when the member for Wolseley (Mrs. Friesen) said that it would be her last question, and I responded that I would be brief. So here we go again at any rate.

The member raises several points that are worthy of discussion. I first want to say that the member indicated he would put some comments on the record if he thought he could persuade me to change my mind. I have been sitting here for many days saying that my mind is not made up on these issues, and I am seeking feedback and opinion from people out there in the opposition. It is all right then to put your opinion on the record because it would be seen as helpful.

* (1130)

I also had asked if the member could indicate to me if he felt that trustees' concerns were valid in terms of escalating costs. The member replied that he acknowledged that trustees had concerns. We know trustees have concerns. We are painfully and absolutely aware that trustees have concerns. That is what sparked this whole process. I think the whole world knows that trustees have concerns. My question to the member was though, did he feel trustees' concerns were valid? Everybody knows trustees have concerns. I am interested to know if the opposition feels that the trustees' concerns are valid. Are they right to be concerned about rising costs? Are they correct in their repeated statements that the current process takes away their ability to make decisions in some areas that they feel they require the right to make decisions in? I did not hear the answer to that, so if you want, when I am finished, come back and indicate that, I would be pleased because sometimes I think in criticizing the process or in criticizing the fact that trustees have asked for strike, the opposition seems to be implying that the trustees' concerns are not legitimate and that there should be no change to the system of binding arbitration or teachers' compensation packages.

I know there have been many who have contacted me who have asked me why the opposition does not seem to recognize the problem. I have said, I do not know it is that they do not seem to have recognized the problem, they have not said where they stand on the problem. They have identified problems of process in our quest for discovery and feedback, but they themselves have not come forward to indicate whether they agree that trustees have a legitimate concern. We can get arguing about the way in which the government has put forth the paper and held the hearings and so on to the point that the real issue is not discussed, and sometimes it is a favourite tactic of opposition parties to talk about the process rather than the issue.

I am not implying by any stretch of the imagination that the member for The Maples is doing that. It would be more the official opposition, I think in that category, that takes that tactic. [interjection] The member is official, but in terms of the official opposition, the NDP has been notorious in not replying to the question as to whether or not there is a problem. They criticized the process, the fact that the panel had two government MLAs rather than two opposition MLAs, or the fact that there was only two

meetings of the Carlyle committee, or the fact that this or that or the other thing, but have yet to put on the record whether or not they feel trustees' concerns have any legitimacy or relevance.

Because I am open-minded on this issue in that I am open to suggestions as to solutions, I acknowledge absolutely as Minister of Education, as an individual MLA and as a member of government and as a representative of my constituency, that I believe trustees do have a valid concern about the process of dispute resolution mechanism.

I have yet to hear any member of the opposition tell me whether they feel that concern is legitimate or whether they feel that the status quo is the preference. I think it is critical for the purposes of this debate that the opposition have the courage to come forward and indicate where they stand on this issue because it is beginning to appear from a wide variety of observers that at least the official opposition does not have the courage to indicate whether or not the trustees' concern is legitimate, and that they can rather, by attacking the process of discovery and search for solutions, be seen to be walking both sides of the fence, pleasing the MTS by criticizing the process we are going through without offending the trustees by stating that the trustees do not have a concern.

So I think it will be imperative, and I will be pressing in the next few days to find out where the NDP stands and if the Liberals have a position, as well.

An Honourable Member: Of course, we do.

Mrs. McIntosh: Okay, then the member can give us that position, and I encourage the NDP to give the position later in the day because this process requires absolutely in terms of accountability and responsibility that the opposition put its views as to the legitimacy of trustee concerns on the record. They have to be accountable as official opposition.

When the government has stated they are developing a position, it is part of their responsibility as official opposition to state yes or no to the question, do the trustees of Manitoba have a legitimate concern? Yes or no. The opposition must state that to be truly accountable when the government has said it is looking for an indication of how to address this issue. To do

otherwise is to abject their duties, to abdicate their responsibility, to fall short of their obligation as official opposition in terms of offering constructive criticism and opinion. Straddling the fence and wading through the issues and trying to pretend they are on everybody's side is something that happens in opposition—

An Honourable Member: That is the Liberals.

Mrs. McIntosh: Well, no, but the Liberals really believe that. The Liberals really could fall either way off the fence. The NDP usually is more strident in its position than that. So there is an obligation to come clean, to be honest, to put your position on the record. Do trustees of Manitoba have a legitimate concern, yes or no? The official opposition can no longer duck the question, and must be responsible opposition members and provide that.

However, the member for The Maples asked about the concern about how the Winnipeg School Division was concerned because they are having to lay off first-year teachers. They have to lay off first-year teachers, why? Because the collective agreements will say last hired, first fired. Why is the collective agreement in place? Because we have a bargaining system that runs a certain way. Why is this Winnipeg School Division laying off instead of retaining teachers? Because their salary costs have risen; their funding revenues are down. Their funding revenues are down because we have a variety of circumstances that have impacted on school divisions that are real and cannot be avoided.

School divisions would willingly pay less to their employees in order to retain full staff and are unable to. I indicated yesterday that school boards had said to us that unless they can get a handle on the problem of dispute resolution mechanism and binding arbitration, they will have to resort to two things: raise taxes or begin to lay off hundreds of teachers. They would probably resort to a combination of both because they absolutely refuse to raise taxes beyond a certain level, and we applaud them for that because we have taken the same stand. So they are left with one thing that they can do and that is to lay off teachers.

I ask the member when he implies they are laying off teachers because of funding cuts—and I say to the member that the funding reductions that we have had to pass

through are far less than our own revenue reductions would have imposed had we passed the whole cut that we received through. I say to the member then, is there another factor maybe that might have influenced the layoffs? Could it be that teachers, by refusing to accept the lower settlement requested by boards, have had some small ability to influence whether or not there are layoffs in their division? Could it be that having made the decision that a certain level of salary was more important than a certain staff number in the division that the teachers themselves had some ability to influence who was laid off? I know that in industry that this holds true, that the employees will take a lower raise or a freeze or a cut in order to keep the full staff employed.

* (1140)

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Mr. Chairman, I would like to change the subject and move into what I believe is a pressing issue for families and children, and that is the pending pilot testing of the Grade 3 math exams coming up May 28 and 29. Many families and children—these are eight-year-olds that I am speaking of—are going to be facing a test provincial exam in preparation for next year and many of these young children are feeling a great deal of pressure, both by families and teachers as they wish to have their students perform well. Evidence that we have indicates that this may indeed hurt their performance in the future, and I wish to go through several questions in terms of the pending Grade 3 standardized math exam and the test that is coming up.

A group of concerned parents have come together and they are called CAST, the Coalition Against Standardized Testing. I am going to go through their brief which I think is quite comprehensive and quite good, and I understand that the minister has been forwarded a copy. They raise several significant issues. They have done what looks to be a fairly comprehensive review of research, and one of their No. 1 issues is that after reviewing the research and contacting the department, they state that they have found no sound pedagogical information to support standardized testing at the Grade 3 level.

Can the minister provide that empirical, statistical documentation to support standardized provincial-wide testing of Grade 3 children?

Mrs. McIntosh: I am getting some information here that will enable me to better respond to the member's question. I do not know if it is coincidental or not, but I am intrigued that suddenly the topic and the subject got very swiftly changed the minute I asked the official opposition to put its opinion on the record as to whether or not the trustees had a valid concern. I thought I had made a rather strong, impassioned plea for the official opposition to come clean and be honest and answer the question with a yes or no; do you or do you not believe that trustees have a valid concern regarding the dispute resolution mechanism under which they are legally bound?

That request was made, and rather than give me the answer that I required to help me in my decision making, the member very quickly said, I am going to change the subject, which does not surprise me because they have been ducking that issue, straddling the fence, saying we do not like the wording in the document. We do not like that you are asking these questions. We do not like that teachers are worried. But they have never said where they stand, and that is irresponsible as official opposition on an issue of this magnitude, and I am disheartened and discouraged that they will not indicate whether or not they feel trustees have a valid concern.

I would ask that some point be—particularly when this minister has indicated that her mind is open to receiving opinions and suggestions. So I would hope that at some point in the process the members opposite would have both the courtesy and the courage to answer the question trustees have. Are trustees credible in expressing their concern, or do they have no point? Government needs to hear your position. The trustees need to know if you support them or not, and the public needs to know where you are coming from.

They know full well you do not like the process that has been used, but are we going to keep deflecting attention away from the issue to discuss the wording that maybe could have been more user-friendly, and I acknowledge that, but the big issue here is not whether the wording could have been more user-friendly. The big issue is, what are the answers to the questions, and where do you stand on them.

So, here in Estimates, I realize that the opposition is never compelled to answer questions. I am here to

answer questions. The opposition can ask questions. The opposition has no obligation to answer questions, and therefore can duck issues, as they are doing on this one. So as the opposition continues to duck questions, refuses to reveal its position, will not identify where it stands, the opposition can claim that they do not have to reveal how they feel about these issues, or where they stand, or what decisions they make, because they are not here to answer questions. I quite agree.

They are not here to answer questions, and I have no right to ask them questions. It would not matter because every time I do ask them a question, they, as the member has just done in saying, I think I will change the subject because I do not want to talk about this anymore because, indirectly, the minister is putting questions on the record that: (a) I cannot answer, (b) I am unwilling to answer, (c) I do not have the courtesy to answer, and (d) I do not have the courage to answer.

So at some point in this whole debate when we make our position clear, you could do the people of Manitoba a great service and let them know that you do have some answers, some solutions, some alternatives, some suggestions, that you are able to do more than to just say, no, no, no, or ask questions for which you yourself have no answers. It is important you ask questions. I believe part of your role is also to present some alternatives and you have not done it.

I just say that if you want to change the subject and avoid the question that I have asked—[interjection]

An Honourable Member: Answer the question . . . development of children.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The question has been posed. The members sitting around the table on the opposition side and government side have the right to ask questions in the way that they choose, and the minister also has the right to answer those questions in the way she chooses. As long as we are within this section, which applies to almost everything within the budget of Education and Training, that is how it has to be.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I have been unfailingly courteous. Except for this particular question, the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) has not been in

this Chamber over the last couple of days where I have been sitting here with great patience and courtesy and friendliness to answer questions put forward. I have been constructive dialoguing for days here. If the member had ever been here she would know it, and the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) can confirm the degree of detail and patience that I have shown in answering the questions.

Finally today I say: Where do you stand? And I get: Change the subject. Fine, I will change the subject, but to imply that my role here is not, first and primarily, for the benefit of children is an implication that is wrong, and I do not accept that. Just as I acknowledge that she does care about children, I expect that same acknowledgment back to me based upon my record and the way I have answered questions to date, until I came to your blocking on the issue of arbitration for teachers.

* (1150)

I want to indicate that nowhere in that document are we attacking teachers. We value teachers. I do not want that to be left unsaid. For the benefit of children, the member asked that I talk about what is of benefit to children. I am answering her question. I value teachers. Teachers are essential, and they must be fairly treated. If we do not retain good people then we will not be attracting good people to the profession, but we also have to have a fair and sustainable balance in the system between what we can afford and what we would like to be able to afford, and when a Ph.D. is achieved and it may be of great value, is it something that boards are willing to give up hiring a second teacher for to obtain in the classroom, and I think those questions are questions that are fair and reasonable to ask. It is not meant at all in any way as an attack on any particular group of people, because we do value teachers just as we value other groups of society whose wages and remuneration are being questioned by the ratepayers and the taxpayers and those who employ them, in this case school boards.

Boards feel they have lost some control over employer rights. I still would like to know if the opposition feels that boards are correct when they say they feel they have lost control over employer rights. It gets right back to the heart of the issue, and I still feel it would be nice to know if the opposition feels boards indeed have lost some employer rights.

Regarding the testing of Grade 3 children, these tests are not being counted for a final mark unless the division wishes. They are intended to be diagnostic in their presentation. They are to be able to provide a snapshot of a moment of learning on a wide comparative basis. It will be based upon the curriculum, so there should be no surprises to anybody. They are pilot tests. The results will not be published. They are expected to be invaluable, based upon experiences in other jurisdictions and historically, into providing early insight into the progress of a child, so that diagnostically measures can be put in place to ensure maximum development and potential.

There is not research on standardized testing regarding the value of early testing, and we are not talking standardized testing. We are talking standards tests. They are norm referenced. They are standards tests, criterion referenced. They are not standardized tests, and I believe the member knows the difference between standardized tests and testing for standards. Two very, very different things which I am going on the assumption she understands, given her background, but if she would like explanation I would be happy to provide it.

Those will provide very helpful, useful information to inform parents and teachers and students about progress. They are designed to be helpful, and we believe they will be helpful not hurtful. We have to assist parents, teachers and empower them with valid, reliable information early in a child's progress in the school system, but it is regrettable that the member and her supporters do not believe that standards testing will help or whether they believe they will be harmful. We do not believe it is harmful to do early diagnosis, and without early diagnosis, you condemn some children and their parents to many years of schooling trouble before problems are identified.

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Chairman, I am particularly upset with the minister's 90 percent of her preamble to getting to the answer of my question. I sincerely came for nine o'clock this morning to ask a series of questions in regard to the Grade 3 exams. I do not appreciate her political rhetoric and her baiting the opposition. This is a very serious issue that affects children and families. She clearly used, I would say, nine of 10 minutes on something that I did not come here to discuss, and I thought it was my mandate to ask the questions. So I

take from that that her priorities are clearly not what mine are. I was not trying to avoid her baiting. Well, perhaps I was. She chooses to spend the morning insinuating and attempting to rile up people, while my goal here was to try and get some facts and, hopefully, sound rethinking perhaps on the matter of provincial testing of eight-year-olds.

The minister is insulting, quite frankly, insulting those families that are concerned about this issue and insulting all of these parents who have indeed forwarded their concerns to the minister by her addressing a totally different subject—I find unbelievable. This minister in the past has been co-operative to me as one member in the Chamber, and I am extremely disappointed that she did not take my question seriously and did not answer it, I think, in a comprehensive way that it deserves. I am disappointed because the member in a past life was a trustee, did deal with families, understands that eight-year-olds who are facing—I am not talking about testing—there are all sorts of tests that occur all the way from the year that children enter schools, and she knows that. The point is that they are going to be facing for the first time a standardized exam, provincially run, and this is the preparation for an event that is going to occur next year.

The issue here—and my question was never answered. My question was to the minister: What empirical and statistical documentation is there to support standardized testing of Grade 3 children? A comprehensive review of the research indicates that by preparing one test method, or even three test methods, is not going to mean that those children will have a tool that can measure their capabilities. In fact, that is why, one of the sound reasons why back in the '70s standardized exams were abandoned. It was not a comprehensive testing tool that worked. In fact, the minister and her government are now moving toward a program of testing that will involve compulsory testing of every child in Grade 3 except for those that are in a very specific category, I believe, that fall into a category of special needs, using a fairly specific testing instrument that may be wrong for that one student. The concerns about the psychological damage that this could cause to eight-year-olds is what my question was surrounding.

For the minister then to go on a tirade about a document that my colleague from the Liberal Party was

discussing with the minister seems to be—like I said earlier—a matter that tried to deflect and avoid answering the serious questions that are dealing with a situation that is going to affect every child in Manitoba who is eight-years-old, and that is to take effect, if the program goes on as scheduled, next year.

Now, I hope more reason will follow, as I know the minister has said in the past that she has an open mind, and I ask her to review, to ask the department to review all of the research that is available in terms of this program to see if we can look at a more comprehensive form of testing that is not administered centrally by the province.

There is clearly the need for standards testing, and that can be done locally. Parents need clear outcomes and clear accountability. The concern that I have is that there is going to be a test administered May 28 and 29 to most students in the province of Manitoba, and in this case I have heard horror stories of children who are already apprehensive, are trying to prepare for the exam, teachers are teaching to the exam, and families are, as the minister would know, preparing for a massive boycott of participating in the exam on May 28 and 29.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. We will be recessing for dinner. When we return, the member will have four minutes remaining to pose comments and/or questions. We are recessed for dinner until one o'clock.

The House recessed at 12 noon.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 1:04 p.m.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Peter Dyck): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Education. When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 1.(b) (1) on page 34 of the Estimates book.

The honourable minister, to respond to the question that was asked before.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the question had been put just before the lunch break requesting some additional information about student assessment. There had been a bit of debate going on about the arbitration paper, which was tidied up, and then on to this particular topic. I note just in passing and a one-sentence observation that the member asking the question, the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) had indicated that I spent a goodly portion of my answer addressing the previous question on accountability and she wanted to talk about assessment and exams. I just note in passing, by interest when people check Hansard, in doing that she spent a goodly portion of her question addressing the same previous question before getting down to the assessment question. As I have indicated before, a sword cuts both ways and standards that are to be applied to one should also be applied to the other.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Having said that, I will move off the arbitration paper because I know the opposition is reluctant to continue discussing that. We will move on to the area of assessment which is extremely important and an area that this government has taken a position on that in this instance the opposition has also taken a position on. We believe in assessment and evaluation and regret that the opposition does not share our views in this regard, because we believe that assessment and evaluation is an extremely important step in the ability of a student to progress in a reasonable and thoughtful way through the learning process. We believe that it is important to know that a student has acquired prerequisite skills before new areas of learning are imposed upon that prerequisite. We believe that the only way you can know if a student has acquired the required prerequisite knowledge is to check, to assess, to evaluate and to test to see if before you begin the multiplication tables the concepts of addition are truly and genuinely absorbed by the student.

We also believe that before you begin the teaching of certain areas of literature that it is important to test for literacy so you know that when you assign these students to a higher skill task, the essential preliminary skills are known and understood. I think that most educators believe that as well. Whether or not there have been formal processes of evaluation and assessment put in place, the majority of good teachers have instinctively and automatically done that assessment. What we are

saying is that we believe it is important that it not just be done by accident but that it be done by design.

I would indicate from New Directions that testing at all levels or grades stems from a foundation of common sense and as New Directions indicates: Student assessment is a continuous systematic and comprehensive process designed to determine the extent to which student learning outcomes have been achieved. This assessment process involves careful planning, systematic implementation and comprehensive analysis, interpretation and reporting of results. It is an integral part of teaching and learning.

Assessment must be based on clear student learning outcomes and standards of achievement where applicable. Assessment must reflect the breadth, depth and complexity of the learning situation and the learning requirements of all students. Assessment must consider aspects such as cultural and gender bias as well as learning requirements such as the need for large print or Braille assessment tools or oral testing procedures. Assessment must allow all students to demonstrate the progress they have made towards achieving their highest potential in relation to student learning outcomes and standards of achievement. Assessment must be clear, must be meaningful, must be honest to students, parents, teachers, employers, educational institutions and the public. It is essential that students be allowed to demonstrate the progress they have made because such knowledge can give a sense of progress and motivation.

The member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) had asked this morning that we be concerned that students were worried about the exams and that the exams would be hard on the students in terms of their egos and their comfort. I indicate to the member that there is no need, in my opinion, for students or parents to worry about the fact that the student's progress is going to be assessed.

* (1310)

On the contrary, I think that most parents are pleased, in fact. It was a major request of parents; in fact, it was almost at the very top of their list. If not first, I believe it was second on the list of requests that parents made to us in the Parents' Forums when they were first established, that they wanted measurable standards. They wanted to know how their students were doing and they

wanted to know how their students' progress compared with others in like learning experiences. This was something that was deemed to be of high, high importance.

We know as well, of course, in the upper grades that universities and industry and so on are wanting to know what the standard is. They know right now that an 80 percent at one school means something completely different than an 80 percent at another school, and they are concerned to the point of talking about putting in a first year at university that would be common to all so that they can determine just where the students are. They have talked in the past about entrance exams so that they can determine just where the students are.

We believe that it is our responsibility as deliverers of kindergarten to Senior 4 education that we are able to provide them with an understanding of where our students are. We believe that as an accountable system, it is important at the end of schooling that we be able to state to those who look at our Grade 12 certificates and say, if a student has an English language arts exam credit from Senior 4 Manitoba, it means the students have achieved a measurable standard of and then be able to identify it. We believe that is part of being accountable.

No item would leave a factory, if we wish to use that analogy, without a test as to its ability to satisfy the consumers' needs. Even automobiles are put to tests before they are allowed to be sold, and if we do that for cars and consumer goods, which are far, far less important than the students of Manitoba, who are people, who are human beings, who have futures and feelings and potential and hopes, if we do these types of tests for things, why, why would we deny that ability to the far more important service delivery of education?

So we feel that in the elementary school, at the primary level, the Grade 3 examinations in mathematics are diagnostic in nature. I have already given an answer to the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) as to the fact that this is a pilot this year but that even when it is no longer a pilot, they are not intended to be tests used for passing, failing. They are to be used for diagnostic purposes. If there are students who face particular circumstances that are difficult, then I should indicate that the department takes special care when testing Grade 3. The member for St. James alluded to the fact that we need

to take special care, and I am indicating that indeed we do, that there are exemptions and special accommodation guidelines being drafted that would indicate students who may not be writing the Grade 3 exam, students with emotional and psychological states that would be detrimentally affected by the writing of standards tests.

I have to emphasize, the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) repeatedly referred to these as standardized tests. I have repeatedly indicated these are not standardized tests. These are standards tests. There is a big, big difference. She does a disservice by referring to something that we have thrown out of the system quite plainly many years ago, to replace them now with standards tests, as opposed to standardized.

I will continue with the rest of this later.

Ms. Friesen: I think the member for St. James' (Ms. Mihychuk) questioning, if I could continue on that line, dealt with the research base for testing at the Grade 3 level. I think she presented the opinions of some parents who had looked at research and felt that the Grade 3 testing was not effective, and she asked what the minister's corresponding research was that led her to believe that this was the best way to go. So it was the research base, I think, that was an issue. Amongst others, that was one of the questions that she asked, and I wanted to pursue that with the minister and to see what kind of research base there had been for these tests.

The minister makes the point about standards tests, and I know that certainly in areas where these kinds of tests are being introduced, one of the concerns is that the test be of an international standard. I think that the minister, perhaps in her response on the research base, might indicate where these tests are given on an international basis and diagnostically how effective they are and what the result has been and how the department is going to apply that to Manitoba.

Will, for example, these tests be developed in Manitoba? Who is developing them? Are they developed in the context of American tests which are used at this level or British tests that are used at this level?

I think the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) also was concerned about the voice of parents in this, parents

particularly who feel that it is not the right thing for their children at the Grade 3 level to be involved in these tests. I am wondering what the minister's response is going to be to those parents. I believe she has recently received the same kind of material that the member for St. James and I had received.

So the parental role in this, how are parents to be involved in this? I know that is something that all of us are very concerned about, the parental role in education. For this first test that the government is instituting, I think the opinions of parents and parent councils, and I have been at parent council meetings in the last few weeks, in fact, where very serious concerns were expressed about Grade 3 testing. I am sure the minister has also had much correspondence dealing with the implications of Grade 3 testing in the immersion programs.

The Grade 3 testing in mathematics, for example, is to be based on a very different way of teaching mathematics. That link between curriculum, between assessment, between professional development which ideally any school division, any minister would be concerned about, I think people believe that that circle is not complete in the immersion area because the testing, for example, and I suppose this applies equally to both French and English, is intended to be based upon explanation rather than mechanical problem solving so that verbal explanation is important. And yet students have not been taught for the past three years to develop those kinds of verbal explanations in the same way that one assumes, as the new curriculum is introduced, that they will be.

So some of the concerns that I have heard from teachers are, first of all, that there is a self-fulfilling prophesy at work here, that you introduce tests before the curriculum has been well established or before the professional development has been done on a widespread basis throughout the province and that inevitably the results of students are going to improve as they are in effect, three years from now, examined on the curriculum upon which they have been taught.

A second area of concern is for immersion children whose abilities to express themselves in the second language are not as developed at the Grade 3 level as the students in English programs. The concern is there that this is not a fair test of their mathematical abilities, that

it will be examining much more intensively their verbal abilities, which are not as extensively developed in the second language.

So I think there are a number of areas of concern about the Grade 3 testing: first of all, the parental involvement, the role of parental permission to engage in these tests; secondly, the relationship between curriculum initiation and the timing of the test; then, thirdly, the second language issues.

* (1320)

Mrs. McIntosh: Just a quick clarification, I apologize, did you ask, will we be asking parents for permission to write the Grade 3 tests? I am sorry.

Ms. Friesen: I did use the word "permission," yes. What I am concerned about is the parents who are expressing the concerns that they feel it is not beneficial to their children to be taking that Grade 3 test. What is the minister's response going to be to those parents?

Mrs. McIntosh: I indicated, first of all, that the assessment testing is deemed to be an integral part of education. We do not believe that you can have a full and thorough education unless you have had a process of assessment that takes place throughout the learning experience. So a child coming into school will be taking the curriculum and the assessment and all of the other things that are part of education as a requirement of attending school. Those same standards will apply to public and partly funded schools as well.

While we are giving tremendous choice to parents, more choice than they have ever had in the past. We still do feel that there are some things that are just basic to education. One of them is that the student would show up at the school, be part of the learning process and have their progress assessed as they go through the system to see if, in fact, they have absorbed the knowledge that was presented to them or taught to them.

Having said that, of course, we do have, as I started to indicate in my earlier answer, guidelines to determine which students could be exempt from writing exams. I have indicated that students who have severe emotional and psychological states that are determined to be sufficiently abnormal or beyond the norm may, under certain circumstances, not be expected to write the

standardized exams if it is felt that they would agitate or detrimentally affect that emotional or psychological state which would already be unusual in its influence on the student.

There may be some English as a Second Language students in the English program whose language proficiency is right at the beginning level whose ability to write the exam would be limited if there. They would be noted as those who did not speak English and could be exempt from writing the exam because they probably would not be able to put anything on the paper. But it would be noted for the statistical purposes that they were not literate or fluent in English.

Certain physically disabled students who might require major modifications to the test administrative procedures or students with IEPs based on cognitive disabilities that are significant in nature such that they would invalidate the use of the test or students enrolled in programs such as those offered at the learning assistance centre, and there may be some others. On the specific dates for the piloting of the tests, it might be that a student could be exempted for the normal kinds of reasons: death in the immediate family; mandatory attendance at family court; a doctor's indication the student is too ill, on a medical certificate, to be present.

We do have accommodations we are able to make providing more time to certain kinds of students to allow them to complete the test if they are disabled in some way. Perhaps they have a motor ability that takes them longer to do the writing, for example, or they require a Braille text. Maybe they have to have someone read material to them if they cannot see and those types of accommodations that can be made.

I want to indicate that the member for St. James had made quite a point of asking this question. Her main question to me was this. I know she did at the end squeeze in a question or two about research but, to me, the main thing she emphasized was this concern that I have just expressed about students who were upset that they had to write an exam and that the parents were worried because of the effect on the ego and the psyche of having to be tested and that they were not being able to sleep and those kinds of things. So that to me was the main thing that she dwelt upon, but I will answer the other concerns as well.

She had indicated, you know, well, this would be very bad because teachers would begin to teach to the test. I say to that that the teachers will be teaching to the curriculum because the test is based upon the curriculum. So, no, they are not teaching to the test, they are teaching to the curriculum, which is what they should be doing because, as the member herself knows, with her insistence and emphasis on proper curriculum development, we would not spend all the time on curriculum development if we did not think the curriculum should be taught. So the teachers will teach to the curriculum and, in doing so, which they would do anyhow, I would hope, and they have not always in the past, but now I think they would have renewed enthusiasm for teaching the curriculum because their children will be tested on that curriculum someday.

I do not see anything wrong with encouraging teachers to teach to the curriculum. In fact, I think it is what we are supposed to encourage them to do. Now, the member for St. James may disagree with me on that but I, as Minister of Education, really do want to see teachers teaching the curriculum and I do not apologize for that or think it is a bad thing. I also do not think it is a bad thing to test on that curriculum.

The tests, I indicate, are not counting for marks. In the future, other subjects, all pilot tests, will only occur after one full year of implementation so they would go for a year first as a pilot curriculum and then do the test. The use of the tests in Grade 3 is diagnostic. These tests assess the curricula, as well as the learning, and it helps us understand if the curriculum that has been developed is assisting the acquisition of knowledge and I think that is an important thing to seek to find out. They are not standardized tests. If the tests were standardized or counted for all or some of a Grade 3 child's mark or were the only means of assessing, then I would be as concerned as the member for St. James. But the member for St. James is concerned about tests which are not standardized, which do not count for any of the mark, which are not the only means of assessing and I should indicate to her that her concerns need not be upsetting when she considers what they really are, not what she thinks they are or has been told they are.

* (1330)

Regarding the immersion testing, we are fully aware of all of the things the member has mentioned. We are more

than fully aware. We have done a lot of study and consultation on the very topic she raises as a question. It is not a new question to us. It is one we have spent a lot of time on and we have talked to a lot of people about. We have developed the math test in English. It is then translated into French and then reviewed for language appropriateness. We involve French Immersion teachers in that process and the tests will assess the students on matters that have been taught. It will not assess the students on matters that have not been taught.

We are also fully aware and have done a tremendous amount of examination of the learning curve that occurs in French Immersion schools. The department was instrumental in helping set up French Immersion schools. They are fully conscious. One might say they are experts. In fact, one should say they are experts in this area and that people come to them to seek opinion on their expertise in the delivery of French Immersion. They are sought out as the experts from whom people seek research. So while we do our own research, I should indicate that we are not starting from a base of ignorance and lack of knowledge here, far from it. The French Immersion students we know are mostly verbal in the first three years, will experience a lag behind the English language arts until they hit a certain point at which time their curve goes sharply up and you begin to see very swift progress rising very swiftly up the graph.

What we need to have statistically for our own purposes in terms of understanding a snapshot, a statistically correct snapshot of Manitoba students, is how well the students do on those tests. We fully expect that on the French mathematics test the students may not show as high a result as if they had done all their learning in English. That will be factored into any analysis and we may eventually have a statement that says in Grade 3 French, at a certain level, we would expect a good mark would be a mark that would be a certain percentage less than the English mark and it would be counted as equal to that English mark. We know the results will rise once proficiency in the language does.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I wanted to follow up with a couple of questions on exams, but I know that we are not really on the area of testing and New Directions, so I just want to let the minister know that for some of this I do want to come back to it when she has the staff there for that. We did introduce the discussion here of the Grade

3 exams because it is a policy decision, it is a new policy and so that is the relevance to this particular line.

One thing that I wanted to follow up on was the exemptions that the minister gave me, and this in effect does apply, I believe, to the whole testing issue, and that is the issue of significant cognitive disabilities. Those are the people who are to be excluded or who may be excluded from exams and who may have an "M" or a "modified" written on their final graduation certificate, I think, is the issue. One of the concerns that I know the minister is aware of again, and I do not know whether it is being answered satisfactorily in divisions throughout Manitoba, is who decides that? The people I have heard from are very concerned that they do not have the expertise in their own schools, and they are not sure about how that significant cognitive disabilities is to apply. Is there a standard that the province is looking at overall? Is there a list of those standards? What proportion of people does the minister anticipate will have significant cognitive disabilities?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the deputy is getting some information there which I will have in just a few seconds. Regarding the matter of research which the member asked earlier, I agree that probably is more appropriately handled in 16.2 under the Assessment and Evaluation unit of SPD, but I just would indicate that research on standardized tests is inconclusive, we believe, and even if it is showing testing of young children, is not supportable. This is not research on standards testing, so that research on standardized testing is not research on standards testings. We do believe we have a different and new approach, that we are evolving new approaches routed in these very important pedagogical principles. They follow: test what is taught—that is item one, test what is taught; two, test as an outcome of teaching the curriculum; three, early diagnosis of children is critical since early intervention is critical to the later success of children.

Can we definitively show that Grade 3 is the "correct" early grade to assess? Could it be Grade 2? Could it be Grade 4? Maybe, but Grade 3 is felt to be the age where you would get the best ability to assess someone who has already enough chance to begin the learning process but still early enough for intervention. You do not want to wait too long. You do not want to catch them before they have had any exposure to learning. So Grade 3 was

deemed to be the year. As I say, standards testing is relatively new. It is a new pedagogical approach. All the research on standardized testing shows standardized testing really does not do what it had been hoped to do. That is why we do not use it anymore. That is why we have moved to standards testing.

We can get into that later when we get going on, but these tests will reflect wholly the curriculum outcomes, and they are constructed using experiences, using expert Manitoba teachers. I like to call them master teachers. They will be developed in Manitoba and not outside of Manitoba.

The question you asked on the significant cognitive disabilities, my deputy has indicated here that the people who decide that would be the schools and the divisions, and he has referred me to page 4 in the Special Education in Manitoba document, and that says: A systematic assessment of a student's educational needs is a prerequisite for special programming and placement. Program and placement decisions shall be made in the best interest of the student in order to provide the most appropriate education within the most enabling learning environment available or possible under the circumstances. In the process of arriving at a programming or placement decision, a co-operative approach involving all persons who have information relevant to the student shall be used. The special education team shall include educators, parents, support personnel and, where possible, the student. The team shall recommend placement or program alternatives to the educational authorities.

Regarding the M designation, as I have said, schools and divisions will make the decision as to whether a student would fit into an M designation category, and they will use available, currently accepted methods, both formal and informal, such as clinical tests, teacher observation, school assessment information, parental observation and views. We believe that most if not all divisions have the tools and the expertise already available for this. The key is a team approach, and that is explained in the book from which I just quoted. There is no set percentage of students. It could vary, but the key is an individualized plan for each child, and I think that may have addressed most of the concerns raised, but if I have missed any, please remind me and I will try to come back to them.

Ms. Friesen: I may be a bit puzzled about the difference the minister, not so much the difference the minister is drawing between standards and standardized tests, I understand the vocabulary the department is using, but on the newness of this. It seems to me that what the minister and the department describe as standards tests, teaching to the curriculum, outcomes, early diagnosis, although perhaps that does not apply in what I am going to say, but that the international programs like international baccalaureate or the French baccalaureate or the British O-levels and A-levels are exactly that and are perhaps almost over a half century old now.

I wonder if I am missing something when the minister says that these are new. Does she mean that they are new to Manitoba? Does she mean that they are new in the context of North America or are they new in some new approach to testing? They seem to me to be quite old and well established in some parts of the world, although certainly not recently in North America where there has been a movement, at least in Canada, away from that until the present government and governments of the '90s.

So maybe the minister will clarify that, how different does she see these tests from essentially the old curriculum-based testing of Grade 12 or the old curriculum-based testing of A-levels or of the current international baccalaureate type of programs? I also wanted to know from the minister what use is intended of the Grade 3 exams. For example, how will they be reported? Will there be an overall reporting to the province? Will it be reported back just to divisions and will it be up to divisions on how to use that information? Will it go down to the level of the classroom? How will parents be involved in the understanding of both provincial results and of the classroom results and of their division results? How will the marking be done? Will that be done by the classroom teacher, at the divisional level, and what kind of time frame is there for that? When does the minister anticipate that the first results will be available from these tests?

* (1340)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure if I got all the questions down but, again, I will just make my statement that there were several questions in there and I was trying to answer them all and it is easy to ask a question in one minute but sometimes they take three or

four minutes to answer, so I may need a bit more time to come back on them.

The member started off by saying that the standards test followed the same or were the same as I.B. or A-levels or O-levels or things that had been done in the past, and the member is mistaken in that. They are different and, you know, maybe some of the difficulties that are being expressed from the benches opposite is that the members keep trying to compare it to what was.

The member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) says, well, these are standardized tests. The member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) says, well, these are like I. B. or O-levels or A-levels. We have said these are different and, I guess, as we continue going through the questions, we keep pointing out differences, it may come out then as the final picture.

In the old curriculum and even in the International Baccalaureate are very few if any identified, specific outcomes. There is no framework as we have in our Grade 3 mathematics. We have a framework where we identify specific outcomes. The test for I.B. sets the standard, whereas in our way the standards are predetermined in that we say these will be the standards and everything we do will move toward those standards. With the I.B. the test will set the standard at the end rather than at the beginning.

The curriculum sets the standard in our standards testing. The test simply assesses standards to see if the level has been reached, to see if it can be measured. We do not mark on a curve, for example. It is possible that every student could achieve the standard. You will not see a certain percentage syphoned off because you have marked on a bell curve, and some place at the top, some place at the bottom and the bulk in the middle. It is possible for all students to achieve the maximum standard, or should be.

In Grade 3, the results will be returned to the school. The individual results are then provided to the teacher and the parents. The school results are for the use of the school or for the division but the province will not be publishing any of the school-by-school marks. We will release province-wide results only in terms of overall conclusions. We will not be saying this division or that division had this or that outcome. We will be saying, in Manitoba, students, and then whatever the fact is that we conclude from the assessment.

What is new about the standards testing is that there are few if any jurisdictions that have this curriculum that is developed with general and specific outcomes and standards of performance followed by testing in mind at the outset of the curriculum development, and it puts a different spin on the whole process. If you say, for example, as might have been done in some areas in the past, we should tell the children about geology and how rocks are formed, and we will do that—now we have done that, we have developed a curriculum now—we should find out if we do any testing of what they remember and so we will give them a standardized test that might be where they could tick off the following points, you know, granite looks like this, tick, tick, tick. It is completely different from saying, we want an outcome that will have students understanding the properties of the earth around them. We must develop a curriculum and build in all these things as we go through so that that outcome, that understanding, is achieved.

The marking for the Grade 3 mathematics, we will be using this year's Grade 3 mathematics pilot to pilot not only the test instrument, but also both local and central marking. As the member may recall, we had central marking for the L.A. exam in Senior 4 last year for a variety of reasons, the overriding reason being that in other jurisdictions it had been clearly indicated that the only way where you had true consistency was centralized. Even with regional marking where people had been through the same training process for the marking, there were great discrepancies in the test scores. One group of markers, wherever they were congregated, had significant deviations from the other. We will be checking to see if that holds true if we try a regional or local marking for the Grade 3.

So we will develop some recommendations on local versus central marking. Hopefully, we will have that feedback for us in time for the September '96 school year. But that was a matter of some controversy because of the inconvenience of marking in a central location. However, statistically, we have been led to believe that that is the only way we could guarantee a consistent approach to marking. We will be checking for that in this pilot.

I think I left out one. I did not get them all written down when you were asking.

Ms. Friesen: I think the only one the minister left out was the timing of the response to schools. She talked

about the method of responding to schools and divisions, but I had asked also when parents might learn of the results of the test.

If I could add while I am discussing that I also would be looking for some response on the use of the test to assess curriculum. That circle, that loop that I have talked about before and I think is also contained within the departmental guidelines, how is that to be carried out? How is that curriculum assessment to be done based on the kind of testing and testing results, and in what way will it be different from the continuous assessment of curriculum that was done in the past by the department and that was made known through public reports or departmental reports? So I am looking for, again, the public record on the assessment of the curriculum and some comparison with how the department feels that it will be improving upon what had existed before in Manitoba.

* (1350)

Mrs. McIntosh: In terms of the timing, they should have that information around the third week in June. The member asked about the use of the assessment testing to assess curriculum. The curriculum assessment versus standards tests way of doing things—the curriculum assessment test is to indeed assess curriculum. The member is correct, but they only are used to assess curriculum.

The standards tests will do things a little more thoroughly. The standards test will assess curriculum, as did the earlier curriculum assessment tests, but they will not take a year and a half to do it. It will be done in a matter of weeks, and they will also, at the same time, provide a profile for each individual child, which the former curriculum assessment tests did not do.

The standards tests will have absorbed components of things that were done before, such as curriculum assessment, but will reject other things that were done before such as the standardized testing and those kind of things. Essentially the curriculum assessment, which was done before, will just be done using this vehicle but still have the same impact. This one will be faster and will assess the whole child as well, give a profile for each child.

Ms. Friesen: The former assessment process, which the minister says took a year and a half—I do not know what

length of time it takes, so I am sure the minister is right on that—but it did involve an assessment of curriculum across the province that was then reported back to people, so there was the production of a document. There was, I assume, also the sense of, here are the recommendations for improvement; here is the kind of professional development that is needed; here is where the curriculum is not meeting the kind of needs that we think we have; and here is where perhaps there are indications that our students have changed and where the curriculum itself needs to change.

I think what went into that year and a half was some careful consideration. It was not every course every year. It was on a rotational basis, so that over a number of years we had a sense in Manitoba of how our classroom needs were changing, how our curriculum needed to be changed and how professional development needed to deal with that. So again, it is that whole circle of curriculum development and standards that I am addressing.

I am wondering how this new process of using the standard tests as one of the elements of curriculum assessment, how that is going to be fed back into the public record, the public knowledge, the community involvement, in developing curriculum and standards in Manitoba.

Mrs. McIntosh: The member is making an assumption that is not correct in assuming that because this can now be done very swiftly, that those elements that used to be in curriculum assessment are not going to be done. It used to take a year and a half to do those things that she named. Those things that she named are still going to be done through this process, but they will be done swiftly in a matter of weeks rather than a matter of many, many months, a year to a year and a half under the old way versus a matter of weeks under the new way to do all of those things that she just mentioned. They are not going to be left undone.

One of the assumptions was that you always had to take eons and eons and eons to do that kind of work. We know and those who are experts in evaluation know that one of the hallmarks of successful assessment is that you get immediate results so you can take immediate corrective action. To do a thorough assessment, it is like if I am driving a car and I am assessed on my driving and

the assessor takes a year and a half to get back to me, and I have been driving around for a year and a half, reinforcing bad habits and maybe getting into accidents or maybe damaging my vehicle to such a point that I have no car, the fact that they come back a year and a half later and say, by the way, we notice that you cannot see, so you should not be driving, is not going to have helped me in the year and a half, and may, in fact, have done me irreparable harm through the delay.

So one of the hallmarks of successful assessment, evaluation and diagnostic techniques which are usually designed to enhance progress, improve progress, enrich progress, is that it be done swiftly with immediate response, like an immediate first responder, rather than an unseemly delay. I stress that because I appreciate her concern, and I wish to reassure her that those things are not going to be lost because the process is now more swift.

In terms of the difference between standardized tests and standards testing, standardized tests are often off the shelf. They are kind of prepared en masse, and you can pluck them from somewhere and apply them to your students, so they usually assess recall knowledge and some applications, but they are often not very reflective of any particular curriculum. They are largely geared to content recall in most subjects, and you will find this in some of the areas that she discussed earlier that she thought were the same as what we are doing now, that tests can be pulled off the shelf and applied and not geared to the development of the curriculum.

They are normed and they are often then marked against that norm, which is usually a right or a wrong answer, and they do not allow students' thinking to be included nor the methods by which they have determined the answers to be marked. We will be looking at not just what is the answer to your question, but how did you arrive at the answer, and that shows an understanding of the methodology as well as the right or wrong answer.

Standards tests, on the other hand, focus on all aspects of performance. There will be criteria referenced reflecting what was taught. They do not focus on recall alone. They focus on application, problem solving, critical creative thinking. For the most part, you cannot teach to a standards test because what is assessed is the learning skill and performance, not how the child was

taught or the vehicle used to assist the learning. The Grade 12 mathematics exam, which I know is not a discussion here, gives a good example. We can maybe go through it in some detail—I do not know if the member has had a chance to go through the awareness one that we did this June—so you can see how that evolved. It really does test literacy.

So I will not go into that right now, but I just do point out those differences. These are not off-the-shelf exams that can be applied. They are ones that are developed through the curriculum.

* (1400)

Ms. Friesen: One of the main differences that the minister seems to emphasize in this kind of testing that the department is involved in, is outcomes based. I wonder if the minister could tell us where the outcomes are for the Grade 3 test that will be developed, and how will the community be involved in looking at those? Will parents be able to see those outcomes that their children are supposed to meet, and when will those be available?

Mrs. McIntosh: The curriculum document—the member was asking about the outcomes and when would parents know the outcomes. That was provided to the schools about a year ago. They were sent out to the divisions. Divisions were encouraged to send them home with students. In fact, in St. James-Assiniboia, where I live, the board sent the outcomes home with the parents a year ago, last June, so they would have it in readiness and those outcomes, of course, are part of the curriculum. The curriculum states the outcomes. The standards tests are a reflection of the curriculum which contains the outcomes. They do not buy a test and then wildly teach the children everything they can learn about the test. They develop the curricula, state the outcomes, and the tests reflect those outcomes, which went to the schools a year ago and in some divisions, one that I know of for sure, went home with the students to the parents.

When the test marks are released to the parents, the parents will receive a profile of how their students did on each outcome. For example, if the mathematics test has four strands and the strands—I do not have the test here so I am just going to do some creative thinking—but let us say the strands are patterns, are shapes, are numbers, so say four strands, and there will be various components

under each strand. The parents then will receive an indication of how their students did on each of the strands so they might get a document that would say, here is your student's profile.

As you know, the outcomes were so students should be able to demonstrate that they recognize four different shapes, whatever the outcome was, and your student, under all the different categories under shapes, here is the profile. Here is what they were able to demonstrate they understood. Here is where they were not able to demonstrate they understood or a partial demonstration, et cetera. So all of that determination goes home to show how the students measured against the standard, how well they were able to learn the outcome, how are those standards calibrated. I just got a little note from here saying that they did four days of in-servicing for Grade 3 teachers this year on that particular item that I am discussing.

But the standards are calibrated for Grade 3 mathematics. They have three levels of standards which describe how well students perform in relation to a given outcome or a set of outcomes. There is a proficient performance, which is within the provincial standard; limited performance, which is below the provincial standard; superior performance, which is above the provincial standard.

The following example which I am going to give from Grade 3 mathematics demonstrates the process the department teams use to develop and calibrate the standards. First, the team familiarizes themselves with outcomes from curriculum framework. So the outcomes from Grade 3 mathematics being that students can use manipulatives, diagrams and symbols in problem-solving context to demonstrate and to describe multiple strategies for determining sums and differences to 100, to recall addition and subtraction facts to 18. Those would be outcomes, and they familiarize themselves with those from the curriculum framework.

The second thing then is that the team designs and develops an authentic assessment task that enables students to demonstrate a variety of levels of performance for particular learning outcomes. They have a story problem, the answer is 18, what is the story problem? Those could actually be fun for students to play with

when you get that kind of situation. It is kind of like the television show Jeopardy that everybody watches and tries to figure out from the answer what the question was. So you can have fun playing with those.

(Mr. Frank Pitura, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Then the team field tests assessment items with students and gathers student samples to use as data for determining standards and performance levels. The team will develop criteria, analyze the student samples, and sort them into levels. For the limited response level one, they might have a criteria for assessing student responses that would show some indication of a mathematical story problem formation, may have context but no question, may have a story problem, but the answer is not the 18 that might be expected.

* (1410)

To give you an example of that, one example that has been put forward is, Stephanie is having a sleepover party. She invites eight people. She makes 10 invitations. What is 10 plus eight? Ten plus eight equals 18. That is a student sample story problem made up by the student.

So level two, which is a proficient response, contains a mathematics problem with complete information. It asks the question; the student's question must have an answer of 18. Student sample would be there were 10 giraffes and eight monkeys. How many were there in all? Just a simple example.

The level three or superior response would meet the same criteria as level two, but it contains a two-step problem having different number operations, or a story problem of unexpected complexity. Then, an example here, a student sample is something like this: Mrs. McGonigal gave Chris 50 carrots. Chris's family ate 40 of them at supper. The next day at school Jeffery gave Chris 10 beets. Chris's family ate two of the beets for supper. How many vegetables does Chris now have? The answer is 18. That is complex beyond what was expected. It is a superior indication of, here is a story problem boys and girls; the answer is 18; now tell me the story. Make up a problem the answer to which will be 18.

Children enjoy this type of thing. They really do, and you can really understand their grasp of mathematics when you begin asking them to state the questions.

The fifth thing that happens when they are deciding how to calibrate the standards would be that the team would establish definitions and descriptors of standards and performance levels for inclusion in curriculum frameworks of outcomes and standards documents. That, I hope, will provide some of the clarification the member is seeking in her question.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister table what was sent to the school divisions, that is, the list of outcomes as contained in the curriculum, and just further to that, the minister indicates that in St. James School Division they were sent home with students. Does the minister have any way of knowing how other school divisions dealt with it, because presumably we are now looking at a standard test across the province? If you have some divisions that sent it home and some did not, recognizing that this is a diagnostic test, one would have anticipated that there would be standardized ways of handling this kind of information.

Having talked to parents in some parent councils, it is not my understanding that they are aware of these outcomes, or indeed, that these outcomes are available to them at the moment.

Mrs. McIntosh: I think the member has just absolutely underscored the point that we have been trying to make consistently throughout this. St. James did not send home the test. They sent home the curriculum which contains the outcomes. That is the point that we have been trying and trying to make. The outcomes need to be known before the work begins, and we have been saying that to divisions. We say that to everybody who will listen. The outcomes need to be known from the very beginning. They need to be known before the curriculum is written, and certainly need to be incorporated in the curriculum, and parents should be familiar with what those outcomes are and what that curriculum is, just as teachers should be.

If divisions and boards and schools are not telling parents what their children can expect to learn in Grade 3, we would contend that they should be encouraging them to say: Your child is now going to begin Grade 3.

During Grade 3 they will learn certain subjects. One of them will be mathematics. In Grade 3 mathematics, we expect that by the end of the year, your child will have achieved proficiency in certain outcomes. These are the outcomes. We would like them to be able to compute to a certain level, to have a basic understanding of shapes and patterns. These four strands in the curriculum will lead us to the outcomes we desire for your child, and at the end of the year, your child will be assessed to see if in fact that knowledge has been absorbed.

Schools should be doing that. School divisions should be doing that. They are not being given the test and they are not—if parents are being told what the outcome should be and not understanding that those are the outcomes upon which their children will be assessed, they should be.

I have to indicate when I say that St. James sent home the outcomes, what they sent home was not the entire curricula, which is extremely thick and heavy. What they sent home was a newsletter with the students indicating the key aspects of the Grade 3 mathematics curriculum. That is not an onerous thing to do. It is a fairly simple thing to do, to highlight those key aspects of the Grade 3 math curriculum at the beginning of the year, or at the end of the year in preparation for the following year. The key aspects of the Grade 3 math curriculum do not take a hundred pages to highlight, although if you take the curriculum, of course, it is very thick indeed, but a one- or two-page summary can be most useful for parents and can give those key points in ways that will help parents understand what their children are going to be doing.

So we have encouraged all school divisions to do this, but when we are asked, we notice that some still have not.

We hesitate to order school divisions to share with parents what their children can expect to learn in school in any given year, because the minute we order, then we are told of usurping the authority of the board or stepping in or sending letters to parents without board approval.

We once sent the report. In fact I think the opposition took us to task for it in the House, in questioning in the House, took us very roundly to task in fact for having inadvertently sent the Canadian report on education in Canada to student councils. In some cases, they did not

get to the school boards, and we were slapped on the wrist pretty hard, not just by the school board but by certain members of the opposition. So we want to avoid saying you have to bring all the parents in and tell them what their children are going to be learning next year.

We believe the majority do that, because first of all most parents will ask what is my child going to learn this year. What sort of things do they have to do? Most schools are responsible enough, or most divisions, to let parents know the kind of work their children are going to be learning or what outcomes they should be looking for. Our staff will present to parents when we are invited to a division and we extend this service to divisions. We are quite eager to be invited. Our math consultants have, in fact, presented this information to many parent groups upon request. So when we are invited to come we show up very happily. We consider it a wonderful opportunity to share with parents and help them become part of their children's learning, and so we are anxious for those invitations and hope, indeed, that boards will do the information sharing.

We talked about outcomes and standards in a very general way in the parent report that we sent out ourselves in September 1995. Then in our September 1996 parent report, the math specifics will be the focus, and it will explain the curriculum and standards of math and that parent report should be widely available to parents, but it is still not an obligation of school boards to inform parents of Grade 3 students what the outcome should be in their schools.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I just wanted to ensure that the minister would be tabling those outcomes so that they can be part of the public record. Thank you.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, we will indeed. We will bring those in. We do not have them here today, but we will have them for Monday.

* (1420)

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, what I would like to do is to look at those and then come back to the whole issue of outcomes and standards at a later time.

I note that we are still on line 16.1 (b), and I have one other area of policy to discuss here, but it can equally be

done elsewhere. I do not know what the minister's staff's time is like.

What I wanted to ask about was the business council and the business advisory group on education that the minister has established. I raised some questions about this in the House and I wanted to follow up here. I am concerned that there are a number of areas of the provincial economy which are not represented on this board and particularly the area of telecommunications on an advisory council on education and business. I would have thought that there were many people in Manitoba with excellent experience and credentials who could have been involved in this committee. Given the department's and everyone's concern about distance education, given our concern with making the Internet and those elements available to Manitobans, I would have thought that there would have been a place for one or even two people right at the beginning of this advisory group who would be able to look at that.

This is not to say, of course, that any of the individual members of this committee would not, obviously, have some experience in their own businesses, but it is much broader than that and to try and establish policy and to develop the programs which I think is what the minister will be looking at from this committee for Education, post-secondary and K to 12—and I must admit, I had not picked that up and I know it is in the press release. That was something I had not picked up right at the beginning, and it was when I began to look at this committee in the context of both sections of Education that some of those areas seemed to me to be overlooked.

My initial reaction, of course, was also that there did not seem to be any connection with the North, that there were no connections here that I could see with aboriginal people, and again in terms of the future of Manitoba, the age structure of Manitoba populations that is very significant, I think, for a province. Obviously, considerable concerns for a committee which will be looking at work experience and apprenticeship, that there are no labour representatives on this committee.

If I were to look at it from the perspective of rural Manitoba, I think the kinds of businesses, if I can put that in the broadest context, that are represented in rural Manitoba, co-ops or credit unions, Manitoba Telephone System, Manitoba Hydro, the Crown corporations in

which we have an enormous amount of technical expertise, professional expertise, that I would like to see connected to the schools. Similarly co-ops and credit unions, there is a very wide range of expertise in both of those, very much connected to the business future of Manitoba. My concerns are that there is much opportunity here to broaden the representativeness of this particular committee.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mrs. McIntosh: There were a whole series of questions in there, and as always when there is a whole series of questions, I am madly trying to write them down hoping to keep track of them well enough.

I want to indicate for starters that it would be impossible, if we are trying to keep the group down to a manageable size, to have absolutely every single sector recognized. I think the member appreciates that. The member suggested a number of other people with other kinds of skills, knowledge, or categories, could have been on the group, and that is absolutely true. But we felt we had to limit the number of size to a workable number.

I also indicate that this type of group has never been established before, and I appreciate what I thought I heard was a compliment, that the government had taken the initiative to establish such a group. I know it has been widely praised with the business community and with chambers of commerce and people in those categories that this effort has been made to try to establish some sort of link with the business community.

The people who have been chosen in some cases may be representative of emerging sectors; in others, may have generic knowledge that is applicable to a series of emerging sectors. The chairman, for example, as director of the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses is plugged into literally pages of businesses with a variety of viewpoints and aspects. So you could technically say that the chair, by virtue of being the director of the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses, represents every sector that is reflected in his particular association, which is just about every small business in the whole province.

But more than that, even if you go down and start to take a look at the individual members that are there, and

you look at a Ralph Bullock, for example, the vice-president of Bristol Aerospace. Is he there as a representative of the aerospace industry? Partly. Is he there because he is a member of the lifelong learning task group? Partly. Is he there because of his position on the Economic Innovation and Technology Council? Partly. But, basically, he is there because he understands philosophically and he understands from experience the interconnection between business, between government, between education, between service, and between economic growth. He has a very good grasp of those issues. He also happens to be a prominent business person of a large group that happens to be an emerging sector with a very strong knowledge of technology, running a business that relies heavily upon the capabilities of technology.

But if I were to say, why did I want Ralph Bullock on there? I would say, those are all wonderful good things. He is a technocrat; he is an Economic Technology Council person. He is an innovator by definition, by virtue of his membership on the Innovation and Technology Council, emerging sector, high executive placement, understands the capabilities of technology and what they can do, understands the relationship. Why would I want Ralph Bullock on? Because he is wise, because he is intelligent, because he is knowledgeable, because he is able to communicate and articulate well with labour, with business, with government. He understands the issues relevant to economy and economic growth, and he knows the skills and talents that are required in such a way that he can provide opinion to me on what we need to do in the schools.

We always look at the resumes of people coming onto bodies such as this, a new body. The first time something like this has been done in Manitoba—long overdue. It should have been done years ago, should have been done in the '70s, should have been done in the early '80s, never was, is being done now. Aside from the resumes, what I look for when I look at people for these areas is first of all I look for their get-up-and-go. I look for qualities of character, personality and overall knowledge. You can have someone with the most impressive resume in the world who can sit on a council and be too shy to say a word, or who can sit on the council and monopolize the conversations so that no one else can give input, or who can sit on the council and

want to hear only his or her own views and not be able to listen to others, or who would not know how to reach out to groups who are not on the council because this group will have to do that. They will have to be reaching out and communicating and dialoguing with people beyond themselves. They need to be the type of people who are eager to enter into dialogue and learn from each other.

So those qualities of character are very, very difficult to put on a resume. I also know when we look at these people that we need to try, and we tried very hard, and I think we did do this to make sure that we had a council that did not just reflect the—what did the members opposite call us one day?—the silver-haired aging old men. I think it was recently, I know last year the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) called us a bunch of old white guys, but this year somebody called us a group of silver-haired aging old men. I see one member around this table who would love to have—be the silver-haired head. Of course, those of us who are female on our side of the House do not really take kindly to be calling silver-haired aging old men. However, we understand that there is posturing in the House. We say things sometimes that upon reflection we regret, and we did not call the members on it because, what is the point? We know we are not old men. But I want to make sure I do not have old men on this committee either. I have middle-aged men, old men, young men, women. Nothing wrong with old men. Some of them are pretty nice, and some of them are very wise and carry long years of experience. That is a perspective that needs to be put before.

* (1430)

We also, of course, have been trying to get Manitoba people. We want Manitobans. We have got people on here who own businesses which I think is really interesting. The three women for example on this—and I am so proud of these three women—Manitoba-based businesses. Gail McCullough, for example, and Bev McMaster starting their own businesses, responding directly to the needs of Manitobans, seeing a need, moving in to fill it. Women from Manitoba, rural women responding to a need and finding the need met far beyond their expectations to the point that in the one instance, for example, with Bev McMaster, a Manitoba woman, not an American, not an Ontario person, not a Saskatchewan person, a rural Manitoba woman responding to a need that she noticed in the community within a very few years

has not only won all awards that she has won but has 41 franchises and thousands of employees, a remarkable, remarkable accomplishment. We need to know how those things happen.

So we have deputies, of course, Mr. Chairman, on the committee. In addition to the deputies, we have the concept of membership evolving as it has with other councils previously established. We have both deputies also sitting on the Distance Education and Technology Council, which is structured via the regional consortia which will enable partnerships locally between business, schools, communities. MERLIN is also on that council. The mandate includes the empowerment and the responsibility to liaise and consult with others to take a system-wide approach. Several members, at least, are very broadly knowledgeable on it because they are on the economic council. We expect that these people will be talking to others because it is impossible to have everybody on this council. This council will be reaching out to those members of society who may not be directly represented here but whose contribution can and should be felt reaching out to obtain their views as they get to those points in their work. Thank you.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, well, my concerns with this committee are, as I said, essentially the representativeness of Manitoba and, obviously, areas like telecommunications and mining and agribusiness are not as represented here as one would expect. I did not know that MERLIN was going to be on this committee. I am not sure if it said that in the departmental press release, but I think that is certainly a good idea that they should be part of it. I am concerned that northern and aboriginal Manitoba is not, so far, part of this group.

My other concern, of course, is the nature of a co-operative province. I do not just mean that in reference to the co-ops and credit unions that I talked about just a minute ago—but the fact that labour is not involved in this, I think, is not perhaps representative of this province or of the nature of this province where there has always been a strong labour movement. One of the things that I was very discouraged to see had not happened in the previous eight or nine years was the fulfilment of—and it was Brian Mulroney's initiative—the Labour Force Development Board, which did bring together labour and business and direct them towards dealing with education, not just in the context of creating a labour force and

connecting it to the labour market but in a broader sense, too, of labour, business and education.

It seems to me that is the partnership we should be looking for, and although I think, yes, the minister has taken a step with this group, my concerns are that I think there was a potential that remains unfulfilled for a government to bring together those groups and to bring together a group which is more representative than I think this one is of Manitoba. My concerns are not with the individuals. The minister has spoken very highly of certain individuals. They are not people that I know, but my concern here is not with the individual capabilities of any person on this board. It is with the nature of its composition and the belief that I had that it was possible in this province to bring together labour and business and education and to direct them in the best interests of our students and of our education system.

So it is, in a sense, if I can put it in these terms to the minister, looking to the future. If there are expansions, if there are directions that this board can go, those are the ones that I would think would be of the most benefit to Manitobans. I wanted to ask the minister a couple of just specific questions because I did have difficulty following up on one of them. Gail McCullough, whom the minister spoke of, the owner of Homecade (Manitoba), I could not find any information on Homecade. I could not even find a telephone number, or otherwise I would have phoned them to find out what the business was. The Manitoba Telephone System did not have a phone number under that name. Has the business name changed, or is there perhaps some description and location and history of the company that the minister could give us?

Secondly, lifelong learning task group, is that a task group of the Innovation and Technology Council? It is not a terminology I am familiar with.

Mrs. McIntosh: It is a task group of the EITC, and I should clarify as well MERLIN is not on the business advisory group. MERLIN is on the obviously the Distance Education Technology Council, but the deputies are on both. There is cross-pollination occurring was what I was trying to say. So I just wanted to clarify that the ability to cross-pollinate is there because those groups are intertwined, and MERLIN is on the group with which the business advisory council has intertwinement, if that is

such a word. That is like when the Minister of Housing said pretzelizing.

Gail McCullough, it may be a new listing. It is a new business. It is computer—what is the word?—they have computer games, they have computer technological entertainment, Nintendo, those types of things. It is a retail business that sells to the retail market computer adaptations basically for entertainment purposes. That business is new. I believe it should be listed in the phone book—well, maybe not. This is nearly the end of the year, should have it some place. At any rate, that is the nature of the business. It is that type of enterprise. It is a small business, family-owned small business.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 1.(b)1 Executive Support Salaries Employee Benefits, \$631,900—pass.

1.(b)2 Other Expenditures, \$128,500. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Friesen: I just had a question on the Supplies and Services line which shows some increase. Could the minister tell us what that increase is for? It goes from \$30,000 to \$39,000. At the same time, I think there is 22.7 increase in staff years as well. So could the staff give us some information on that?

* (1440)

Mrs. McIntosh: I wonder if the member could point out to us exactly where she is looking. We see a decrease here but not an increase, but maybe we are looking in the wrong place.

Ms. Friesen: I am on Other Expenditures, 16.1 (b). In 1995, on the first line, there was \$24,000 for transport. That goes up to \$29,000 in 1996-97. Moving further down it goes from, on Supplies and Services, from 30 to 39. Are we on the right lines now? Then I was also just questioning some information further down on the 22.7 staff years, an increase from 13.7.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I should indicate that it is just a fairly simple explanation. We have realigned the dollars with different categories so they reflect more accurately the actual expenditures.

In the past, the totals were very concise and clear, but inside the totals we were not able to be as specific as we are now. For example, when we say, as we do if you look down to the bottom where it has 128 on that page, you can see that we are down \$300 on our operating expenses. So we are within \$300 of last year. We are down \$300. We are pleased to be down rather than up, and we are down \$300 due to savings in telephone rental and long-distance charges. That is basically how that adjustment occurs.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, the adjustment then from staff years, however—I am not sure how that works within the regular procedures of government. The shifting from 13 to 22 seems rather large to me, and I wondered what the explanation was of that.

* (1450)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, those are not staff years. They are other expenditures. If you look at the top, you will see other expenditures—[interjection] Pardon me? Yes, there is a difference of about \$9,000 there—I see where she is looking. She is pointing up to the top where it has SY—but if you see the solid black lines under the 11 and the 11.

So we have increased some other office supplies, and it has come from reductions in other places. That is the 22 to the 13, but those are not staff years. Those are other expenditures.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 1.(b)(2) Other Expenditures \$128,500—pass.

1.(c) Planning and Policy Co-ordination (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$423,200.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, this is Planning and Policy Co-ordination. We have discussed a lot of the policy issues, I think, under an earlier line.

But specifically here, I wanted to ask about the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. I know the minister is taking a delegation to Edmonton soon and that it deals with post-secondary education, in particular. I have asked in the past about the Council of Ministers of Education and its plans, policies, organization, the way in which it has the opportunity, in fact, to bring a national

presence or a national voice to bear in post-secondary education. Ministers, not just this minister but ministers in the past, have said it has been very difficult to focus the attention of the CMEC on post-secondary education.

So I am particularly interested in this forthcoming conference. What kind of policy papers have been prepared for the minister on this? What kind of message is Manitoba taking to this conference? Who is involved in the delegation to the conference, and, really, what does the minister anticipate will be the outcome?

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not know if the member has received a copy of the agenda. If she would like one, I would be pleased to provide her with one, because it is interesting and I think she would be interested. When I finish referring to it here, I will table it. This one is a little grungy. [interjection] Yes, that is a good one. It is not as grungy as most of ours, but it has a few little smears. Here is a cleaner one, and I will table this for you to look at. It is not primarily focused on post-secondary education although that certainly will be part of it.

There are topics such as accountability in Canadian education, are we getting what we value? Now that covers the whole gamut from kindergarten to doctoral level in terms of—the heading is Are We Getting What We Value. It is actually in light of some of the controversy going on here in Manitoba, probably an appropriate one, and it also I think underscores the fact that this is a topic that is of very high interest to every province and territory in the nation.

I am taking with me someone from the Manitoba Teachers' Society. I had hoped it could be Linda York, the president, but she is having to go to another meeting so I will be taking her designate with me. I think if you look down you will see under the Accountability, Canadian Education, Are We Getting What We Value: you will see Values, Expectations and Needs; What do Canadians want from Canadian Education; Current Best Practices; What can be Learned from Best Practices; Accountability Practices in Education; Accountability for Universal Quality; How do we Achieve Quality Education; et cetera, et cetera.

That topic is one, there is quite a bit actually going on through here in accountability, but as I table this you can

see the topics, and if you would like to discuss any of them or indeed provide me with thoughts on any of them I would be pleased to take this under consideration when I go to the meeting.

We are limited in the number that we can take this year because of cost. The Ministers of Education across the nation agreed that this year trying to contain cost they would only take a limited number of people. There will be representatives in attendance from the superintendents' association; the school trustees association; the Manitoba Teachers' Society; it used to be called Home and School, it is now called the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils. Of course the two deputies will be with me. I am taking with me one university student. There will be a representative from the Independent School Federation. Every stakeholder group that we are aware of in education has a representative going. We are taking with us directly representatives from any groups that were not already on the list. So the groups all signed up, and any group that was not able to, or for whatever reason was not on the list, we have invited to attend with us, so all groups in Manitoba with an interest in education will have a representative there, plus I will be there and my two deputies.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, does that mean that six plus two, the total delegation is eight, or is there essentially a longer list that the minister is tabling? My other question was what kind of a message, what kind of papers have been prepared for the minister? What is Manitoba going to be focusing upon and what kind of outcome does the minister expect from this conference? These are annual events. Manitoba now has a history and a record of attending these conferences. Some have been more valuable than others, I expect, and what does the minister hope for and expect from this conference? Could the minister also tell me who the university student is, or shall we say from which university since we have not identified the other individuals?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: While the minister is getting ready to give that answer, I would just like to put to the committee: since we started a few minutes late, would it be the will of the committee to make up those few minutes at the end? We can do that on a Friday. We can adjust the time if we wish. You do not have to. It is up to you. We started four minutes late, if you will. It is not a big deal, but I am just saying to you, if you wish.

Mrs. McIntosh: I will just try to give you a fairly brief answer for now, presuming this line of questioning will continue and we will have a more thorough discussion on Monday, if you wish. Where to start?

The university student that I am taking with me will be the president of the students' union at the University of Manitoba. The president that I will be taking is the incoming president, and that will be, I think, his first real thing that he does on behalf of the students' union in his role as incoming president.

Students are not normally included at this level, but I have a propensity for including students, particularly adult students who have some sense of experience and, as the consumer of the system, some expectations as to the quality of service we deliver. So I keep running around saying, schools are for students, educational institutions are for students, so wherever I am legally allowed, I will include a student. I have chosen the president of the University of Manitoba Students' Union because it is the largest post-secondary educational institution in Manitoba. I did not have room to take along all the others, although I would have if I could have.

* (1500)

I think the students have a sense of each other's needs between institutions, and I thought that his perspective would be valuable. This did not mean that I wanted to replace any of the other organizations because the way the conference is set up, there will be groups who will receive invitations, though not directly from the minister's office. But, through other channels, they will receive invitations to attend the Council of Ministers of Education.

What we did in my office, then, was to obtain a list of the representatives who were going. We have a list in our office of what we sort of call the stakeholder groups in education. We took that list and compared it with the list of people who were already going and determined that the superintendents had a representative registered but that the teachers did not—that type of thing.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Is it the will of the committee to allow the minister to finish her answer? [agreed]

Mrs. McIntosh: I will be brief. So we just went down that way and said, we have five plus three. We are allowed to take—we will fill in the holes and make sure that every stakeholder group, if they are not already going under a different invitation, then can be put on the minister's list to be invited.

The other question you had was policy papers, and we have already supplied our policy papers to CMEC for this consultation. We can bring those in Monday as well, if you wish. We are looking to find priorities for common action. We are looking for a collaborative action between the partners to achieve these priorities. We are now meeting twice a year, not just once a year, and the degree of co-operation, I am told, by the staff that has been ongoing is unprecedented. It has never been seen before in the history of this country in terms of the issues that we are tackling and the way we are working together as an entity. We are no longer just a networking group, we are a hardworking team. We will get into this more, but I must indicate that I am thoroughly enjoying getting to know and working with ministers of Education of all political stripes. I find them all to be very concerned about students and education and delightful to work with, each and every one of them.

I think that covers all your questions for now unless I have forgotten one again.

Ms. Friesen: There was a little bit more on anticipated outcomes that are sort of a reflection on the whole process, which we can leave for next time, but the minister did offer to bring in the policy papers that have already been presented or that the department has prepared. I would appreciate those as a tabled document.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes. I will be pleased to do that. I want to indicate to the member, just so that what we go through there is understood, that we present a policy paper and we will have those kinds of formal discussions. The bulk of the real nitty-gritty kind of work comes when questions are thrown out and dialogue begins and out of the dialogue then surface ideas and reactions to ideas that may not be contained in a policy document from any one of the provinces but that rather surface from the combined mind meld, so to speak, of the people who are there.

You may not find everything in the policy papers or in my anticipated outcomes that we will include all that we

might end up discussing once we get there, because it always kind of grows like bread rising. Just for clarification, I put that forward to you.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The time being 3:05 p.m., committee rise.

HEALTH

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Would the Committee of Supply come to order please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Health. We are on line 1.(b)(1).

Would the minister's staff enter the Chamber at this time, please.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, yesterday we discussed briefly the Health ministers' conference that took place in Ottawa yesterday. I also asked the question about the additional \$2-million expenditure in the Estimates concerning transfusion services, and I have not seen the communique that was issued as a result of the conference yesterday, but I did read a report in The Globe and Mail concerning the results of yesterday's conference.

I realize it is not a final position, but there seems to be a move towards the establishment of a different kind of regime or agency or administrative apparatus dealing with blood transfusion services in the country. Putting aside the issue of the Krever commission, that has major implications for how we are dealing with the blood transfusions in Manitoba in the future. From the comments, I assume (a) that the Red Cross will continue to be the agency that will deliver the transfusion services in Manitoba. I am looking to the minister to confirm that firstly, and secondly, what kind of regime is being looked at and the relationship between that regime and the Canadian blood agency? I wonder if the minister might inform the House where he sees this going or how the structure may or may not look in the future. I realize this is tentative, but just to give some understanding as to where we are going so people in the system will have some idea as to where the province is taking us.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Chairperson, I will be able a little later today to give the

honourable member a better report. Dr. Wade returned from Ottawa last night and we have not had an opportunity as yet, because of meetings Dr. Wade is attending this morning, for a debriefing on the discussions in Ottawa. But Dr. Wade will be with us a little later today for some time, and perhaps the honourable member might raise that question at that time.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for that response, and we will pursue that line of questioning further on during the Estimates process.

Mr. Chairperson, the department has sent a letter to the hospitals separately asking them to account for their expenditures in relation to the labour dispute that is going on now concerning home care. I am wondering if the minister can outline for us under which appropriation of the Health budget will these additional funds that are being expended to deal with patients in institutions come out of? Which budgetary appropriation will that come out of?

Mr. McCrae: In a situation like this our first priority is to ensure that the clients of the home care system get what they need in terms of additional costs that hospitals are put to as a result of this disruption—not something we wanted, and not something that anybody supports it seems.

The hospitals of course, in a situation like this when similar things have happened in the past, they have to keep careful records of expenditures that they have had to go to in order to assist us get through a disruption like this. At the end of the strike, which we hope will be just right away, there will be an appropriate accounting on the part of all hospitals who took patients in from the Home Care program and then adjustments made at that time. As to which appropriation we are talking about, that is not something that is clear at this point. It will be made clearer as we get to that time.

The resources of this department are really being used—quite serious about this to assist our clients. We have people at all levels in our department who are providing service to people while the union has withdrawn its services to the clients. Someone has to be there for the clients, and we have some pretty wonderful people in this province, I can tell you, at all levels of our department. I daresay there are volunteers from other

departments and other parts of society in the province of Manitoba that are moving to assist their fellow citizens.

It is quite a tradition we have in Manitoba. We have people like yourself, Mr. Chairman, helping out with the flood conditions, sandbagging and one thing and another. This is not new in Manitoba. This is what we do. I remember a few years back there were forest fires. A number of communities just linked arms with others and helped their fellow Manitobans in a time when it was important to do that. So that is one of the reasons we can all be very proud to be Manitobans.

There are a lot of people who work as home care attendants who have my respect. Some are providing services; some wish they were and would be except for some of the things that are being said to them and some of the ways they are being treated by others in the system, especially those involved with the union movement who are finding ways to discourage people from providing services to their clients. They do not want to be abandoning their clients, and yet that is what they are being forced to do. We find that very troubling but nonetheless we sympathize with those people. I do not think that the withdrawal of services is something that the rank and file home care attendants in this province ever wanted in the first place. We have union leadership leading people in directions that I am quite certain they do not want to be going in.

* (0910)

So when it comes to how we do the accounting at the end of an unfortunate dispute like this, that will become clearer as we get to the end of that strike, which we hope will be very soon.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, when we ask questions often in Question Period related specifically to expenditure items as they relate to the budget, ministers, and this minister as well, often refer us to the Supplementary Estimates process where we can get the specific information on a specific budgetary appropriation item.

We have had a long debate in here about the merits or the nonmerits of the strike, and the minister has gone on at length on the issue, but my question, however, is highly relevant and I wish the minister—there was recently a strike in the health system concerning doctors. Can the

minister indicate—and as well there was a procedure put in place by the Department of Health to reimburse those institutions for the incurred cost of that particular dispute.

Can the minister tell me, did that expenditure come out of the direct Hospitals line expenditure, item 4.(c) of the expenditure items, or did it come out of some other contingency or some other fund from the Department of Health?

Mr. McCrae: The costs, the expenditures associated with the delivery of emergency health services comes out of the Hospitals budget as set out in the Estimates for the department, so that expenditures related to that particular disruption would have come out of that line. That was for 1995-96.

There may be some difficulties getting the kind of information the honourable member wants. I just say to him, as I have said to him before, the resources of this department are pretty stretched. When it comes to a review of the Estimates and some of the things the member brings forward, I have said to him, help us get this strike resolved and the staff of the department will be in a more traditional mode when it comes to dealing with the Estimates here. But it is very difficult, Mr. Chairman, for me to promise the honourable member speedy responses to the detailed kinds of questions he asks when we have people at senior levels and every level of the department out there providing service to people, helping them as volunteers and helping them with whatever skills they have, applying them to the task of making sure that our home care clients are properly cared for.

It is a difficult time when you get thousands of people being led off the job by their union leadership without even knowing what the government's proposals are, voting to do that without having anything negotiated. That sort of thing creates a difficulty for me right here in these Estimates. Within the Estimates review, I am usually I think pretty forthcoming with information when it is asked for, and I would be that way now except that we have staff in the Department of Health whose attention is directed towards a dispute and services that need to be provided in the light of a withdrawal of services.

We have a union that will not even agree to essential services, and the honourable member, I have implored

him a number of times to use his considerable weight with respect to, you know, a close association with the union leadership to use whatever influence he has as the Health critic for the New Democratic Party to try, if he cannot find it in his heart to ask the union leadership to abandon this foolishness, at least to do the right thing and have a little bit of compassion and sensitivity for fellow citizens who require services like toileting assistance, services like feeding and bathing, dressing and moving from chair to bed and bed to chair, that sort of thing. The union is refusing to assist with that sort of thing.

The honourable member and his colleagues, his own Leader, who is a former president of the MGEU, it seems to me there is a close association. Well, we know there is a close association between the NDP and the union movement, and I would appeal to the honourable member's sense of compassion for his fellow citizens to get together with his union boss friends and say, you know, there are people who really require these services. This is totally unkind. It is callous and it is insensitive, and we in the New Democratic Party do not want to stand for this sort of insensitivity and callousness so why do you not help us out here, help us out by—even if you cannot agree with the government on the bigger issues, why can you not at least provide essential services?

My colleague the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) apparently was talking to somebody yesterday about this, and even in a war, there is a Geneva Convention that provides that there be these types of basic services. Here we are in one of the most civilized places in the world and we have a recognized political party in our system here, the loyal opposition in this Legislature, who will not come to the aid of their fellow citizens at a time like this. It boggles the mind, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: I take it from the minister's response, Mr. Chairperson, that the last year expenditure, the additional expenditures as a result of the emergency doctors strike came out of the appropriation of the hospital appropriation. I take that from the minister's response. If I am incorrect, I would hope the minister would advise me because it is last year's expenditure and surely the minister ought to know that.

My question continues, hospitals have been told in a letter, dated April 12, to make specific budgetary provision and allocation based on the cost as a result of

this dispute. Now I have accepted the minister's response previously that it is very difficult to ascertain the costs, that he will provide a cost accounting at some future period, and I recognize the fact that the department staff are very occupied, but there are some very legitimate questions that I think the minister ought and should be able to answer in this Chamber.

The question, therefore, is, with respect to these additional costs that are considerable, that are occurring as a result of this dispute, will those costs come out of the line hospital item which has been reduced by \$53 million this year? Will they come out of the \$38 million transition that has been put in place to deal with changes in the Winnipeg hospital sector, or will they come out of the additional roughly \$8 million put into the home care budget this year to deal with home care costs?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, no one is saying that the member's questions are not quite legitimate. They ought to be answered, and I do not say there is anything unreasonable about that, but the honourable member did not answer my entreaty. I wonder will he please answer the question? Will he go to the union bosses and insist that unless they provide for essential services, their relationship is at an end?

* (0920)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, can the minister outline for me whether or not the additional costs incurred during this particular dispute—there is a letter dated April 12, '96, that went to all institutions from the department, asking them to make specific allocations in their budget and in their accounting. Will that money come out of the hospital line item, which has been reduced by \$53 million? Will it come out of the \$38 million that has been put in place for transition as a result of changes occurring in the urban hospital sector in Winnipeg, or will it come out of the \$8-million home care additional funding, or the home care budget per se that has been allocated this year?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, the time has certainly come when the honourable member has to be responsive to the responsibilities that he has as a spokesperson for the second largest represented party in this House. You know, the honourable member cannot run and hide from the issue at hand. Will he use his considerable influence

to insist that his union boss friends provide essential services to people in Manitoba who have Alzheimer's disease, people in Manitoba who have Parkinson's disease, people in Manitoba who have multiple sclerosis, people who have severe cases of arthritis?

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, I asked a very specific question on a very specific issue relating to a line appropriation item in the course of these Estimates, and the minister has responded with completely—I look to the question of relevancy again. While we have been debating and discussing the home care issue in great detail back and forth, the minister's response bears absolutely no relationship with the question as posed.

The minister cannot draw even a minute association with the question as posed, and I am wondering if you might call the minister to order based on relevancy.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, throughout the course of the Estimates review for the Department of Health, the honourable member has been raising issues related to home care, and so have I, to be honest. That is an appropriate topic for discussion, I suggest.

I think the honourable member is very often listened to; he is very often quoted in the public media. People look to the honourable member for Kildonan for leadership, and frankly, so do I.

This is a time in the history of health services in Manitoba when leadership is something that is cried out for, and from Her Majesty's loyal opposition here, you would think the people of Manitoba would be entitled to expect some kind of support for the clients of the home care system. Will the honourable member use his—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister has given me enough information on the matter. Just give me one minute, please.

For the information on the honourable member's point of order, he does have a point of order towards Rule No. 70.(3) "Speeches in a Committee of the Whole House must be strictly relevant to the item or clause under discussion." I do believe we have had a fairly open

discussion on home care over the past three or four days. The item questions that the honourable member is asking are pertinent to certain line expenditures. The concern I have as the Chairperson at this time is that under the line we are dealing with we can almost go into a very open debate on just about any area. I would request the assistance of the honourable members in maintaining the lines of questioning and the answers towards the issues that are before the committee at this time.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to conclude his answer.

Mr. McCrae: The questions, as I have said, raised by the honourable member are indeed important and there is a time for answering them. I do not think that during the dispute is the right time, frankly. Why would the honourable member want to know how our contingency plan is being financed at a time when the dispute is still on if it is not to—there is no reason why that information ought to be shared until the strike is over. When it is over I will be happy to tell the honourable member all the things that arose from that. We have a job to do, and so do the home care attendants in this province. They want to do their job. They are being held back from doing their job by their union boss leaders who are very close to people like the honourable member for Kildonan.

So I am saying, we have people in Manitoba whose needs are such that they require—it is not a question of something being optional. These are the kinds of people that, as my friend and colleague the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) has pointed out, would be protected under such instruments as the Geneva Convention in a time of war. But here we have a New Democratic Party in Manitoba who refuse to stand up for people in Manitoba who have Parkinson's disease, who have Alzheimer's disease, who have multiple sclerosis and who have severe cases of arthritis and others as well who are functionally dependent upon home care services. Not once since the beginning of this labour dispute has the honourable member for Kildonan done a press conference, rose in his place in this House and stood to his feet and said, yes, I demand that the union provide essential services to those people.

You know, it is reasonable for a New Democrat to maybe agree with the union about the substance of the

dispute. I am not arguing that right at this moment. I will at some other time. But certainly when it comes to the issue of essential services, a responsible opposition would cry out from the rooftops and say, enough of this foolishness, what about the people in Manitoba who require these services?

You know, when the nurses went on strike back in 1991, there were essential service arrangements in place. Any decent, responsible union in this country—this is the most civilized, supposedly, country in the world—any decent and responsible union leadership would say, yes, we have to be able to have a right to fight out our issues with the government of the day but certainly we are not going to make victims or hostages out of the very vulnerable clients of our home care system while we have our fight with the government. It is quite appropriate that that fight be had, that the discussion be had, that there be a dispute and so on. I am not saying that should not be happening, certainly not for the moment. What I am saying is that there are people who need services on an essential basis. I want the honourable member for Kildonan to have the courage of what he says. He says he cares about the clients of the home care system. Let him use his good offices and his considerable influence with the union movement to demand of Peter Olfert that today, within the next hour, they agree to arrangements for the delivery of essential services to the clients of our home care system.

* (0930)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am advised that the government has so incompetently handled this matter that they were not prepared to have a proper contingency plan, and still do not, relating to this particular issue. I am advised that this government, who knew they were facing a strike situation, was unable to negotiate and have had eight years in office to negotiate an essential services agreement in this area and were so incompetent in that application they were unable to do so. They knew they were facing a strike. They were unable to put in place an essential services agreement. They had eight or nine years, and all they have done is be on the defensive and blame everybody but themselves—blame the unions, blame the home care workers, blame the clients—when in fact it is this government's and this minister's incompetence that have put us in the situation we are in. It is this minister and his failure to negotiate an agreement over eight years of office. How long have they

been the government? How long have they had the opportunity? How long ahead did they know this strike was upon them?

I am advised that they are so ill prepared, ill equipped to deal with the strike, that it is one of the reasons why they were forced to get clerks and financial people to go into people's homes, Mr. Chairperson, to deliver home care. This government does not even understand home care. This minister does not understand the implications, the intimate relationships between home care clients and home care workers, the very intimate and long-standing relationships. If they did, why would they put in place a plan that would remove the home care workers and put in place a private agency for a determined—they are going to tender. They are going to take away peoples' home care workers and tender to private companies in a monopoly situation, and at some point that contract may or may not be up, and they will change the workers again.

The biggest criticism of this government's privatization policy is the lack of continuity, the lack of understanding of the relationship between a home care worker, Mr. Chairperson, and the client. So, I do not fault the home care workers, and I do not fault the clients. Who I find fault with is a government that was ill prepared, ill advised, did not have in place an essential services agreement, knowing they were facing a situation, knowing they were facing this. They did not believe there would be this kind of situation and are thus unprepared and, consequently, we have a minister who is attacking everyone instead of looking internally and saying how can we solve the situation, how can we get out of this situation.

Mr. Chairperson, there is no report, no study, no foundation whatsoever that supports the government's privatization. Evelyn Shapiro does not. The Connie Curran report does not. There is even a graph in the Connie Curran report that indicates the present system is more cost-effective than the proposed privatization, in their own documentation, and yet they continue to privatize. So the issue is not one of ideology, the issue is the government's insistence on privatization. If the government position is so sound, why would you not consider a year moratorium to review the situation?

Mr. Chairperson, there are people of upstanding character all across the province. We have ex-Premiers,

Duff Roblin, Ed Schreyer. We have ex-Health ministers, Bud Sherman, Larry Desjardins, ex-Conservative Leaders, Sidney Spivak, any one or combination of them could be given a task to study over the next year the merits of the government privatization plan. If the plan is so sound, if the need is so sound, why would the government not be prepared to put it on hold for a year, have some individual or individuals review it, study it and come back? Why would the government be unwilling to do that? That would end the strike today. That would put the home care workers back to work. That would allow the clients to get the kind of care they need and deserve.

(Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

So why would the government not consider that option in order to end this situation, rather than constantly attacking, constantly looking for scapegoats? And that offer is made. The minister did it as Minister of Justice on several occasions. The minister did it as Minister of Health. I believe it was Don Orchard, who brought in an outside party to deal with the original doctors' dispute. Why, if the government position is so sound, would you not put it under scrutiny, let it be studied for a year and then come back? If you are so confident of your position, why are you unwilling to have it come under public scrutiny, under that vehicle or, in fact, under some form of public hearings? If the position is as sound as the minister says it is—and his is the only voice we hear other than the We Care proposal from 1993 advocating it. He is the only voice. If that position is so sound, why would they not open it up to some kind of moratorium for a year and have it studied by eminent people who are familiar with the situation and have some public hearing process? Why would the minister be unwilling to do that?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I listened fairly carefully to the honourable member, and I did not hear any position put forward with respect to essential services. He suggests that I am blaming everybody; no, I am not. I certainly blame union bosses who take a strike vote without even knowing the position of the government, simply because they wanted to have a strike. Yes, I do. I certainly blame the honourable member for Kildonan who not once has stood on his feet to defend the interests of the clients of our system.

He has defended the union bosses; he has defended the status quo. I have known since I was a young fellow that

the New Democrats oppose anything other than public ownership and public operation and public control and all of that. That is no surprise. So, when we moved in this direction, it was no surprise to me that this would not enjoy the support of the honourable member or the union bosses. It was interesting that, when that Seven Oaks project report did come forward, the honourable member for Kildonan very, very, sheepishly had to admit that all of the patients that were part of that project were extremely pleased with the outcomes and that they were getting better care and the medical people were also of that view. So the honourable member had to handle himself very, very carefully in those circumstances because it was a private company, and this, of course, bothered the heck out of the member for Kildonan because he has got this sort of thing about anything that is not run by government.

It is really quite an insult, too, to hear the honourable member talk. If I worked for a private company, no matter what kind of private company, whether it was manufacture of wieners, which is one of the examples he gave, or if I worked for McDonald's—we have heard the NDP talk in very disparaging terms about that particular corporation and the employees who work there—no matter who I work for, if I work for a government organization or a private one or a nonprofit one, as an individual human being, I know I speak for everybody when I say this, you do your level best, you take pride in your work, you care about the product, you care about the service, and you care about the person who is receiving the service. I have talked to enough people to know this, Mr. Chairman.

Just because you happen to pay union dues, you are somehow a special kind of human being. Give me a break. That is not the real world. The honourable member seems to think that, unless you have a union card and pay your union dues, you are a second-class citizen. I do not subscribe to that sort of thinking and the patient does not either. I do not know a patient anywhere in this province who is going to demand to see your union card before they receive services from them. I think it is time that the member for Kildonan and his colleagues over there were exposed for what they really are, and that is that they are totally against individual human beings out there in our society doing their level best to put in a good day's work for a day's pay.

I do not care whether you work for the government or who you work for, Mr. Chairman; you are an individual human being and you are supposed to have a little bit of dignity and be accorded a little bit of dignity by the honourable member and his colleagues. They insult ordinary Manitobans day in and day out around this place, and somebody has to stand up and talk about that and expose them for what they really are and for what they really do.

In this particular case, the question cries out for a response. Why is it that the honourable member, even today at this late hour, continues to refuse to stand up for people who have multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, severe cases of arthritis and other people who are functionally dependent on home care services? He will not go to his union boss buddies and say, I demand. Union bosses demand enough of the NDP. Is it not time for a little payback? Is it not time for the NDP to have a chance and a turn to demand that somebody do the right thing for vulnerable people in this province? This is the main issue right now. I do not expect the union bosses will ever agree with any sort of competition, although we have offered that opportunity to them. They must be afraid of their ability to compete or something because they have not accepted any offer put forward by the government to allow them to bid on these contracts and provide work for their union members and to provide care for their patients. You see this is what is hard for the honourable member to accept. I do not care whether you have a union card or not. I am here representing the client of the system. The client deserves better.

* (0940)

The honourable member wants to go back to the system we had in the first place. That is the position of the New Democratic Party as put forward by its own Health critic, the honourable member for Kildonan. I repeat, go back to the system we had in the first place. Their own report, Mr. Chairman, the Price Waterhouse report, commissioned by the NDP—I do not know how many millions they paid for it. Maybe the member can answer that question today. He has refused to answer that question: how many millions the NDP paid for the Price Waterhouse report, which on page xix, if I can find it, calls for the following, and I quote: The program should require regional program managers to manage their

budgets more actively and to stay within approved levels and should give program staff greater discretion over service levels per client, i.e., permitting dilution of services in order to achieve budget targets.

The NDP had a lot of concern about budget targets in those days, I guess. This was in the later part of their term, and they were starting to talk about trying to live within their means, although they never came anywhere close to it.

And that quote again, Mr. Chairman: The program should give consideration to introducing measures that would serve to encourage clients to meet their needs through their own resources, e.g., user fees, waiting periods prior to receiving nonprofessional services—making them wait—and user fees during the initial period of service—in other words, patient pays up front, that is what the NDP is talking about, and limiting hours in which services are provided.

The honourable member wants to talk about reports, well here is a dandy one. I go back to where I was yesterday before the end of the day arrived, and he says—I think it was last week in Question Period, the position of the NDP was put forward when the honourable member said, go back to the system we had in the first place. Well, the system we had in the first place was like this. The review found that there are inadequate hospital discharge planning practices which lead to inappropriate discharges to home care, lack of proper discharge preparation and potentially unsafe client situations. That is what the honourable member wants us to go back to.

This report from Price Waterhouse, Mr. Chairman, is rife with references to problems in the home care system, and since we have been in office, every attempt that has been made to try to address the issues raised in the NDP's own report has been met with condemnation from the member opposite. It makes you wonder about what drives him. Is it his slavish friendship with the union bosses, or is it simply an opportunity to call attention to your own party, not to your position, but to your own party, because we have not heard a position from the honourable member other than go back to the system we had in the first place? Well, that is not good enough. Our patients have been telling us—a thousand of them in the first year of operation of the appeal panel had concerns to raise with the appeal panel. You cannot say

we have the greatest program and there is nothing wrong with it. Well, we do have the greatest program, but there are things wrong with it, and we are not going to address them unless we admit it. This honourable member cannot admit it, and I appeal to him again to answer the question. Will he today prevail upon his union boss friends and insist that the relationship between them and the union will cease unless immediately essential services are delivered to the clients of the home care system that I referred to earlier?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I pointed out to the minister on many occasions and he was not aware of it, but I told him that he has an implementation committee for the Price Waterhouse report. His government tabled that report. This minister has an implementation committee. The minister keeps referring to the appeal board. The appeal panel was put in place to deal with changes put in by the Minister of Health when they cut back home care services in 1993. The appeal panel was put in place when the government changed the nature of the home care system so that we went from 13,139 people being assessed for admission down to 11,395. That is when the minister put in a home appeal panel and it was put in because government was cutting people off of home care.

So the minister is getting completely distorted in terms of his—Mr. Chairperson, the minister talks constantly about relationships. I would like the minister to table all of the meetings that he has had with private companies. Would the minister be prepared to table all the meetings that he had with private companies, private caregivers, the principals of the private companies? Would he be prepared to come to this Chamber and deal with that issue so that we will know where the input is coming with respect to this decision?

When the government's Treasury Board document—which the minister refuses to deal with in this Chamber—that he signed off that proposed the privatization of home care, when that document was released, the Department of Health held meetings with home care staff. I do not know if the minister had occasion, but I attended one of those meetings, and Mr. Chairperson, the staff were in shock. There were maybe 500 people at that meeting, and the department officials stood at the front of the meeting and tried their best to try to explain the government policy on privatization, but

they did not have the answers. They did not know whether the staff would be fired. They did not know whether the staff would be eligible for UIC. They did not have any answers to the 500 or so staff, many of whom were crying, who were concerned about their clients, saying you are going to take me away from my client whom I have worked with for years and years and years.

There was no recognition of that continuity. Does the minister not see the point? You have longstanding relationships develop between clients and caregivers. The government is taking, at least in the start, 25 percent of the city of Winnipeg and saying we are giving you all new caregivers, firstly. They are taking all of the nursing service, 300 nurses, the entire VON service that provides home care in the city of Winnipeg, and they are saying we are giving that to a private agency. Does the minister not recognize that there might be a little bit of concern on the part of not just the workers but the client when you are saying we are dismantling, we are taking away your workers, the people that you have developed these intimate working relationships with? And they are intimate, Mr. Chairperson, let us have no mistake about it. The relationship of an orderly to his or her patient is as intimate as you can get.

This government, without consultation, without study, is ripping apart those relationships, so is there any wonder that clients and caregivers are concerned? Not only have they decided to take away the relationship between at least 25 percent in Winnipeg, soon to be all, and all of the nursing service, changing the caregivers, changing the approach, they are going to give it out to contract. And how long will the contract last? The minister will not give us any information about the tenders. Will it be a year? And after a year, will they then give it to another company who will then have to change all of their workers and change all of those relationships, and then another company and another company? What will that do to the relationships between the clients, the patients, the community and their caregivers. Is there not even a recognition, is there not an understanding?

Mr. Chairperson, Evelyn Shapiro has indicated the most condemning aspect of the government's privatization plan is this question of continuity and the question of relationships, and there is absolutely no recognition on the part of this government or this minister

of the essence and the importance of it, which takes us back to our initial point. Why will you not be prepared to put a year-long moratorium, have it studied by a group or a group of individuals, have public hearings, do something to deal with those concerns. If at the end of the day you can justify your position, which you have yet been unable to do, then so be it.

* (0950)

This whole debate going back and forth and back and forth and blaming the unions, it is not productive, and I could counter just as easily and say table all of the meetings you have had with private caregivers; table all of that. Come to this House and tell us when you have met with the principals of private home care companies so we will know what impact and influence they have had on this particular decision. But it gets into a war of words.

What is at stake here is the relationship and the care being offered to Manitobans and the lack of understanding and sensitivity on the part of the minister and the government of the importance of the relationship between caregivers and those requiring the care, those very intimate relationships. Your policy of privatization, by saying we are going to tear away all of your workers and we are going to tear away the system, a large portion in Winnipeg, the entire nursing service, is the reason why we are in the dispute that we are in today. There is no recognition on the part of the government and the minister of the significance of that aspect.

What is worse, what does the future hold? You will not give us information about the tenders. You will not tell us what is happening in the tender process. Will it last a year and then will it be doled out to another company and another company and another company, and the relationship will change and change and change, Mr. Chairperson? That does not even take into account the fact that we heard statistics from Evelyn Shapiro that the turnover rate for private companies was something in the area of 60 percent, if memory serves me correctly. All of that causes grave concerns. All of that is unrecognized by the government's policy.

So let us debate in this Chamber the government policy. Will the minister acknowledge and recognize that the privatization plan, by completely overlooking the

essence of the relationship, is the reason that we are in the situation we are today? Let us not try to go off and blame every—and talk about report. Mr. Chairperson, the minister defends himself with reports that are over 10 years old. The minister talks about strikes and disputes in 1987. We are talking about a very serious situation affecting the patients and affecting Manitobans today. Will the minister not face the reality of it? We have offered solutions. I have offered the minister, I have asked the minister, why would you not today consider a year moratorium, have the matter studied, have public hearings, if your position is so, it would end the strike today. It would end the strike today. We would not have the additional expenditures. We would not have a strike situation; and, if the minister's position is so sound and the minister is so convinced of the soundness of the position, then he will be vindicated.

But the government seems totally reluctant and unable to deal, to recognize that they have a responsibility as well. They have a responsibility to those requiring home care. They have a responsibility to the home care workers. They have a responsibility for maintaining the public health and the health of Manitobans. These are our expenditures. This money is given to us by the people of Manitoba who pay their taxes for us to use it soundly and wisely, Mr. Chairperson, on their behalf. They expect some leadership, and they expect to be cared for. It is the No. 1 issue in Manitoba with respect to what citizens desire from their government. This minister and this government have a way of ending this dispute. They can put a year moratorium on it. I have given names this morning of prominent Manitobans, and they are not—some are New Democrats, some are Conservatives. I even heard the name Monique Begin raised as another possibility. So it is all political stripes.

Mr. Chairperson, the minister has the ability and the means to end the strike, if the minister would put down his defences, face the issues as they exist, the question of the privatization, the question really of the relationship between the clients and their workers and those that provide the service. It is a question of continuity of care, and it is a question of trust. The minister has the opportunity today, will he be willing to take the step and try to end this dispute?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, will the Health critic for the New Democratic Party prevail upon his soul mates,

who are at the highest levels of the union movement, to prevail upon them at least to do what the Geneva Convention calls for and that is to provide essential services to our home care clients? Will the honourable member do that? Perhaps this morning we could have a recess and he could do that, and we could get the services being provided to the people who need it.

There is all kinds of rhetoric going on here today. Let us cut to the chase. Let us deal with the issue, the issue being essential services. The honourable member wants to change government policy because of his philosophical idealistic leanings which are shared by the union. That is something that we understand, we do not agree with, but that aside, there are people who are being held hostage by the union here. Will the honourable member agree to recess this House until he can prevail upon his union boss friends to get services to those people who need them on an essential basis?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, as has been the case from the very start of this issue, the minister has not heard. There are some Biblical expressions about listening and not hearing, and it aptly applies in this case to the minister.

If the minister will not listen to me, I am going to read in the record a letter from an individual who is a registered nurse who lives in Gary Filmon's riding. She wrote a letter to the Premier.

Dear Mr. Filmon, I am writing to you in your capacity as my MLA. This is regarding the recent news release announcing the government's intention to privatize home care. I am deeply concerned about this proposal on many levels, and I am writing to you to seek your intervention as my representative in the Legislative Assembly.

I am a registered nurse employed as a community health nurse by the Victorian Order of Nurses. I am writing as a concerned nurse and citizen and not as a representative of my employer. My concerns regarding this proposal are in four areas: quality of health care for my clients and my family and the citizens of Winnipeg; professional issues and standards; issues as a woman in a largely women's profession; for profit versus nonprofit agency.

Number one, quality of health care. I am very concerned about the fragmentation and inconsistency that

will inevitably result from the division of the city into four quadrants with four different service providers. Manitoba is widely regarded as a model for home care delivery. I fail to understand why the core of the professional service provided by nurses is being dissembled. Our goal is to help clients remain as independently as possible in their homes.

When an organization must realize a profit, there is no doubt the goal of care will not be to foster independence. The more service provided, the more profit. Mr. McCrae has stated that home care is not an insured service. Regardless of his assurances to the contrary, I have no doubt many services now considered core services will easily become noncore in the future. I agree there are areas where home care can be more efficient. However, Mr. McCrae should be looking at changing the source of that problem, the home care bureaucracy, not the frontline nursing services provided by the VON. I believe friendship with private business is overshadowing common sense and quality care.

* (1000)

Two, professional issues and standards. There are some things about a profession that are impossible to know to an outsider, but as a member of the profession one has access to, there is not another health care provider in this city who has the high standards and ethics of the organization I am associated with. In particular, I would not risk my nursing licence or my professional standards by working for We Care Health Services. Inside the nursing profession they have a very poor reputation.

Three, women's issues: Nurses have worked hard for decades to earn the respect they deserve and decent wages for a largely female profession. I went into nursing so that I could do a particular type of work. My clinical specialty is palliative care. I did not enter nursing to become rich. However, as a university-educated professional, I expect to be fairly reimbursed for the life and death decisions I must make on a daily basis. I expect to be able to help support my family, to have medical benefits and to have a pension plan. These will not be available to me if home care is privatized in the manner planned. All for-profit agencies employ their nurses on a casual basis and provide no health or pension benefits. They also pay their nurses \$10 to \$12 per hour,

some as low as \$8 per hour. I took a 4.5 percent rollback a year and a half ago. I made \$38,000 last year.

Personally, I will leave nursing before working under these conditions. I believe that this would not be happening if nursing was not a primarily female profession. I had thought that as a society we had made progress in the valuing of women's professional contributions. I am saddened and angry that this work is being demeaned and devalued.

Four, for-profit versus nonprofit: As a taxpayer, I am appalled that companies are going to make a profit off illness. The largest percentage of any organization's expenses is salaries and benefits, therefore the way for profit agencies to make their profit is at the expense of their employees. The cost of home care is not going to decrease, according to Mr. McCrae. These agencies will make their profit at the expense of all the front-line workers, the professionals, paraprofessionals and nonprofessionals who provide the care to you, me and our families.

As my MLA—and this letter is directed to the Premier (Mr. Filmon)—I am requesting that you investigate this proposal for change in the delivery of home care. I welcome the opportunity to discuss my concerns with you further. I look forward to your response at your earliest convenience. Karen Fletcher, R.N., B.N. I was copied on the letter, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson, I acknowledge that the minister is not listening to what we have to say, but I do not understand why the minister has not listened or talked to people in the community who provide the service. The minister has said from his seat that he has listened for two and a half years.

If the minister had listened for two and a half years, he would have known and understood the significance of what this privatization plan would do to care and the continuity of care. If the minister had listened, he would have had some understanding of the relationships that have been built up. If the minister had listened, he would have understood some of these points, not made by me, and I do not know this person. He would have had some understanding of how this policy will diminish the quality of health care, how it affects professional issues and standards, how it is directly related to women's issues,

and I might add at this point that the women's issues are far broader, because most of the home care support and attendants are women, and they feel, as this nurse feels, that their work is being devalued, and their future capacity to earn for their families is being devalued, and the very work, the most intimate work, perhaps one of the most important works and things that we do in our society, providing care for our loved ones, is being devalued by this policy.

Finally, if the minister had been listening for the past two and a half years and had talked to people, he would be cognizant of the effect of profit versus non-profit in the health care sector, Mr. Chairperson, because it really does come down to an issue that if we are in a situation where dollars are hard to come by and where budgets are being constrained, it seems ludicrous in the extreme to be providing private companies with health care dollars for profit. It is so much the antithesis of everything medicare stands for, and the minister should acknowledge that.

This whole question of providing profit in our health care system is the antithesis of what the system was to stand for, but if the ministry had been listening for two and a half years and had talked to as many individuals—I have had a home care committee, since I was a health care critic, of workers and of clients. I talk with them on a regular basis, and I knew what this was going to do. We had heard rumours a year ago about privatization, and we had heard grave concerns raised then, but they were unacknowledged by this government. Thank Heavens that we had the Treasury Board document which we were able to provide to the public which permitted at least some form of public debate.

Mr. Chairperson, whom is the minister listening to? Whom is the minister listening to with respect to this policy and the continuing dispute as it goes on?

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, the honourable member has not been listening. We have documented all the reasons in the world for moving to address whatever shortcomings exist in our home care system, which, everyone acknowledges, is amongst the best there is.

The only weakness that I am finding in so many of these arguments is that some people take an ideological

approach to this and say, you know, we would rather you left patients at risk and had potential dangerous situations than do something that might upset our union boss friends. That is where I draw the line, Mr. Chairman.

Every single time in my 10 years experience in this Chamber, every single time that the interests of ordinary Manitobans have conflicted with the interests of the friends of the New Democrats, the union boss friends, they have always come down on the side of the union boss friends, and the rest of the population be damned. It is sickeningly consistent, and these people should be exposed for what they are.

Mr. Chairman, I am requesting now that this House recess, and that honourable members agree that this committee recess to allow the honourable member for Kildonan to prevail upon his union boss friends to agree immediately to essential services provision in home care for those people with Alzheimer's disease, those people with Parkinson's disease, those with multiple sclerosis, severe cases of arthritis, and other conditions that render an essential requirement of home care services for our clients. So I am requesting recess of this Chamber until the honourable member can make that happen.

Mr. Chomiak: I find it very, very curious that several weeks into a strike, after nine years in office, Mr. Chairperson, after knowing a strike was on the horizon for approximately three weeks, after two weeks of a dispute, the minister is now saying he wants to look for an essential services agreement.

Point of Order

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I have asked for a recess to allow the honourable member to prevail upon the unions to get us an essential services agreement. Will the honourable member please address that? Will he agree or not?

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister does not have a point of order. The honourable member for Kildonan is putting forward his views.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: Thanks, Mr. Chairperson. The government has been in office for eight years and was

unable to negotiate, or unwilling to negotiate, an essential services agreement. They knew the strike three weeks ahead of time was coming. They did not even propose an essential services arrangement.

Mr. Chairperson, they have now been on strike since about one and a half weeks and the minister finally understands. He finally understands the significance of the kind of care that is being delivered in the community. I could cite to you a Free Press article where the head of VON said people do not understand how much care goes on in the community. Clearly, you did not understand. This government did not understand. They did not understand—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable member to put his comments through the Chair. It would assist in keeping the decorum.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. The minister did not understand the significance, the volume, the quality and the type of care that is being carried on in the community. Only now that we are in the situation has this government, who is incompetent, who did not have a plan of contingency we are told, and who are fumbling the contingency plan, now find themselves in the situation they are in. I have offered to the minister a way out, and I have asked the minister if he would consider a year moratorium, and I have asked the minister—[interjection]

Mr. Chairperson, I am having a little trouble because the minister keeps—he will have his opportunity to speak, I believe.

Mr. McCrae: Will you agree to a recess?

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister will have his opportunity when the honourable member has concluded his statement.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, it is very, very difficult to understand why the minister is now chirping from his seat and regularly looking for some kind of a recess. The minister and his colleagues have been handling the negotiations.

I do not understand why the minister has now realized he needs an essential services agreement only this

morning. Perhaps that is indicative of the problem with this government who have been in office for eight years, who knew in advance, three weeks, that they were entering a strike situation, who have been unwilling or unable to negotiate that kind of an agreement, who now find themselves in a situation where they have a very poor contingency plan to deal with the strike. I certainly admit the situation is getting difficult. We do not have to be where we are at.

* (1010)

I recognize that the hospitals are in a very difficult situation. Already the flexibility in our hospital system because of cuts of the government, because of the government's slashing and cutting for the past few years, the capacity and the flexibility in the system is at a minimum. There is no more flexibility in the system. On top of that, we are now faced in the situation where the government has taken—where individuals have to be institutionalized. I recognize that it is a very difficult situation. I also recognize that the government could stop, could end the situation today. They could end the situation today if they would only be willing to put their plan under scrutiny and put it on hold. They seem unwilling and reluctant to do so.

I do not think it furthers the debate or the discussion by the government who have the responsibility, who have been elected with responsibility to care for health care, to try to blame and to try to push the issue off onto anyone that they can find in the system to take attention away from their inability to deal adequately with this situation, Mr. Chairperson. We started off this process asking specific questions on contingency and funding. The minister was unable to answer.

We have now gone back into this debate where the minister has now recognized that an essential service agreement might be useful in this kind of a situation, and the minister recognizes that it might be significant. Perhaps, the minister finally recognizes the acuity of care that is being conducted in the community now and the significant kind of care that is required.

The VON took a strike vote in March. Did the government have in place or did the government at that time try to deal with a contingency—with an essential services agreement in that? No, the government sat on their laurels. They did not know what to do. They were

confused. At that time the government ought to have been considering and looking at that entire situation. What they did, like most aspects of the home care issue, the government has bumbled and fumbled the ball, and we are now facing this difficult situation which I think we ought to be able to get out of, and we can get out of it by a year moratorium and by having some individuals or group of individuals study the situation, hold public hearings, and Mr. Chairperson, the strike would end today.

I do not know what more I could say or how many more letters from home care clients or home care workers I could read into the record to try to convince the minister otherwise. I do not know how much more of this I would have to do. I do not know if there is anything I could do, but I implore the minister to consider the option that he has utilized in the past in several instances, in the Pollock matter when Judge Hughes was brought in, in the emergency doctors strike when Wally Fox-Decent was brought in and to consider that as a useful, meaningful way of getting an end to this dispute, permitting clients, permitting patients and caregivers to go back to providing the quality care that patients deserve and need, and allow us and allow the public to have an examination of the government's motivation and rationale behind their privatization scheme.

I again reiterate, Mr. Chairperson, we are charged, the minister is charged with the responsibility of looking after the welfare and health. He is the minister responsible, and that ought to come first and foremost above all of our disputes in this Chamber. There is a way out, there is a means to deal with that, that I think is honourable and would permit an end. So I implore and I again ask the minister if he would consider something along those lines.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, everything that I have been doing has been with the focus on the client of the home care system and the health system. That is a fundamental principle underlying the policy respecting the approaches that we take as a health department and as a government in Manitoba, focus on the client. I will not let the honourable member get away from the position that he does take.

We have heard a lot of talk, but we have not heard much in the way of position except go back to the system

we had in the first place. The NDP's own report, the Price Waterhouse report, is replete with shortcomings but is acknowledged to be a very good program but problems that require addressing. We have bent our efforts in the direction of addressing those things. Meanwhile he says just go back to what we had in the first place. If we try to go back to what we had in the first place, we will lose it all. That is the fiscal and economic reality of the environment in which we are all working nowadays.

The world is changing. Our friends in the New Democrat Party should start to realize that the world has changed very significantly in the 50 years or so that the New Democrats have been a political force in this country. I am asking the honourable member to agree to recess this committee while he prevails upon his union boss friends to do at least what you find in documents like the Geneva Convention, to at least do the right thing for the clients in terms of those people who require, on an essential basis, home care assistance. Why will the New Democrats not stand up for people with Parkinson's disease, people with Alzheimer's disease, people with multiple sclerosis, people with severe cases of arthritis and people who are functionally dependent for their existence on the Home Care program?

Will that honourable member agree to recess this committee until he can prevail upon his union boss friends to bring in immediately an essential services component, leaving open the opportunity for the honourable member to disagree with the policy of the government?

I never found a policy they have agreed with yet anyway. So they can disagree, but do they disagree with the whole idea of essential services being delivered to vulnerable, needy, elderly, disabled, infirm Manitobans? Why will the New Democrats not stand up for those people? Why? Will the honourable member agree to recess this committee so that he can prevail upon his union boss friends?

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. For clarification, seeing as I am the humble servant of this committee, I would ask for the minister to clarify—is he asking for a recess at this time?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I have asked for a recess three times. We have not heard of a response from the member for Kildonan.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to recess at this time?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: No. Denied.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I will agree to a recess if the minister will agree today to put on hold the moratorium and to appoint a commissioner body to study this issue so that we can get out of this dispute today. I would be prepared to recess if the minister will agree to do something like that. I would be prepared to recess for 10 minutes if the minister will agree that he will put a one-year moratorium on the privatization of home care.

Mr. Chairperson, the minister ought not to be playing political games in here. This is a very serious matter and a very serious dispute. Why, today, has the minister finally realized an essential services agreement is actually important in this province? Why, after eight years of government, after knowing three weeks ahead of time a strike was possible, after the VON workers, the nurses took a strike vote at the VON, does the minister finally realize that perhaps an essential services agreement—you know what that speaks of, incompetence, incompetence on the part of this government and incompetence on the part of this minister who is unable to manage the health care field.

* (1020)

I am sorry to have to say that, Mr. Chairperson. It is so obvious from everything that we have seen in the last little while in the Department of Health, from the mishandling of the emergency doctor situation to the mishandling of the urban hospital situation, to the mishandling of the home care issue, so the minister ought not to come in here now and try to make some political point by suggesting or finally recognizing that an essential services agreement might be helpful in the health care field.

It was negotiated during the nurses' dispute. It was negotiated during other disputes, but we find a minister who has been in office, who has been the minister now for two and a half, three years, unable to recognize that. We have a minister that has put us in a situation where we are in a strike, who was aware for weeks that a

dispute might take place, who had a strike vote with the VON that provides some of the most fundamental services.

Mr. Chairperson, I normally do not take the bait from the minister when he accuses us of going against multiple sclerosis patients and going against arthritis patients, et cetera. I just want to point out a couple of things to the minister.

I attended a support group for cancer victims the other day and spoke to them, and as far as I could ascertain, the majority if not all of those people were against the government's privatization plan. Further, I have a constituent who suffers from multiple sclerosis. My constituent, unfortunately, has had to go into the hospital. [interjection] The minister says thanks to me. My constituent has been taken from his family and does not have the opportunity, and I felt quite bad about that situation, and I phoned him. I was moved by the fact that he articulated the issues, and he recognized how difficult it was, and that he supported the situation, and he closed by saying God bless what you are doing in this thing, because it is important.

So, Mr. Chairperson, I do not normally respond to the minister's attacks. I do not think anyone in this Chamber does not care. I think we all care, and I think we all are doing our best under the circumstances. I just think the minister has himself a policy that does not fly. It has no justification, and I think the government is in a corner, and I think the government ought to recognize that and ought to consider some measures to try to get out of that situation and will permit clients, patients and workers to go back to receiving the kind of health care they need and they deserve.

I am not going to go back and forth, as the minister might choose to do all morning, and he might choose to do it for the rest of the day. I am not going to go back and forth on this debate, debating the same point over and over again. My preference is to move on to the Estimates and to deal with the line-by-line items, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. McCrae: No.

Mr. Chomiak: The minister is saying no. If the minister wants to filibuster and be obstinate, that is fine. We are not going to—

Mr. McCrae: You have to be exposed for what you are, Dave.

Mr. Chomiak: The minister says I have to be exposed for what I am. The minister has ample opportunity during the course of these debates, but I think we are not doing the public of Manitoba a service by going back and forth on this. I have proposed options and a way out to the minister. The minister can choose or not choose to accept them, but I would hope that we can get on with dealing with what we are here to do this morning and this afternoon, and that is—[interjection] The minister says not very likely. Well, we will do our best.

I was elected to try to do the best for my constituents, Mr. Chairperson, and I will continue to try to do so in the course of these Estimates. The minister's Treasury Board submission dated September 16, 1995, that outlined a privatization plan said that in 1995-96 there would be an expenditure of \$150,000 to set up the Crown corporation or the holding agency to deal with privatization, and that there would be a further expenditure of \$150,000 this year and much more additional expenditures in subsequent years to fund this agency. Can the minister indicate whether or not the \$150,000 in last year's Estimates was expended and whether they are going to expend the \$150,000 in this year's Estimates?

Mr. McCrae: All we get from this honourable member is rhetoric, Mr. Chairman. We want action. It is an appropriate role for Her Majesty's loyal opposition to use its powers of persuasion, to use its powers working with organizations in society, and we all know of the very close association between the NDP and the union. Professor Allen Mills has referred to it as an organic fusion. I do not know how much closer you can get than that sort of thing. They are literally joined at the heart and brain.

I demand that this House recess so that the honourable member for Kildonan, the Health critic for the New Democratic Party, can use his considerable powers with respect to influencing senior members of the union for whom he and his colleagues work. His seatmate, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), is a former president of the Manitoba Government Employees' Union. Surely, the New Democratic Party can play a useful role today for the clients of our home care system. They can disagree all they like about what they call

privatization and the government's policies. They do it all the time. They think that through the use of the strike weapon, they can use that to change government policy. Rather than just looking out for the interests of workers, as unions are supposed to do, here they are wanting to set government policy. The member for Kildonan wants to be part of that. That is fine, too. I do not quarrel with any of that stuff. I do not agree with it, but they are entitled to.

But let us get a sense of priority here. Let us try and understand what is important right now, and what is important right now is not criticizing government and unions for not having put in place essential services agreements previously. Mr. Chairman, we need one. We need one now, and as the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) has pointed out, the initiatives that are underway will guarantee that no union can ever make hostages of all of the people in the home care system ever again in the future in Manitoba. They are against that. They want to have that tool to withdraw services from people. I profoundly disagree with that.

That aside, we need essential services for our clients now, and so now is the time for us to recess this House, for the member to do the honourable and the proper thing and use his considerable powers of influence with the union movement, and call them up today, now. Go and see them. Do what you have to do, and we will resume the sitting of this committee once the honourable member has achieved for us an essential services agreement.

What higher calling could there possibly be, Mr. Chairman, for a health critic in an opposition party than to assist in bringing life-giving, life-saving services to people in their homes. The honourable member is the one complaining about people being in hospitals. Well, I do not want them in hospitals. We have been forced to move people to hospitals because the union disagrees with the policies of the government. It is okay to disagree with the policies, is my point, but not at the expense of the removal of essential services. So I ask the honourable member to agree to recess this committee.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Chairperson, I want to continue on the line of Home Care, but to go back to what we ran out of time yesterday with respect to—

Mr. McCrae: We are talking about recessing this committee.

Mr. Lamoureux: The Minister of Health is talking about recessing the committee, and the Minister of Health—[interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. All members will have the opportunity to put their comments on the record. At this time the honourable member for Inkster is putting forward his question.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, yesterday, we were talking about criteria, standards, and making sure that members of this Chamber have the ability to be able to discuss and debate, exchange thoughts and ideas about that criteria prior to the tendering process getting underway.

Again, I would ask the minister, is he prepared to provide us that information so that we can evaluate and add to that criteria?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the honourable member for Inkster would agree to recess this committee, so that the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) can carry out an important public service, i.e., bringing forward some essential services for our home care clients. Would the honourable member for Inkster agree to recess this committee?

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, again, in an attempt to get an answer from the minister, I will answer his question. The simple answer is no. Now will he answer my question?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, the Liberal Party has now placed itself firmly in the pockets of the union bosses, right along with our friends in the New Democratic Party, and, you know, that is really not a very nice place for a Liberal to be.

* (1030)

I will tell you, the Liberals have usually stood up for something a little more than that. We can expect this kind of behaviour from New Democrats, but I thought maybe the honourable member for Inkster had a little more to offer the people of Manitoba. We are talking about people who have Alzheimer's disease. We are talking about people who have Parkinson's disease, people who need services like daily toileting, help with

their dressing, help with washing and bathing, help with feeding, people who cannot even do those things for themselves, and the honourable member for Inkster wants to turn his back on them. Mr. Chairman, I am astonished.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, a while back just prior to getting underway in terms of this session, I had a conference out in Committee Room 254. We had about 55-60 people that showed up and one of the issues under discussion was home care services. There were a number of questions that were posed and one individual strictly dealing with home care services, and the type of questions were, and these were questions that were in essence put to the Minister of Health if they had the opportunity.

One of the questions was, how have you used the principles of Total Quality Management, i.e., focus on the consumer, involvement of frontline staff to find solutions, efficiencies, in your decision to tender out home care services? What specifically are the outcomes you hope to achieve through the tender process? What criteria will be used to determine whether service provider is providing quality care? How will you define quality care, and how will it be measured? Will the lowest bidder win the tender? If not, what criteria will be used to select the successful bidder? Will the tender specify a minimum rate of pay higher than what is currently being paid for-profit organizations or agencies? What process will be in place to prevent profit agencies for overservicing?

Mr. Chairperson, these are the types of concerns which I had brought to the minister's attention yesterday during the Estimates process. We have persistently pressured the government because it is so focused on privatizing home care services and is unwilling to bend to service the needs of the clients by allowing for that one-year moratorium. We have persisted and asked the Minister of Health to provide the criteria, the standards, those core services that the Ministry of Health believes is essential prior to putting it into tender.

Why is that important? We believe ultimately that there needs to be given preferential treatment to nonprofit organizations if in fact the government is pushing for privatization. Why? Again, because we believe that for-profit organizations such as We Care, their first priority is going to be profit. As a result of that first priority we

are going to see the establishment of a two-tiered system, one in which those clients who have the economic means, who are going to be able to pay for the extras, are going to get the service providers or the health care workers that are in there for a career, the long-term, the higher wage, because it is going to be the cream of the services, the extra services, that is going to bring in the extra dollars, if you like, for that company. Increase the bottom line, the bottom line being that of profit. So what you are going to have is, you are going to have for those individuals or those areas of home care services or those individuals with the economic means that are going to get a better quality service, not only for what they are paying extra for, but also for the core areas. It is those core areas which we are talking about, making sure that that core is administered in a fashion that is equitable to all citizens because we are using public dollars. The only way in which we can assure that will take place is if there are going to be standards, and that is why it is we have been calling on the government to demonstrate, to show us the standards, to show us those core services that the minister is referring to.

Mr. Chairperson, we believe a nonprofit organization such as the Victorian Order of Nurses, on the other hand, their primary objective is for the community and the client. They have demonstrated that over the past nine decades. The Minister of Health and backbenchers often talk about how wonderful the Victorian Order of Nurses is. What we are suggesting is give them the opportunity to be able to provide that service if the government is not prepared to provide that service. Do not make the mistake of changing home care services into private for-profit, because in the long term what you are going to see is the establishment of that two-tier system, and in the long run we do not believe that is in the best interests of Manitobans.

We—and I have challenged as I indicated yesterday—the Minister of Health was on CJOB where he said nothing prevents the nurses from banding together and putting forward a proposal. Again, what we would ask of the Minister of Health is to go the extra step and to provide a mechanism that will allow the nurses in particular the opportunity to participate in some form of a nonprofit group. Maybe it is through community clinics. We have Nor'West Health up in the north end. We have Mount Carmel Clinic. There are many different ways in which nonprofit organizations can participate in the process.

Mr. Chairperson, time is of the essence, and that is the reason why we believe there are so many ideas, good ideas, that there needs to be put into place a moratorium that would allow for the minister and the government to be able to get the feedback from the nonprofit community in particular, but also the clients and the home care workers and any individual Manitoban that would like to be able to express their thoughts, their ideas on the future of home care services.

We are not talking about a widget. We are not talking about a service that is through computers or any other area of service that is currently privatized. What we are talking about is home care services which is clearly identified as a part of our health care system. Time and time again we often talk about the deinstitutionalization of health care. The deinstitutionalization of health care has always meant to bring health care services more into the community. The best way we can do that is through home care services.

We have heard, during the debate of the minister's censorship motion, members stand up, talk about the free market process and so forth. Mr. Chairman, we do not oppose the free market process. The free market process can be a wonderful thing and can in fact contribute in many different ways in many different aspects of our economy. What we are talking about is a health care service, and Manitobans, Canadians as a whole feel very strongly. They ultimately feel as a part of that Canadian identity that each of every one of us—there, by the grace of God, walk I. It is not just seniors that receive home care services. Through a vehicle accident, any one of us could rely on home care services in the future. Quite frankly, if I cannot have home care services being delivered directly through the government, I would like to see nonprofit organizations delivering that service because I believe that their primary goals and objectives are entirely different, and in the long term, in my best interests as a single Manitoban or as an individual, and ultimately in the best interests of all Manitobans.

Why I bring this up again is because I want to leave a very strong message to the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae). The Minister of Health has a responsibility, and that is to provide the criteria because through that criteria we are going to be able to find out, is the Minister of Health being fair. Is the Minister of Health giving an advantage to nonprofit groups?

* (1040)

(Mr. Mike Radcliffe, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

There are many different ways. The Minister of Health does not have to say, look, we are going to give a 5 percent—or whatever to nonprofit groups. The Minister of Health can say, for example—and I will conclude on this—we are going to guarantee a minimal salary structure for home care services. That is one of the ways in which preferential treatment can be given. Is the Minister of Health prepared to share with us the criteria prior to sending out the tender?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairman, I just wonder if—the staff have been here a long time—whether we might take a five-minute break if the staff so desire. Some of us members can move about and get in and out, but it is not as easy for the staff. So if the committee agrees, perhaps we could have just five minutes to permit the staff—

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Is the committee agreed for a five-minute recess to facilitate the staff?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I, of course, agree that staff should be able to have the kind of breaks that they need to have. It occurs to me that there are people who require assistance to do what the staff in this room can do on their own steam, and they are not getting it. If this recess could be used for the purpose that I have asked for, I would be very happy to have a recess. I have been asking for one all morning for that purpose.

Obviously, we are going to have to get the agreement of the honourable member to have a recess for the purpose I am asking for. I agree of course that the staff should have an opportunity for a short break, but I renew my request—no, my demand, that this committee recess for whatever length of time it takes for the honourable member to prevail on his union colleagues to ensure that essential services are delivered to people who cannot go to the bathroom on their own, for example, for people who cannot feed themselves on their own, people who cannot dress themselves. Those are the people the New Democrats are turning their backs on, and the Liberals, shame on them, are saying the same thing. I think that is absolutely shocking. I did not expect that from the Liberal Party but here we have it.

I will agree to the five-minute recess for the purposes of the staff, but I will be renewing my demand for a recess so that the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) can do the right thing and actually do something positive for the people of this province.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Upon hearing the agreement of all members of the committee, this committee shall stand recessed for five minutes.

The committee recessed at 10:43 a.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 11:01 a.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Committee, come to order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Just before the recess, I had posed the question to the minister, and I am sure he has had the opportunity to have somewhat of a debriefing in terms of the preamble leading into the question, but the question still remains in essence: Is the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) prepared to be able to share with us prior to going into the public tender the type of criteria standards, core services, that the government is looking at?

Mr. McCrae: I would like very much to engage in a discussion with the honourable member about standards and the tenders and how the tenders are going to be designed to ensure that we protect the integrity of our home care standards and core services and the quality and all of that. But there is a more urgent and pressing issue right now, and that is that we have clients in our home care program who are not getting services delivered by their home care attendants because they have been pulled off work by their union bosses. I would like to ask that the committee recess to give the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) an opportunity to do something very important and to do the right thing for the clients of our home care system.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The minister had asked the committee for that request just prior to the last recess and it was already turned down, so I do not believe—if the minister would clarify, is he asking me to make the request again?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, precisely that. I think it is important that honourable members think about this very carefully, and I do not think there is anything wrong, Sir, with all due respect, with asking for a recess.

The honourable member for Kildonan asked for one a little while ago and everybody agreed with it, and it was simply so that staff could have a break and I appreciate that that is appropriate. I am asking for something which I think is very appropriate, too. We have some 7,200 home care clients who have been abandoned by the honourable member for Kildonan and the union, and now with the support of the Liberal Party it is time that somebody got serious about essential services in the home care program.

I suggest that somebody is the honourable member for Kildonan and that he approach his union buddies and see if we cannot get something done about that immediately, and it is for that reason I am asking for a recess.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to have a recess at this time?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: No.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) is very persistent in always wanting to have this recess for the clients of home care services, and I can appreciate the gesture. One has to question the sincerity in the sense that if the minister really wanted to overcome the strike that is currently going on, or push for an essential service agreement, there has to be some give and take from the Minister of Health.

The Minister of Health has not provided any sort of give and take—

Point of Order

Mr. McCrae: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, the honourable member for Inkster has called my sincerity into question, and I take offence when that happens. There is not a soul here who can successfully challenge my intentions when it comes to the clients of the Home Care program. I would like the honourable member to think about what he has said very carefully when he talks

about asking for something like essential services, that we are supposed to make a reasonable trade-off for such things. Well, there is always time for reason, of course, but this is a priority. We have asked from the beginning for essential services. The union has never, never provided anything except services for people who are terminally ill—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I thank the honourable member, but I do not think this is a time for debate. The honourable minister was recognized on a point of order, if he could put the point of order before me at this time.

Mr. McCrae: Yes, indeed. The point of order is that the member has questioned my sincerity in terms of my representation in this place for the clients of the home care system. I resent that. Nothing I have done is inconsistent with that. It is not a matter for—I mean, it is a matter for debate if the honourable member wants to have a debate. That is fine and dandy, but do not call into question the sincere motives I have with respect to the clients of our home care system by taking the side of the union bosses, then saying that there is something wrong with my sincerity here offends me very greatly.

Mr. Chomiak: On the same point of order, I believe, if you review the record, the member for Inkster was very clear that he questioned the sincerity of the minister in proposing the recess, constantly over and over again, Mr. Chairperson. On that basis, I think, given that in fact it does not go to integrity but simply the sincerity of the minister imposing a particular action in this Chamber at this time, I think it is not a point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable members for their advice. I will review the Hansard and get back to the honourable members with my decision.

The honourable member for Inkster, to continue.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, just to save you some time, if the Minister of Health takes objection to anything that I say in the sense of imputing motives or something of that nature, I will humbly withdraw that. Having said that—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I would like to thank the honourable member for that. That will conclude the matter that I had taken under advisement.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Inkster, to continue.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, agreeing in principle with the need to have essential services put into place for our clients and having acknowledged that, today in the next 55 minutes what I would like to be able to do is talk about other aspects that might assist in alleviating some of the concerns that the union has. Hopefully, the minister is in a position in which he can share some of this information with us. He appeals for, in particular, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), to be able to talk to individuals he might know. I know it would be of great benefit for me in our party if the minister would provide us with information which, who knows, ultimately might assist in some of the negotiations that are actually taking place, especially around essential services.

* (1110)

The specific question to the minister is, will he share with Manitobans or this House the criteria that he has established? I do not want to presume or I should not assume that he has established the criteria. Does the minister have a draft or a completed standards criteria in place that is getting ready for the tendering process? If so, will he share it with us?

Mr. McCrae: I answered that question yesterday. I would ask this committee to recess, so that the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) can prevail upon his friends in the union movement to ensure that the clients of the Home Care program can benefit from an essential services agreement.

Mr. Lamoureux: Does the Minister of Health have the criteria today?

Mr. McCrae: I answered that question yesterday, Mr. Chairman, and I would ask that the committee recess.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to recess?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: No? The honourable member for Inkster.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, just for future reference for the Minister of Health, I am not going to agree to a recess until we get something coming from the minister that will provide hope for the clients.

The question is, does the minister have the criteria? He says he answered the question yesterday. I do not believe that he has answered the question. Is the criteria complete, and if so, will he table it?

Mr. McCrae: The documents are being prepared for the tender process.

Mr. Chairman, we have a dispute going on. We have proposals on the table. We have offered a moratorium to the union of a certain length, and that has been, I think, negotiated to some extent. There is a conciliator at work. I am not about to get out in front of a process that is underway with the union, which is a process of negotiation, so rather than discussing things here that ought to be discussed at the negotiating table, rather than discussing things here which will be part of a public tender—and they will be public documents so the member will see those documents at that time.

I cannot understand the honourable member's strange priority here. Does he not care? Am I reading this wrong? He is saying he cares about the people who rely on our home care system, and yet he will not roll up his sleeves and get into the act of trying to bring about an essential services arrangement for people who have Alzheimer's disease, people who have Parkinson's disease, people who have multiple sclerosis, people who have severe cases of arthritis and people who are functionally dependent on home care attendant services.

The member for Inkster will not stand to his feet to support an essential services arrangement. I cannot believe this. I thought that the Liberals were different from the New Democrats. Why do they not just all join together into the same party and go to the same caucus together, invite their union boss friends to join in, and the Liberals can make friends with them, because they had a terrible time when Paul Edwards was their Leader, or maybe he was not even their Leader at that time, but they had a terrible time with the whole issue of final offer selection. The Liberals embarrassed themselves all over

the place. They tried to jump into bed with the union, and the NDP and the union got together and stung the Liberal Party rather badly.

Why can the Liberals not learn that you cannot get ahead in this world by jumping into bed with the union bosses? [interjection] I think you are right about that. The honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) corrects me, that the Liberals stung themselves, and I think that is probably correct, but the point is, what is it about the Liberals that they think they can occupy territory which the NDP seems to have a lock on?

The NDP does not get very much support, but what support they get, they get from their union boss buddies. That you can count on. Why is it that the Liberals think they can move in on that territory? I do not think they can. Good luck. You can try anything you want. It is your own business, but really and truly, there are clients here. I think the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) sometimes forgets in his fervour to curry favour with the union bosses. I think he forgets that there are clients of the home care system. There are some union bosses out there that I get along with just fine, but they have different requirements than the clients of the home care system.

Union bosses have to have employees that they can sort of push around and tell them what to do. They have to have union dues that they can confiscate from people, so they can finance their operations and stuff like that, none of which has anything to do with the delivery of essential home care services. I cannot understand the honourable member for Inkster, and I am wondering, his colleagues in this Chamber, his Liberal colleagues, how they have arrived at this decision to take the side of the union bosses and to continue to hurt people in our home care system. Maybe they can give me some documents or something to set out the process they used to arrive at their position to turn their backs on people with Alzheimer's disease, to turn their backs on people with Parkinson's disease, to turn their backs on people who have severe cases of arthritis, to turn their backs on people who have multiple sclerosis, to turn their backs on people who are functionally dependent on home care services?

How is it that the Liberals find themselves so close to the position of the union bosses and yet they do not have

the support of the union bosses yet? How is that? Or maybe they do. Maybe I am wrong about that. I remember Daryl Bean. I remember asking Sharon Carstairs to get up on her hind legs and to do something about Daryl Bean and his abusive behaviour toward women in society, especially elderly women, grandmothers. He talked of drowning them and hanging them. I could not get Sharon Carstairs to agree with me that Daryl Bean ought to be removed from office.

Is that still the position of the Liberal Party? I thought it had changed since Sharon abandoned her principles and took her place in the Senate.

An Honourable Member: There are good appointments and bad appointments.

Mr. McCrae: I know. I think it was Sharon Carstairs who said that there are good appointments and there are bad appointments. If it is Sharon Carstairs, that is a good appointment, and all the other ones might be bad; but, if it is Sharon, then that is a good one.

I cannot forget that Sharon Carstairs refused to stand up for elderly women in our society. I thought now that she was gone that the member for Inkster would have used his leadership to make a change in the Liberal Party in that regard, but it apparently has not happened because he repeatedly says no. In fact, he has told me in his last comments, so there is no point asking for that recess anymore because his answer is still going to be no.

I am still going to ask because you see hope springs eternal in the human breast, and I have hope. I am a very optimistic person. I find that people survive and thrive better if they are optimistic rather than pessimistic. Rather than nattering their negativism all the time, people should be optimistic. Not unrealistically optimistic, but optimistic. Recognize the realities and accept challenge and turn them into opportunities. That is what we want to do for our Home Care program. The honourable member for Inkster just wants to go back to the system we had in the first place, as the New Democrats want to have. Why?

An Honourable Member: When you have not got any ideas, you might as well repeat the old ones.

Mr. McCrae: My friend and colleague for Crescentwood says, when you do not have any ideas, repeat the old ones. I have a better analogy. I may have mentioned this one before, but it is about the lawyer. [interjection] My friend for River Heights is here, so he should just sort of just plug his ears while I tell this next little story.

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (River Heights): I see, you would not want to offend my sensitivity.

Mr. McCrae: I would not want to offend the sensitivities of the legal profession. See?

Mr. Radcliffe: I see. Be careful.

Mr. McCrae: I will. My friend and colleague reminds I should be careful, and I will, but it is a lawyer joke, a lawyer story told by lawyers probably all around the world. I have told it in this place before, but I have only a minute to tell you. In the legal profession it is well known—and the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) reminds me of this—if you are kind of weak on your facts, pound the law, and if you are a little weak on the law, pound the facts, and if you are weak on both, pound the desk. We have got a lot of desk pounding going on amongst some honourable members opposite, Mr. Chairman, and now we include in the ranks of the union boss supporters the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party has jumped in with the NDP. They have jumped in with both feet, and now they are in for a real ride. Let them fasten their safety belts.

Mr. Lamoureux: In the first minute of the minister's response, I believe there was an answer. The last nine minutes, I am not too sure what was there, Mr. Chairperson, but let us pick up on that first minute. The minister indicated that, yes, there is some documentation, preparation that is going currently. I am wondering if the minister is prepared to share with us some of the principles of that documentation.

Mr. McCrae: I would be pleased to do that, Mr. Chairman. You see, we have protocols and standards in our Home Care program that we consider inviolable, and this is the area where members of the New Democratic Party like to scare people. They are taking a leaf from their own book about user fees, for example. One of the standards and protocols here is that there are not user fees

for those core services that are part of the program. The other thing that the NDP wants to do is cut those core services, hack and slash services for seniors and infirm and disabled people in our province. It is in their own document, so you do not have to take my word for it. That is what they want to do. That forms part of our standards and core services. You see, we want to provide the services that people need, so we think that if a client is referred to the program by a medical person, that is appropriate. That is one of the standards that are a part of the Home Care program. You must be assessed, and that is one of the principles of our Home Care program, and when the clients condition changes there should be a reassessment.

This is an area where the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) does not want that to happen. He says let us go back to the system we had in the first place, and that system we had in the first place allowed some people whose conditions improved not to have any reassessment or those persons whose conditions got worse not to have any reassessment so that they could get more services. The NDP are against that, and I am not, Mr. Chairman. I think that reassessment is an appropriate, very proper thing to do, and that is part of the deal. We want to work towards getting our services guaranteed, so that when we say that you are going to get service, you are going to get it, not like the member for Kildonan who wants to go back to the system we had in the first place where we could not guarantee services, where we just phone in to Mrs. Jones or Mrs. Smith and say, oh, sorry, your worker has called in sick today, can you manage on your own? This is the way it is, and I do not think that is good enough. To the extent that we can possibly improve on that, we should. None of that has been possible under the system we have, and we need to make further improvements.

You see, by calling attention to the shortcomings in the system my honourable friends opposite like to say, oh well, I am condemning it. Well, I am not here to condemn the system. I am here to improve it and to sustain it for the future, and that is exactly what we are about. But if we follow the NDP, and I quote, go back to the system we had in the first place, that really is not going to achieve what we need, and we are going to continue to throw large amounts of money into our Home Care program and not get any benefit from all of that cost.

The NDP platform on this issue is to bring in user fees. Well, Mr. Chairman, I disagree with that. The people in our government working on the NDP report have rejected that. We do not agree with user fees in the Home Care program, even though the NDP—and I assume the Liberals agree as well. Since they are agreeing with the unions on these issues, they must agree on this one too. Although I do not know, because the Liberals did not commission this. They were not in office, but they have not said they do not agree, so I assume they do.

We are talking here about user fees, waiting periods, I mean, having a deliberate wait for services, forcing clients to go to the private companies in the first place, forcing them to do that for a period of time before home care clicks in. This is what the NDP stands for, and I assume the Liberals as well. I do not. That is not an improvement; that is going the other direction.

I cannot for the life of me understand why New Democrats and Liberals would favour downgrading our Home Care program like that. Why do they want so much to defend potentially unsafe client situations which is brought to our attention in the NDP Price Waterhouse report? It says right here on page little v, as in victor: Potentially the review found that there are inadequate hospital discharge planning practices which lead to inappropriate discharges to home care, lack of proper discharge preparation and potentially unsafe client situations.

And the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) want us to go back to the system we had in the first place.

The NDP report describes the system we had in the first place. I do not want to go back to that, Mr. Chairman. I want better for the clients of our home care system. In the short term and immediate term, while we have the union bosses out there, supported by the New Democrats and now the Liberals, refusing to provide services to people with Alzheimer's disease, people with Parkinson's disease, people with multiple sclerosis, people with severe cases of arthritis, people who are functionally dependent on these home care attendant services—and the Liberals and the NDP will not agree to recess this committee so that they can get in touch with the union bosses to ensure that an essential services

arrangement is arrived at immediately. I say, shame on them both.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for some of the information that he has put on the record. I understand that what we are looking at is services are guaranteed, reassessments when the clients' conditions increase or decrease, that there must be an assessment prior to entering into it. There must be a referral by a medical person; there will be no user fees, core services. Those are the points that I picked up on the answer.

My question now is, can the minister indicate to us, does he have any documentation on what core services are?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, when a patient or client enters the Home Care program, they are given information about the program describing the services that the government will make available to them.

To put it very simply, the core services are those services that you need to remain safely in your home so that you do not have to be admitted to hospital or to personal care. The core services include assessment of need for care. The core services include care planning, co-ordination of service, nursing service, therapy assessment with respect to occupational or physiotherapy; health teaching; cleaning and laundry; meal preparation; personal care; respite and family relief and access to adult daycare. Those are among the core services, Mr. Chairman, and members opposite know that they exist, but they would lead the public to believe that they do not.

Those are the services that are provided, and if you do not think they are provided look in the budget for the Home Care program: \$38 million in 1988; in 1995-96, \$91 million—83 last year, I guess, it would be. So we are talking extremely significant increases in funding overall in this province between '89 and '95-96, 107 percent increase in spending but only a 62 percent increase in the number of units of service.

I want the members who oppose everything to explain why it is we should not want to get value for money? I would like them to explain that, because they are the ones who just said go back to what you had before. They are the ones who say go back to where you just keep throwing money into a program and not getting enough

value for the money—you see, we are all elected to represent the taxpayers. The members of the Liberal Party, they do not care about that. They prove that very, very well by making demand after demand for further spending of money and never having to be accountable for it. So we know they are not responsible.

The New Democrats, well, they are the ones who got us into the mess in the first place, so New Democrats in this province tripled the debt in this province in the space of about seven years. That is astounding, and yet they still think they have the credentials actually to be in here and speak for people. Well, the fact they speak only—to the exclusion of everyone—they speak only for union bosses, it kind of exposes the New Democrats for what they really are, mouthpieces of the union movement under the guise of being elected and representing all the people of our province.

* (1130)

You know, we are talking about 107 percent increase in the expenditure increases, but we are only serving 11.6 more clients. Well, that is pretty significant. But to serve 11.6 more clients we are spending 107 percent more dollars, that means those clients are getting a lot more service than they used to get, and that is appropriate in my view—[interjection] The honourable member says why. You know why? Because they need it, that is why.

So the honourable member for Kildonan really does not have much to offer until he agrees, Mr. Chairman, to recess this committee and to do the right thing for the clients of home care and intercede on their behalf with his union boss buddies. That means get us an essential services agreement right now. If the honourable member does that he will have my gratitude and he will have the gratitude of the people who benefit from the home care program. All my colleagues are already getting gratitude from people in Manitoba for fighting for what is right and for fighting for the clients' best interests.

But now, because of the way this has all gone, do you know who is going to get all the attention when he does the right thing? The member for Kildonan. Frankly, that is okay with me. I hope my colleagues on this side will agree on that point that even at this late date for the member for Kildonan to come forward and do something courageous. Goodness knows, it would take some

courage for a New Democrat to actually demand something of a union boss, but it is the kind of courage that should be respected by everybody.

An Honourable Member: Actually, he should have done that before he came in here.

Mr. McCrae: Well, what is past is past. I agree that he should have done it a long time ago, but it is never too late to do the right thing, Mr. Chairman, and the honourable member for Kildonan can distinguish himself enormously by doing the right thing for the clients of home care today, now, by agreeing to recess this committee, so that we can achieve essential services for our clients.

The honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), I do not know. I sometimes think he does not know what he is doing. I have a lot of regard for him, because I know he wants to do the right thing, but he gets led very easily in different kinds of directions, which demonstrates—well, you judge what it demonstrates—but he kind of is led by others too much, and that is not leadership. Leadership is where you do the leading, not where you get led around by this group, that group or the other group, trying to pander to this special interest group, pander to that one, pander to the other one. I have learned one thing in politics, and I have been on both sides of this House, that pandering to special interest groups does not provide for too much political longevity.

We have seen that—[interjection] That is right. The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) reminds me that somebody must have got to the member for Inkster because he is in here championing the whole idea that not-for-profit organizations ought to be given special privileges in the tendering process, which ignores altogether that they already have a special opportunity because they do not have to build profits into their bids. But he wants something more, in other words, skewer the system, gerrymander, play little games so that basically you destroy the whole concept of competition right from the start. If I am going to do that, why am I doing anything? Why do you think I have gone through all this trouble, Mr. Chairman, taken all this abuse from all the honourable members and a few others, not very many but a few others in society, union boss leader types, for example, who do not agree with me and therefore do not like me, so heap scorn on me and call me names and do

other things that are not very nice? Why do you think I put up with all that if it simply—you think I like that sort of thing? No, I do not.

Mr. Chomiak: No, it is evident you do not, Jim. It is quite evident from your manner, you do not.

Mr. McCrae: Right. But leadership says—you want to show some leadership, sometimes you have to stand up for things. You cannot stand up for things if you just sort of lie down for everything. You cannot be seen to be exercising leadership when you just sort of, whatever way the wind is blowing, that is the way you are going to go today. Today I think I will see what the union bosses want me to do and I will go with them, or maybe I will listen to this other group over there, this other one over there, this other one over there, and if there is a chance to score a political Brownie point or two, maybe that is what I should do. That is not leadership, and the honourable member for Inkster has been around long enough to know that, and I think that he should take note.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, just to add on to the comments that the Minister of Health has just put on the record. It is also not leadership to make a decision without going through a process that allows for the average Manitoban and the clients of home care services to be able to participate in a system which is going to have a severe impact, not only for today but for many generations to come. Having said that, the minister again, in responding to my last question, said that core services are those services that you need in the home that will allow you to remain in the home, and that is at least somewhat of a definition. I would anticipate that the Minister of Health would even have more detailed information that maybe he might be able to share with us regarding the core services that might be able to complement that particular statement that he made.

I would also ask the minister, has the Minister of Health given any consideration in terms of putting in some sort of a minimum-wage scale in part of the criteria?

Mr. McCrae: I answered that question already, Mr. Chairman. The honourable member was talking about core services, and I told him what they are. Those are the kinds of things that the New Democrats want to begin to

hack and slash. They want, I guess, to put an end to assessing care needs. They want to put an end to coordinating home care services, and they want to put an end to having nursing services, at least not what the government is going to pay for.

All of those core services are at risk under the New Democratic point of view and the New Democratic way of looking at things.

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I have listened to the minister's diatribe and his putting facts on the record that are completely inaccurate. Will the minister please source specifically where the New Democratic Party has made those claims with respect to eliminating nursing services, et cetera, because I think it is not doing any good to the community to have the minister putting falsehoods on the record.

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

Mr. McCrae: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I agree that the member did not have a point of order, but nonetheless—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for Kildonan during his point of order used a word that has been ruled unparliamentary many times. I would ask the honourable member to retract the word "falsehood."

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I will retract the word "falsehood" and substitute false facts.

Mr. Chairperson: Order please. I did not ask for him to replace the word, just retract the word.

Mr. Chomiak: I retract the word "falsehood."

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable member.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to continue.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member for Kildonan has graciously complied with your ruling, Mr. Chairman,

about which we are all very pleased, but in his point of order, which was not a point of order but nonetheless relevant to the issue that we are talking about, relevant but not a point of order, he talked about how—something about facts that are not correct or something along that line.

You see, I only go after the New Democrats the way I do because they start it. When I was a little boy, I never liked to start fights, but I never liked to shy away from them when they got going either because there is a sense of, I do not know what you call it, appropriateness, that you do not just allow yourself to be kicked around all the time without somehow standing up for what is right.

Well, it is the NDP that tells us that it is because of some document they brandish every day that the government wants to impose user fees, and the NDP and their union boss friends went out and told the clients of home care that they can expect to see user fees and cuts in services tomorrow. I cannot sit still for that, Mr. Chairman. You have to understand that that sort of talk is mischievous, and if that is unparliamentary, I will change it to unhelpful, if you like, but the point is, it is wrong to do that.

* (1140)

That is when they get my dander up, the New Democrats, when they say things that are not true, or they encourage their union boss friends to do that. It is one thing to tell a reporter for the newspaper something that is not true. That is one thing. It is another thing to go right to the doorstep of the client of our home care system and spread this kind of misinformation.

So I am simply engaging in a little bit of the same thing that the New Democrats engage in. I am referring to a report that the New Democrats, Mr. Gary Doer and Mr. Chomiak, who was an employee at one time for the NDP, as I understand it, or for one of the ministers or something like that.

(Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

He shakes his head. No? You did not work for anybody? [interjection] Who? [interjection] Okay, that would help. The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) is

going to give me his résumé so I will know who it was he worked for, because he does not want to tell me right now. But he worked for the NDP anyway, which works for the unions, and it is the NDP and the unions that commissioned this Price Waterhouse report that I am looking at right now.

It is this report that—they are covering up I am sure, Mr. Chairman, because they are not telling me what they paid for the report and stuff like that, or how many Americans were involved in its production. We know there were Americans. Oh, my goodness, Jay Cowan was a former American. Oh, and he sat on the government benches opposite. Woe, this is terrible. I understand there is one or two honourable ones on the benches opposite right now that are formerly citizens of the United States. Oh is that not awful. These are my fellow Canadians we are talking about right now, and somehow the honourable member for Kildonan wants to taint his own colleagues by his continuous blasts at the Americans, their flag burning and all that stuff that goes on with the New Democrats. I think you cannot talk at cross purposes to yourself all the time. You should not do that because after a while, people stop believing anything you say.

What are we supposed to do with this NDP report that says, let us have user fees and let us cut services in the Home Care program? What are you supposed to believe? Do not stretch my credibility and I will not stretch yours. If you are stretching my credibility and the people's credibility by spreading information around that is not correct—and it does not bother me so much, except that you have upset the clients of the home care system. You have upset them, and they deserve better than what you are dishing out. They deserve a lot better. In fact, right now they deserve essential services.

So I would like to request, Mr. Chairman, that this committee recess, so that the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) joined by his sidekick, the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), together can go to their union boss friends and ask—not ask, demand—that essential services begin today for the clients of our home care system, that essential services begin today for people with Parkinson's disease, for people with Alzheimer's disease, people with multiple sclerosis, people who have severe cases of arthritis, people who are functionally dependent on these services,

functionally dependent. Do not turn your back on those people anymore.

Let us recess this committee, send these members off to their friends to get this matter solved right now. You can come out a big winner, and I will be the first one to congratulate you, because I need that on behalf of the clients of home care. I should not have to beg people in this Chamber. Can they not see, Mr. Chairman, their duty as representatives of the people? You are not here to represent union bosses. If that is what you think you are here to do, how come you are taking your pay cheques from the people of this province? They are very different. Union bosses are not the general population. They are well-paid people who wield significant powers over other people. They are the ones who are leading decent, hardworking people to abandon their clients.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Give those clients a break today. Let us adjourn this discussion. Let us recess this committee. Get that job done. Report to us at one o'clock when we resume, and then we will get into the regular kind of examination of Estimates, and there will be all kinds of information. I can get my staff here. They are busy. I cannot get the kind of staff I need, with all due respect to Susan and Frank here, who do excellent work, but they can only spread themselves so thin, too. I would like to answer all the questions that come at me, and I need the staff resources to help me do that because the Estimates review is a detailed review of the spending of the government. But, my goodness, you take 3,000 people and you get the union bosses to abandon their clients, we have got problems. We have got work to do, and that is what my people, that is what the people in the Department of Health—God bless them; they are doing a great job—but they are working very hard.

We are getting volunteer assistance. Manitobans are responding beautifully, Mr. Chairman. Our clients are getting service, but it is not the service they are used to getting. It is not as reliable as we would like it to be. It is not something we can guarantee as well as we would like to guarantee it. I mean, we are in a strike. We have essential services being withdrawn, withheld from people who need it, people with Alzheimer's disease, people with multiple sclerosis, people with Parkinson's disease, people with severe cases of arthritis, people who are

functionally dependent on these services. These two honourable members can change that. The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), they can make a real contribution to their fellow Manitobans simply by agreeing to recess this committee so that they can go and demand that the union bosses relent and provide services to these very, very vulnerable people. So I repeat my request that this committee recess.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, the Minister of Health has the power to be able to resolve this particular issue on behalf of the clients. He knows what is being asked of him, and, you know, one might wonder in terms of has the Minister of Health taken an opportunity to sit down with Peter Olfert, appeal to him to come to his office to see if in fact if between the two of them they can see if there is a compromise or a consensus that is there. If the minister was quite serious in wanting to be able to sit down with individuals like Peter Olfert and go to the table with the idea of being able to compromise for the sake of the clients, I think then that the Minister of Health would be doing all Manitobans a decent job, at least in attempting to resolve the strike, let alone the essential services and the need for the essential services.

I asked the minister, my question actually was prior to him standing up and giving that response, was the Minister of Health prepared to look at some sort of a wage scale as a part of the criteria? He listed off some of the standards and criteria that he was looking at. My question to the Minister of Health is, is the minister indicating that he is not prepared to look at a wage scale or salaries in the health care Estimates?

* (1150)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable member to turn off the device that he has in the Chamber? Thank you.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member is not putting this question on behalf of the clients, obviously. So I am having a little trouble with it. Again, he has allowed himself to be lulled into this business of being led around by the nose by the union bosses, and it is showing in some—if I were the member I would be mightily embarrassed.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, unfortunately, I had to go all the way and get the telephone, and so I was not

able to actually pose the question in the fashion in which I would have liked to have posed it. So let me rephrase the question for the Minister of Health. There is in fact a need to be able to address the whole issue of what sort of standards are going to be put into place to ensure that there is going to be quality care. One of the ways in which you can ensure quality care is by those individuals that are providing that care, and one of the ways in which you can ensure that quality is through the pay structure in which you pay employees, whether you are in the private sector, public, private for profit or private not for profit.

One of the questions that was actually again from that committee meeting that I had hosted in terms of trying to get feedback was from one individual who stated where does the minister expect to find the nurses to provide the community needs? Does he believe all the health care workers will jump to the new job demands in the private sector? Does the Minister of Health believe that the hundreds of home care service workers today are not worth the dollars that they are currently being paid? What gesture, sincere gesture is the Minister of Health prepared to incorporate into a tendering process to ensure that there is going to be a decent wage given to those individuals providing a very important quality service to Manitobans, keeping in mind, Mr. Chairperson, that if there is no attempt to address this particular issue, what you will see is a lot of individuals that will be constantly entering into the home care services as a minimum wage type of job, providing a service that will see a lot of transients, individuals just entering to fill in for a short amount of time and then going back out.

That is not in essence in the best interest of the client, I would argue, and that is one of the reasons why we feel that there is a need for the government to come out and say, look, as part of the criteria this is going to be the expectation in terms of how much a home care service worker should be receiving. If you incorporate that into the criteria, what will happen is you will allow for organizations such as the Victorian Order of Nurses the ability to be able to compete that much better. If you do not incorporate that in, then you are allowing organizations such as We Care and others that might be in a better position to employ individuals at a minimum wage some form of preferential treatment. In other words, indirectly you could be providing for preferential treatment if you do not incorporate some sort of a wage scale structure.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, the honourable member is being pretty insulting to people. I do not know if he knows he is being insulting to people, but he is.

If you take a nurse who trains for his or her profession, they are required to meet the standards and the rules set down by their professional organization. The honourable member is now saying that these dedicated people will provide less service or fail to meet the standards of their profession if you do not pay them X number of dollars, which in my view is nonsense.

I would ask honourable members to agree to recess this committee.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, it is absolutely amazing how the minister time and time again will stand up and ask for us to recess. Is it for the purpose that ultimately he can go to the public and indicate that he tried to get opposition members to agree, to score some political points? I do not understand why it is the minister does not want to accept responsibilities, answer questions that are being posed to him. If he wanted the essential services put into place, he has the means in which he can actually get that accomplished. He is not going to sacrifice the principles of the Tory agenda. He might have to put it off or put it off in such a fashion that will allow for a genuine input into the decision-making process.

What I do not understand is why it is that the Minister of Health is not taking advantage of the position that he has and taking direct action on behalf of the home care clients, and he does have the capacity to end, if not end, to put into place essential services. All the minister has to be able to do is sit down with the so-called union individuals, with the home care workers and ultimately with the clients, Mr. Chairperson, and be prepared to compromise. Is the Minister of Health going to say that under no circumstances, even on behalf of the clients of Manitoba, is he prepared to compromise today in order to get that essential service in?

Mr. McCrae: We have put compromises forward, Mr. Chairman. They have all been rejected out of hand. They only looked at them for an hour or something like that or less and rejected everything. Their minds were made up. Does the honourable member for Inkster not understand that? The union bosses had their minds made up. They

wanted a strike because they had other things on their minds, too. They wanted a strike. If it were otherwise they would have at least looked at what the government was going to offer, but they went and got a strike vote before anything even happened and out they went. They had their deadline set. All of that was a done deal. Is the honourable member for Inkster so naive that he does not know that, that he cannot see what has been happening in this province? The NDP and the union bosses are trying to sort of make hostages of the clients of our Home Care program. Does the member not see that?

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, I think it is totally inappropriate for the Minister of Health, a member of the Crown, to say not only that the union but the NDP are trying to make hostages of clients in the home care system. I think that is unbecoming and inappropriate for a minister to indicate. In fact, that is a criminal offence, and the minister is making allegations of those kinds in this House, I think it is totally inappropriate and only serves to diminish the capacity of this minister to serve in that function.

Mr. McCrae: On the same point, the honourable member for Kildonan knows that I would not attribute criminal—

Mr. Chomiak: Why did you say it?

Mr. McCrae: I am making it clear right now, Mr. Chairman, I attribute no criminal imputation here and the member knows that.

He is very, very sensitive; he is totally despondent. There was a vote held the other day. I asked an expert in this field, when is the last time a union put a strike vote and lost it to such an extent, and this expert was unable to say except that it must have been a very long time ago. They totally misread what the people of this province—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for Kildonan did not have a point of order, but I would ask all honourable members to choose their words carefully. It will aid in the decorum of this House, and I think if we carry on in that fashion, we will go as we have in the past three or four days and we will get along real well.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being twelve o'clock, this committee will recess until 1 p.m.

The committee recessed at 12 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 1 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: The Committee of Supply, please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply is dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Health. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time. We are at Resolution 21.1, item 1.(b)(1).

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): I wonder, Mr. Chairperson, if we might have leave to ask questions from the front bench for the duration of this session of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairperson: Would the second critic for the official opposition have leave to ask his questions from the front row for the remainder of the Estimates of the Department of Health?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Chairperson: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Sale: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, member for Inkster, I appreciate it.

I would like to move to the question of the urban advisory group and start by referring the minister and staff to page 28 of the Quality Health for Manitobans: The Action Plan document tabled in May of 1992, by the previous Minister of Health, the Honourable Donald Orchard.

From the time that this document was issued, I have been struck by what I think, to put it charitably, was a very unhelpful graphic on page 28 at the top, and I want to ask the honourable minister and his staff if they might respond to this perception, at least on my part, that this is a very unhelpful graphic.

The assumption that Manitobans and the Legislature were invited to believe were that costs per day in community hospitals, such as Grace or Deer Lodge geriatric centre or the municipal centre, were in the order of \$400 a day or \$200, \$234 a day in the case of Deer Lodge, instead of \$775 per day at Health Sciences.

The minister of the day indicated that as beds closed in Health Sciences that beds would be opened in other centres, and the implication was that there would be substantial savings because people were invited to do the arithmetic and to multiply the difference in the costs which amounted to, in the case of the first example, Health Sciences and St. Boniface to Grace, of about \$365 per day implied savings. I wonder if the minister could comment on the usefulness of the diagram and the assumptions that are contained in it.

Mr. McCrae: The question raised by the honourable member about costs in the various acute care settings and the potential savings by closures and reductions all hinges on our ability, for example, in our home care program to be able to respond to the requirements of earlier discharges and less reliance on acute care. We cannot very well even have a Home Care program if the union is going to take the employees and invite them to abandon the clients. So it all comes back to home care every time, and for that reason, if we are going to have a labour disruption in this crucial area of health care, we at least need to have essential services. So I would request the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) and the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) to agree that this committee recess, and the honourable member for Crescentwood could join his colleague, the member for Kildonan and go and see their union boss friends and arrange for some essential services to be made available immediately.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, it is difficult to penetrate that answer and find any logic or any connection to my question, but let me try another way. Could the minister tell the committee how many beds have been closed at Health Sciences Centre between 1992 and the present time? How many rated beds have been closed at that particular facility in the approximate four year period?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, whatever number of beds have been closed at Health Sciences Centre has been made possible by the fact that we have a Home Care program, but right now our Home Care program is under

vicious attack by the NDP and their union boss friends, and while that vicious attack continues we have people who require essential services. Now, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) pointed out yesterday that even arrangements that deal with international warfare provide for certain minimum levels of services, and you would think the NDP and their union boss friends would at least have enough compassion in their hearts to deal with this in a sensible way. There are people who have multiple sclerosis who are clients of ours, people who have Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, severe arthritis and other debilitating conditions that make them functionally dependent on home care services.

I ask honourable members to agree that we recess this committee so that members opposite who have such significant influence with their union boss friends—or maybe it is the other way around, maybe the union boss friends have all the significant influence on them. Maybe it is time to reverse that and do something that is right for the clients of home care. So I would ask that the member for Crescentwood agree that we recess this committee so that he and his colleagues can work with their union boss friends to bring about the immediate restoration of essential services.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave to recess at this time?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I would appeal to the minister to think about how foolish he appears on the record of Hansard with his accusations in regard to bombs and shopping carts and groceries which were certainly the subject of CBC's morning program today in which the minister appeared very foolish when he continues to use the mantra that he uses of union boss friends and other mantras that have become part of his lexicon in the last 10 days. Readers of the record are going to wonder just what possessed this minister to continue to make such foolish responses to questions which are attempting to get at some fundamental issues of health planning in this province. The minister can, of course, under our rules, not answer the question, but I would respectfully ask the Chairperson to call the minister to order when he continuously provides specious and irrelevant answers. He is quite free not to answer, but I do not believe that under our rules he is continuously free to wander off into, as I say, specious

allegations and the repeating of mantras which are in no way, shape or form connected to the question being asked.

* (1310)

I would like to ask one more time, would the minister confirm then that in the report prepared by his own policy institute, the indication was that somewhere in excess of 300 beds have been closed in the four years from 1992 to 1996 at Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg?

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Within the honourable member for Crescentwood's question, he had asked if the Chairperson could intervene when the minister is not being relevant. The member for Crescentwood is quite correct that the relevancy of the answers is part of the rules, but under this section which we are in at this time, which is 1.(b)(1), it is also very open for the minister or the critic to flow just about anywhere within the department as long as we are dealing with administrative or issues relevant to that line.

It is very awkward for the Chair to intervene until it disrupts the House. If there is disruption, I will intervene at that time because we do attempt to keep the decorum at a certain level, but I would like you to understand that there is a bit of an awkward situation for the Chair at this point. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members in the Chamber to aid the Chair in maintaining the decorum, and we will carry on at the point.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member referred to that publicly owned broadcaster, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and the reference made to myself on one of its programs. I have received a disturbing allegation respecting the activities of, I believe it was, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, but it was recently planned, an interview with one of the clients of home care on television, and the allegation is that the union asked this client if it would not be too much trouble if she would not mind crying for the camera.

This is the kind of thing that we are working with, that the member for Crescentwood seems to want to support when he says no to a recess for this committee so that we can put an end to this nonsense. He says no to people who have Parkinson's disease; he turns his back on people who have Alzheimer's disease. He more or less is

saying to people with multiple sclerosis that they can go and eat cake or those with severe cases of arthritis, people whose bodies are such that they cannot even go to the bathroom without help; they cannot feed themselves. They cannot bathe themselves, dress themselves or move from their bed to their chair without help, and this honourable member sits there, Mr. Chairman and tells me how foolish I am for standing up for those people. I do not accept that. He does not embarrass me a little bit when he calls attention to some of the things that I have said about him and his union boss friends and the things that they have allowed to go on without any condemnation whatsoever, without any denial, even, of the involvement of New Democrats in regard to those activities. It is not me. I raise the activities; it is up to them to condemn them. I remember when I was Attorney General sitting over there and complaining bitterly about Daryl Bean, the president of the Canadian public service.

I think it is the Public Service Alliance or some such union like that.

He wrote a letter to a couple of grandmothers who wanted to go to work during a strike. He wrote a letter to them saying that people like them should be either hanged or drowned. This is the kind of activity that New Democrats sit here and stand here in this place all the time and defend. I simply want the people of Manitoba to see these people exposed for what they really are. They go out into the public, they put their name on the ballot, and they say, vote for me because I stand for everybody. There is no evidence of that here.

Everybody includes people who have Parkinson's disease; everybody includes people who have multiple sclerosis, people who have Alzheimer's disease and severe and debilitating cases of arthritis and other conditions that render them functionally dependent on home care services. The members opposite support abandoning. I really think that that is what needs to be made known, that this is where these people stand. I think this is the appropriate place to do it; this is our Legislature.

Here we are discussing a program and something even more urgent than that, a withdrawal of services, a virtual abandonment by the union and the NDP of the clients of the home care system. They want to shut me up; they want to tell me what I should say. I mean, they do that to their membership. The unions use threats and intimidation to make people conform to their way of

doing business, which means to turn your back on people with Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, severe cases of arthritis and other debilitating conditions that render people functionally dependent on home care services.

That is what they do around here every day under the guise of caring about some group in society or some other group in society. Well, you do not care for these functionally dependent people by turning your back on them and abandoning them. That is why I ask again: Will honourable members agree that this committee should be recessed so that New Democratic members, who enjoy a organic fusion type relationship with the unions, will have an opportunity to demand of those union bosses that a stop be put to this nonsense and that the essential services be provided to those people who need them?

Mr. Sale: Approximately 340 beds or so have been closed at Health Sciences Centre over the period of time that is in question. The diagram to which I have referred, and attempted to have the minister refer, on page 28 of his Action Plan, indicated that the cost of those beds was \$775 per day. The implication of the arithmetic is that we would be saving in excess of \$240,000 per day as a result of the closure of those 300 beds. That is certainly the implication that Manitobans were invited to believe; \$775 times 300 beds, you round it off a little bit, and you will find that it is close to \$240,000 a day.

Now, that is a lot of money, and when you take it over a year, it is a heck of a lot of money. The implication is that we would have saved well in excess of \$100 million a year by that expedient of closing that number of beds. I am sure that the deputy minister and the staff from the administration department know and can tell the minister that the problem with this diagram is that it uses the concept of average costs. As the deputy minister will, I am sure, tell the minister, there is no such thing as an average bed in a hospital. Many of the beds which were closed actually cost in the order of \$250 to \$300 a day in real terms and perhaps less. When you do not make a distinction between average costs and marginal costs in any system, you certainly invite the public, who are not particularly trained in that kind of thinking, to believe things which are simply not the case.

Most simply, the average member of the public understands that when one child leaves a classroom, the

school division is not saving the average cost of a pupil in the school division of \$5,000 or \$6,000 per year, nor, when one child more enters into a classroom, are we going to spend the average cost of a child in a school division of \$5,000 or \$6,000 more. In fact, costs in any institution do not vary directly with the population it serves, but they vary in a jagged and step-wise fashion, in increments, in effect so that, to use the analogy of schools again, when you can lay off a teacher because you do not have any more need for that number of students in a classroom—they have disappeared, 20 or 25 of them, however many— then there is a substantial saving, but, until you can reduce the cost drivers in a system, the actual volumes do not make a terrible amount of difference. They simply drive the average cost up or down slightly, but they do not make a lot of difference to the overall expenditures.

* (1320)

So really what the minister should have said when he issued this book was that we are going to have to do some very careful work to discern the difference between marginal costs and average costs and find out what we really would save if we closed 100 beds or 200 beds or 300 beds. Similarly, when we open beds, we are going to have to do the same kind of work to point out the difference between average and marginal costs and make sure we are not fooling ourselves. Mr. Chairperson, this government, I think, fooled itself and in the process misled Manitobans into thinking that if we could only close some reasonably large number of beds in our acute care system, we would have amazing savings because, as the minister points out, home care at a much cheaper cost can replace unnecessary acute care, and community-based hospitals are cheaper. The problem is that they either mistook for themselves, or at least they invited the public to mistake, average costs for marginal costs.

Would the minister confirm that in the years since the issuing of this report, the actual base budget of Health Sciences Centre has only varied by a very small amount of money and that the implied savings in the closure of such a large number of beds have never materialized in spite of Connie Curran's report? There have been improvements in productivity which are to be welcomed, but the magnitude of savings implied by this document have never, ever been even approached, let alone achieved.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I am sure these are items that can and should be discussed during the Estimates process, but I think we should all try to understand what our priorities should be. Maybe the member opposite disagrees about priorities, but priorities to me are people who need essential services right now in the Home Care program. If we can get that matter resolved, then it would be so much easier to get on with some other things that are of interest to the honourable member.

It is very nice that he is interested in all these numbers and everything, and I am, too, but there is a more compelling matter on my mind. I am trying to encourage the honourable member to place some priority on the clients of home care. In furtherance of that, I would ask that he agree to recess this committee until he and his friends can get together with their friends in the union movement and put a stop to the foolishness and bring about on an immediate basis some essential services for the clients of the home care system.

Mr. Chairperson: With all due respect to the minister, I have put the question of whether we should recess a number of times, and it has been rejected. The honourable member for Crescentwood is dealing with the matter which falls under the jurisdiction of 1.(b)(1) at this time, so he is being relevant.

Mr. Sale: Let me just say, without wanting to move to the minister's agenda of home care at this point, that I have great confidence in the collective bargaining process, and I am sure that if the government is prepared to be flexible, that the home care workers certainly are not asking much.

The government has indicated that it does not think it is going to save any money through its process of privatization, at least that is one of the stories that it gives, and so the process of appropriate public hearings shared by someone whom the minister trusts, for instance, Noralou Roos or Brian Postl, both of whom have done many reports for this government, that that would be a useful process and might allay the fears of the clients of the home care system and the public about the process of privatization.

I understand the minister's anxiety when he is facing a situation where no one agrees with him or his government, where the clients are not supportive of his

approach, where organization after organization flays the government, where its own best experts tell it it has not got a shred of dignity, intellectual or otherwise, to stand on in this whole process. It is very embarrassing and I sympathize with the minister to be in such a situation, but it is entirely of his own making, him and his Premier (Mr. Filmon) who have caused this strike by refusing to be up front about the process and by basically threatening workers with not just their incomes but their jobs.

I am sympathetic to the patients and to the clients of the home care system, but I have to tell the minister that overwhelmingly the clients support the workers not the government, and that also must be very difficult for the minister.

Now, Mr. Chairperson, I want to go back to the question of this urban hospitals cost issue. The minister has indicated the intention to close two hospitals as acute care hospitals; convert one to a geriatric centre and convert the other to a walk-in clinic. He made that announcement, indicated that policy direction, and to, I think, his embarrassment and the embarrassment of his colleagues, again, he did not have a shred of evidence to support this from a policy perspective or from a financial perspective.

He attempted to use some ratios from Calgary as justification for cutting the number of acute care beds further in Winnipeg, having already reduced them substantially and in a number of occasions from December onwards indicated that costing studies were underway. Informal contacts with those involved in the costing process have indicated to the public, to us, to the press, that the anticipated savings are simply not there and that we are perhaps looking at saving \$5 million to \$7 million out of \$97 million and that even that number does not take into account all of the adjustments that have to be made in the current system before the closures could take place. Could the minister tell the committee when he expects to have a final and public, or at least a public report, interim or final, from the committee undertaking the costing that is under the immediate direction, I believe, of Dr. Brock Wright? Could he indicate when that costing will be made public so that members of the public might understand better the rationale for closing these two valuable facilities?

Mr. McCrae: I am sure the question the honourable member is addressing here is very, very important, but I

cannot think of anything more pressing, urgent and requiring more immediate prioritization than the plight of the clients of the home care system who have been denied services with the active support of the New Democratic Party along with the unions. So I would ask that this House be recessed so that that matter—

Point of Order

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I am sure you have in front of you the appropriate citation from our rules. With great respect, you indicated earlier that during the process of Estimates, particularly this section of Estimates, committee has a history of being able to move across a department. I believe though that if you will review carefully, the intention of that section is to enable questions to be addressed which address a broad range of issues.

With great respect, the questions which I have asked this afternoon address acute care hospitals, planning and financing. The minister has persisted in asking for a recess which he knows will be denied and which the Chair has asked him not to request, and he has persisted in answering with remarks that bear no relationship to the question at hand, so I believe that the purpose of our rules is being violated by the minister's behaviour. I would ask that you consider calling the minister to order and, if he does not come to order, consider naming him, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, the point of order raised by the honourable member for Crescentwood demonstrates a clear lack of priority recognition when it comes to the health of our fellow Manitobans. He wants to talk about anything but home care today, anything but the clients of home care. He wants to talk about anything but the plight that he and his friends in the union movement have put our clients into, and I believe that we need his help. Having done so much to put them in the position they are in, we now need the help of the New Democrats to help get the clients out of this problem that he and his—

An Honourable Member: You have a clear way to climb down from your embarrassing position; all you have to do is take it.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I was attempting to address the—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. If the minister could wrap up on the information on the point of order at this time.

Mr. McCrae: Yes, Sir. In short, the honourable member does not have a point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: The member for Crescentwood brings forward an area that I have some concerns with, but I will take the matter under advisement and come back to the Chamber with my ruling on this. But I ask all honourable members at this time, relevancy is not the only thing in question; repetition also comes into question at this time. To assist the Chamber—and that is what I am here as, just to assist you in seeing that this committee runs in an orderly fashion—I would ask all honourable members to help me in maintaining the decorum—and we have been doing a fine job of that over the past while—but also in trying not to direct imputations towards each other or towards where we are headed here today.

I will take it under advisement and return to the House.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I recognize the delicate and difficult position all of this puts you in as we attempt to focus some attention on the issues that we believe to be important in this wide-ranging aspect of the review of the Estimates.

To the honourable member, it is some analysis of what it costs to run a hospital bed or some such thing. To me it is to get service to people who need it, and I guess we are in a little bit of a competition to see whose agenda item or issue should be given the most priority. Certainly today on April 26 I think it is, 1996, I cannot think of anything more important than restoring for our clients services that they need and through no fault of their own whatsoever have been removed from them.

I did not remove those services, the NDP and their union boss friends did, and how did they do it? They did it by misleading people. They did it by telling people that they were going to face user fees, something the NDP themselves were putting—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, you just said no more than three minutes ago that repetition was an issue. This must be the seventh or eighth time this afternoon that we have heard the same mantra. I would ask you to call the minister to order.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. On the member's point of order, he is quite correct. I did ask for the issue of relevance and repetition to be looked upon by the honourable members, but at this time I am holding back on that other ruling which I have taken under advisement.

What I am asking for is the assistance of the members this afternoon to attempt to abide by those rules as we see them before us today. This is a very difficult situation you have put me in from both sides of the House. That is why I am asking for your consideration on this matter. I need your co-operation if we are going to have the matter resolved, and I will attempt to bring back a resolution to this problem, but I will not be able to do it today. I understand the member's concerns, and I understand the pressure we are under within this committee today, but I would just like to further study the matter before I make any recommendations on my ruling.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister to conclude, with one minute remaining.

Mr. McCrae: I am not trying to make life difficult for you, Mr. Chairman, by making reference to the Home Care program and the clients thereof. I will try to stay within the rules to the extent that I can, but you see, I guess I would maybe ask the members to waive the rules if we get so close to breaching them that we need to do that in order to bring to the public's attention the requirement for us to get the NDP to see the light, to come to their senses, and do the right thing for our clients.

I will try not to break any rules, and I will try to be relevant, but it is something that will require all my strength and all my effort and, frankly, all my understanding of the rules of this House to use those rules for the maximum benefit of the people of this province, and not to make life difficult for you, Sir. Life is difficult

enough having to sit between the opposing sides in this Chamber.

You cannot talk about a hospital without talking about home care. In that sense, every time a hospital comes up in discussion, the whole issue of home care comes up. Do you want to talk about doctors? It is home care. You want to talk about nurses? It is home care, because we are trying to build a continuum of health services here in this province, and you cannot think of health care in Manitoba without thinking about home care.

It seems to me that while we are at it, the honourable member wants to talk about beds; he is a bed counter, I guess. The age of bed counting in measuring the quality of your health system is over. Surely the honourable member who has called himself a health consultant—he passes himself off as a health consultant—should understand that we are talking about what goes on within these buildings, not just counting beds. If we are just counting beds, I can do that. How many beds are there in a dozen Toronto hospitals? We know that there are 10,000 beds that Michael Decter and Bob Rae—you know, Michael Decter, do you not? I think the member for Crescentwood—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has expired on that one.

* (1340)

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I appreciate the difficulty of the situation that you are in. Something in the order of 60,000 Manitobans have signed petitions asking that Seven Oaks and Misericordia Hospitals remain open. Approximately 100,000 families are served by the family physicians and specialists who use those hospitals. They number about 125 family practitioners who have admitting privileges to those hospitals.

Would the minister confirm that the proposed closure was done without any plan for dealing with the admitting privileges of those physicians, and that the Manitoba Medical Association has accordingly written to the minister very strong letters suggesting that they best take into account the admitting privileges question and the capacity of the remaining system to meet the needs of the 100,000 Manitobans who are patients of doctors who have privileges in the two hospitals in question? Will he

confirm that he has correspondence to that effect from the Manitoba Medical Association?

Mr. McCrae: No. Yes.

Mr. Sale: I appreciate the minister's answer. Mr. Chairperson, I asked earlier and I do not think it is repetitious of me to ask again because the minister did not respond. I asked him if he could indicate the date by which there would be a public release of the costing estimates that are being developed under the direction of Brock Wright, I believe, and others in his department and in his working group in regard to the closure of Seven Oaks and Misericordia hospitals.

Mr. McCrae: I hope I understand the honourable member's question, but I have to put it in the context of something he was saying awhile ago that these various proposals represent government policy. Well, they do not and so, therefore, I do not know how to answer any questions that flow from that. The direct implication of what the—

Mr. Sale: With respect, I could not hear the minister's response, and I wonder if he might be so kind as to repeat what he said. I was not hearing his words.

Mr. McCrae: Earlier on the honourable member was sort of passing off as government policy recommendations made by the design teams and they are not government policy, so that questions that flow therefrom have to be taken in that context. The member was not leaving the record in the correct form when he left the impression that the policy of the government was to shut down these hospitals and stuff.

The shutting down of hospitals is what happens in Saskatchewan, NDP Saskatchewan. The shutting down of hospitals is what happens as a result of NDP Ontario. The shutting down of 10,000 hospital beds is something that Bob Rae and Michael Decter, with whom the honourable member used to work, are directly responsible. Michael Harris has to clean up one heck of a mess left by the New Democrats under Bob Rae, but it was not Mike Harris who shut down 10,000 acute care hospital beds. It was the dear friend of the honourable member for Crescentwood, Mr. Bob Rae, and Mr. Michael Decter, who is a dear friend of the honourable member, I think a former workmate and brother to my

opponent, my NDP opponent in the last election. The 52 hospital beds shut down in Saskatchewan, you know, that is what happens there when you are counting beds, there are 52 hospitals there in rural Saskatchewan shut down by the NDP.

You do not have to look very far to know what the NDP policy is. You can look at the Price Waterhouse report and recognize that NDP policy is user fees and cuts in home care. You know that it is massive bed cuts in the hospitals. It is a good thing we take a more evolutionary approach here. They were beginning their approach to hospital reform or whatever you want to call it back in 1987, and just for a little testing ground they have decided to use my community of Brandon as their little guinea pig and decided to begin hacking and slashing hospital beds at Brandon General Hospital.

I do not need to take too many lectures from honourable members opposite, but on the other hand, it is not just the NDP that have these issues to address. Whether it be in Ontario or Saskatchewan or B.C. where they are shutting down home tertiary care centres and stuff like that, there are problems going on in Alberta where there is a Conservative government. I guess it is a PQ government in Quebec where they are closing down seven hospitals in Montreal; the Liberal government in Halifax where they are making one hospital out of five.

And here we have our New Democratic friends here in Manitoba who seem to, by implication, have you believe, Sir, that, oh, those are things that go on everywhere else but do not go on here. Well, frankly, they have not gone on in that way here, but we cannot ignore the fact that we have over capacity in our acute care sector. Members opposite agree with that but it depends, they will agree today and not agree tomorrow depending on which way the wind is blowing.

I just do not want the member to think that recommendations by the design teams passed on to the urban planning partnership have become government policy, that is all. They want me to accept their protestations that what is in the Price Waterhouse report calling for the cuts in the user fees is not NDP policy. Somehow someone makes a recommendation now in the '90s, and it is all of a sudden PC government policy. The fact is, as I have said many times here and publicly and privately and everywhere else anybody would listen, that

the design teams were there as a group of professionals with a particular expertise in the various medical disciplines and stuff to make recommendations, which they did. It must have really got some people going because they actually made recommendations to do something rather than go back to the way things used to be like it is official NDP policy.

Rather than go back to the way things used to be, which is a sure prescription for the death of health care, which is the NDP prescription, we are listening to what the professionals have to say, and yes, there has been criticism that there were too many academics, and yes, not enough from my hospital and too many from the other guy's hospital, I believe in reform unless it is to reform somebody or to reform something, I believe in it, but by golly, do not reform anything because that would be reform which I believe in, which I cannot let you do. This is more or less the circumloquacious argument that we get from honourable members opposite.

It is all a game to the New Democrats. They have been out of government for so long, they are so badly out of touch that they have decided to have a little fun out of it while they are at it. They are getting paid to be here anyway, they might as well say something, but do not say anything that makes any sense, because somebody will pin you with it. They will pin you down and make you explain and make you stand up for what you believe in. That is what they will do to you. If you actually say something, that would be just far too courageous for New Democrats to do, so they do not. They take the easy way out all the time, which is okay, they are in opposition. You are not fooling anybody. You have not been anywhere and you are not going anywhere, because you do not have anything to offer the people of this province.

Mr. Sale: The minister continues to wander in circles and have nothing much to offer in regard to answers to what I think are very important questions, and the 100,000 patients of those two hospitals may feel that he is not exactly serving their interests very well by refusing to at least give some indication of when they might know whether there is any substance to the notion that there are substantial savings to be made to the closure of these hospitals, and when they might know what plans are being put in place to provide for their care when it is no longer available within a reasonable distance of their

home. The people of Stonewall would be very interested in the answer to that question.

* (1350)

In terms of the minister's foolish accusations about substance, the platform of this party has always focused on community based care. We instituted community clinics under our leadership. The minister has not set up a single one, although he bows on their direction from time to time. If he really believed in community based care, he would have established a community based clinic system and supported that system. He would have dealt with walk-in clinics, he would have dealt with the sharply escalating costs identified in his own report in regard to private laboratories.

There are any number of things which have been in our platform for years and on which when we had an opportunity we made significant progress, and we will make great progress again when we form government.

I would like to ask the minister in response to his reference of overcapacity, what is the current estimate on the government's part? What numbers do you use to indicate to yourselves the scale of the overcapacity of acute care beds in Winnipeg at the present time? What is the actual number?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, at this point, it is very hard to be totally precise because, depending on a hard look at the demographics of our population and the different population health indicators that come into play when one is doing this sort of analysis, you could go anywhere from all the way down—what is the name of that measurement from the States?

There is a measurement that they use in the United States, which goes all the way down to one bed per thousand population, all the way up to well over four where we are already here in Winnipeg. So, certainly not interested in one, I do not think we can do that here. Calgary, which has 2.5, I believe it is, has a different population mix than we do, so we probably would be looking at something higher than that. So we are narrowing it a little bit, but I cannot be more precise and say it is 2.8 or 3.1 or something like that. Four is agreed by everybody to be more than we need per thousand, especially with the burgeoning growth of the Home Care

program and also the tremendous growth of our long-term program, and the capacity that we are building into those programs. We do not need the acute care that we presently have.

The honourable member knows, but does not talk about this very often, that, for example, there was a time not so many years ago that if you had a heart attack, you would be in the hospital for five to six weeks. I met recently with a cardiologist who tells me it is five to six days now for a hospital stay as a result of a heart attack. That is just one. A very close relative of mine recently was a long-stay patient for gall bladder removal—two days. Long stay, two days. This person, in her mid-'70s, was in her car driving to Calgary within 10 days to visit relatives. In the olden days, everybody knows that was a 10-day stay and longer than that before you would be back at work.

The concept of health care is now that you do not convalesce at hospitals, you convalesce somewhere else. You might as well not even bother sending a get well card except to the person's home address nowadays if you hear about somebody having an operation; that is how much things have changed. Our hospital system has not changed. The bed counters of the past are still with us—some of them are anyway—and they are still there to complain each time you close a hospital bed, when the focus for the system should be services and not the number of beds. That is the old style when we did not have all these other supports in place. Now we do.

Technology is such that it is things like laparoscopic surgery that have brought about the less intrusive procedures like gall bladder removals, for example. I was at the opening of the new surgery centre at Victoria General Hospital recently, and they let me play doctor but they did not let me at a real patient.

An Honourable Member: Thank goodness.

Mr. McCrae: Thank goodness is right. They gave me a little jar of gummy bears and laparoscopic equipment and I was to take the gummy bears out of the cup and put them somewhere else. I do not know if, Mr. Chairman, you got to do that that day or not, but with a little bit of practice people who are skilled in these matters can really make a difference in the care of our patients.

Eye care is an example that the president of the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses referred to recently to make the case that, when we do about 6,000 cataract surgeries a year at the Misericordia General Hospital—this was a move, by the way, that the NDP opposed— but what we did was we saved money and we did more surgeries there.

But here is the rest of the story on that one. It used to be a 10-day, two-week stay to get your cataracts removed. Now it is done on an out-patient basis, and because we have this centre of excellence at the Misericordia General Hospital which the NDP oppose—but I guess they oppose it because it is better for the patients; that is typical—the fact is 60,000-plus bed days per year are now saved because of the different way of doing just that one procedure.

So now we have talked about heart attacks, we have talked about gall bladders and we have talked about eyes. How many other procedures are there where technology has made such a difference in the length of stay in our hospitals? I know that in Brandon, for example, they are doing the 24-hour mom and child release where mom and child go home after birth, and I think they are doing that elsewhere now, too. It used to be six, seven days in hospital to have a baby. Now you have a public health nurse visiting mom and baby at home where they are interacting with each other in their home environment, and the outcome in that situation is very positive and saving again in bed days.

But try to close a hospital bed and listen to the critics. Then you ask yourself, why are the critics being critical? Is it about care or is it about something else?

Mr. Sale: The initial response of the minister in regard to scale is very helpful, and he appeared, at least, to say that the range the province was looking at was somewhere between 4 and 2.5, which is a fairly big range, and I hope that he will narrow that range somewhat more in further answers to this question.

The point of the question, Mr. Chairperson, is simply to point out that unless you have some idea of a relatively clear range—it does not have to be an absolute number, but from 2.5 to 4 is a huge range. You look at the number of people effectively served by Winnipeg's hospitals, which is in the 800,000 region, the population

of the city, plus the immediate outlying areas that depend on Winnipeg for a great deal of their health care, approximately 800,000 people.

Now, at 2.5 per thousand, that would suggest that we need 2,000 acute care beds in Winnipeg. At 4 per thousand, that would suggest 3,200. He has suggested that the range for acute care beds in Winnipeg is somewhere between 2,000 and 3,200 based on an effective catchment area of about 800,000 people.

I wonder if the minister would be prepared to confirm that the implication of his over- capacity discussion at the beginning of the answer to my previous question would indicate that the number of acute care beds in the city optimally at this point in our technological history might lie somewhere between 2,000 and 3,200 acute care beds in total; rated beds, that is, that are actually occupied and staffed and functioning. Of course, I expect that he will distinguish between the capacity of the hospitals which is much higher than their actual staffed beds at the present time.

So I would ask that he respond to that, and just in closing my remarks I would completely agree with him that the style of care has changed dramatically, and the average length of stay, as has been pointed out by many commentators, including those in his institute, is that the average length of stay in Canada is finally coming down, not just here but elsewhere, to be more in line with what is possible. That is not a bad thing. That is a good thing, and I agree with him that that is a good thing.

The issue is, do you have in place in the community the resources available to support that style? The minister has indicated that that is the direction that he would like to go and we applaud that and support it, but I would like first if he could confirm that the implication of his scale is somewhere between 3,200 and 2,000 staffed, functioning active acute care beds in Winnipeg.

Mr. McCrae: It is nice, Mr. Chairman, finally to hear the honourable member acknowledge that significant work has been done to lay the groundwork in Manitoba, and that is borne out, of course, by looking at the tremendous increase in funding for Home Care over the last eight years, the tremendous growth of the long-term care, the personal care program. It is nice that the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) has

acknowledged that we have laid the groundwork in the home care and in long-term care for changes that are required in the acute care sector.

You do not just pick a number and then build your case around that number. You find appropriate methodologies for you to arrive at that number in the first place, and those appropriate methodologies depend on things like the health of the population; what kind of environment do we live in; our water, does it support a good healthy population; do we have any unusual heredity issues that somehow impact our population in a way that somehow hurts our health or makes it so much different from some other population? All of those things have to be taken into account.

So you do not just find a number and then try to make everything work around that number. You have to become very evidence based when it comes to arriving at a number, and I will not engage with the honourable member in a discussion today about how many beds there should be or should not be.

* (1400)

The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has given us his opinion, but it is very hard to know what to do with that opinion, because he said in one case you can close 100 beds. I do not know. Maybe we need to close more than 100 beds. In another sentence he said you can close 700 beds in Winnipeg. I do not know. If it comes that easy for him, why not 800 beds? Why not no beds?

Mr. Lamoureux: Are you suggesting 800 beds?

Mr. McCrae: No, that is what the member was suggesting, 700, and I am saying where is your science behind it? Where is your science behind your 700 beds that the Liberals are suggesting can be closed? Where is the science behind the 100 beds, which, in another breath, the Liberals are suggesting could be closed? We are going to be a little more scientific than the honourable member.

He is asking me about all these reports and things in Home Care, and I have been tabling them as if there were no tomorrow and he has never read any of them. Yet he has got all these highfalutin' expert opinions that he wants to share with everybody and he has not ready any

of that stuff. So, Mr. Chairman, we have to be kind of careful. I think it is important not to try to substitute our judgment all the time for the judgment who know more than we about these things, even those people who try to make you believe they are health consultants, try to make you believe they know a whole bunch of things about health. Some of them do, and some of them do not know so much. The thing that you have to do is get people working together, which is what our government does. We have been doing it a lot.

The member referred to the 1992 document relating to Quality Health for Manitobans—The Action Plan. He was being critical of something in there, that is okay. It is just that that report enjoys unanimous agreement. If the honourable member is saying today it no longer does, then let him tell us why. He has told us about one graph he does not like. You can dislike a graph and still agree with the policy. That is okay. If the honourable member wants to go further now and change NDP policy by the seat of his pants, let him do that. The Liberals, the NDP, everybody agrees with the document the honourable member was referring to, and I have said, without fear of contradiction, throughout this province, that it is virtually unanimous.

Now the honourable member shakes his head, so it is interesting, the NDP seem to be changing policy by the seat of their pants. Maybe the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) can explain that to us.

Mr. Lamoureux: You know, Mr. Chairperson, the member from Crescentwood actually put forward a fairly straightforward question, and the minister really has this fixation about putting words in the mouths of individuals on this side and then not answering a question, which ultimately does not make it as productive as the Health Estimates could be.

The point, of course, that is being made is that the minister we know has looked somewhere between 2.5 to 3.25 beds per 1,000. The total acute care beds that we have today in Manitoba—I should not say today—as of November back in 1995 was at 2,543. What we do know is that the minister is looking at closing down a number of beds. What number? Well, the Minister of Health wants opposition members to say numbers, to give specific numbers and yet he himself, as minister, is

not prepared to share with us the numbers that, in fact, he is looking at.

I have speculated in the past that I am anticipating it to be somewhere between the range of 100 to 700. I think that he has given serious consideration just through what I hear and most of it is hearsay and rumors or speculation, whatever it is that you want to call it, that it is somewhere between 350 to 600.

The Minister of Health is in a position to be able to indicate the type of global or an estimate of the type of numbers that he is looking for. Then the minister takes those numbers and he says, well, you know, the opposition recognizes that to a certain degree that, yes, there is a need for change, but when we suggest change that they are not necessarily supportive of change.

In other words, we say, okay, yes, there is a need, and I will say that now, yes, the Minister of Health given the acute care numbers of 2,543, we could justify seeing some beds being closed. Well, does that then mean that we are supporting the closing down of acute care centres, whether it is the Misericordia or the Seven Oaks Hospital or the Concordia Hospital? No, we are not saying that at all. It is a question in terms of how you want to administer those services. Where can you, in fact make, those acute care bed savings?

The recommendations that the deputy minister, and I am a little bit disappointed, I was hoping that the deputy minister would have been able to be here not only now, but when I had raised the questions the other day regarding hospitals. I believe that there is a fundamental flaw in the recommendations that this committee has brought to the Minister of Health and I am glad to hear the minister has not made a decision, but what he needs to do is he has got to recognize that fundamental flaw. There was a heavy bias, there was turf protection that took place, there is no justification for the closing of acute care services at the Seven Oaks Hospital or the Misericordia Hospital.

Come forward with some numbers. There is a valid argument to be made that, yes, you can close down acute care beds, but there are no valid arguments that will demonstrate that the Seven Oaks Hospital, in particular, should be shut down of its acute care services. That is why I challenge the minister the other day, not only in

committee, but also in writing, to provide me the opportunity with some health care professionals to cross-examine the Deputy Minister of Health and the CEOs. I have talked to CEOs, both in tertiary and community hospitals, who have pointed out that there are flaws, that there are other options. This minister has not looked at or, at least, provided, or acknowledged any credibility to other potential options. Those options will see our community hospitals continue, while at the same time allow for the reduction in acute care beds

The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) does a disservice by not allowing for us to get more of a debate. He can use, I guess, to a certain degree the home care crisis and the strike that is currently out there as one of the ways in which he can say, I do not have the staff to be able to bring into the Chamber to be able to articulate more of the details.

Mr. Chairperson, there is one thing that the Minister of Health can do. The Minister of Health can talk about the other options, and other options that would see, for example, if there is a need to cut acute care beds, acute care beds being cut at the Health Sciences Centre where money can be saved because the Health Sciences Centre, quite frankly, does many operations that could be done in our community hospitals, those sorts of beds, and that is nothing that is new. There are reports, The Action Plan makes reference to that. That is under Don Orchard and Frank Maynard. The Health Policy Institute with the University of Manitoba, this minister's guru of health policy, if you like, makes reference to tertiary hospitals doing services that could be done in our community hospitals. There is a viable option that will allow for the Seven Oaks Hospital and the Misericordia Hospital to provide acute care service. There are valid arguments as to the need for emergency community services.

When I look at it, quite frankly, in the way that it is being proposed, I have to question whether or not the right thing is, in fact, being done by this government. I have to give the benefit of the doubt, I guess, to a certain degree to the Minister of Health. He says a decision has not been made. All I would like to hear from the minister more than anything else through this afternoon dealing with the hospital issue—and the only reason why I bring up the hospital issue is that this is something in which the member from Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), and the Minister of Health have been talking about for the last hour, and

that the Minister of Health made reference to me and my suggestions.

* (1410)

All I really would like the Minister of Health to make a commitment towards is that, yes, there are other options, we are looking at those other options, and possibly to start talking about some of those other options to give that some hope, if you like, to those individuals who are advocating on the benefits of those community hospitals. That is what I am looking from the Minister of Health to do, and then we will continue on with the Home Care questions.

Mr. McCrae: This may, indeed, be an area where the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and I can collaborate more closely than perhaps we do on other matters. I would like to defend my deputy minister who was here. I told honourable members earlier today that he would be here for a little while this afternoon, and I cannot help it if honourable members did not want to ask questions when he was here. The fact is, the deputy and all the members of my department are very busy, as they always are, but certainly more so than ever right now because the NDP and the unions do not want to provide services to our home care clients, so we have to do it. We are doing it and we are doing the best we can. We have placed the highest priority on this. It does not mean it is easy, so I have told honourable members as long as this strike is on not to expect to see very much by way of staff representation here.

If the honourable members are not happy with some of my responses, because I do not have all the information sometimes, it is simply because the staff who provide me with that information are engaged in something even more important than answering the questions that get raised in here. They are looking after the clients of our Home Care program.

The union and the NDP have abandoned those clients and somebody has got to look after them and with some sensitivity and compassion. That is what is happening. Thank goodness for the wonderful people that we have working in the Department of Health, and thank goodness for the wonderful people who are providing their services to us on a volunteer basis, not to us, but to clients in the home care system.

I am very critical of the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in this area, because he has gone all the way over to the NDP on this, and I think it is shameful, shocking and horrific. really, if you think about it in all its dimensions that one would allow oneself and a whole party to be drawn in by people like the ones that we have opposite here in this House in the New Democratic Party who do not represent people, they represent unions.

I am sorry to see the Liberal Party sliding down that particular slope, but as I said to the honourable member, I appreciate what he is trying to do with regard to the hospital configuration in the city, and I am not trying to be unduly unfair to the honourable member. It is just that I do, indeed, wish to see proposals coming from him. He says, are you looking at options? Well, I want to know what options the honourable member wants me to look at.

I have private conversations with CEOs and people like that, too, same as he does, and those people are only trying to help. They are trying to help the system and I very much appreciate it. These are hard decisions to be making, and no matter what decisions get made, they are going to be hard because we know that fewer dollars are going into the hospital system. We know that, and so therefore the decisions will be hard because some people's jobs are going to be involved.

We cannot save every job, and the honourable member for Inkster knows that. All I ask of him in our collaboration—he used the word “debate,” I prefer the word “collaboration.” Debates fine, we have got to have it, but let us also try to work together on this. I am inviting the honourable member to do that. I do not want to take aim at any particular community hospital in this city for any unfair kind of treatment or anything like that. I have patients that we need to keep foremost in our thinking. We have got geriatric patients in this city.

All these years that I have been involved in politics, everybody talks about elderly Manitobans and their needs. Now, all of a sudden we want to do something about it. Oh, yes, well, no, no, that is a downgrade to look after elderly people. That is not an important part of the health system. You can forget about that part. We have got to have acute care, that is the only thing, acute care, we have got have that, acute care, acute care, acute care, never mind the old folks.

Well, the old folks are our pioneers and they deserve better than that whether it is at Seven Oaks Hospital or somewhere else in the city. Our senior citizens deserve not to be sloughed off like this. I find that a little bit upsetting that all of a sudden, when my corner of the city is somehow impacted here, that senior citizens do not matter anymore. Well, that is the one flaw in the arguments of the honourable member. I can understand him wanting to preserve acute care—okay, that is a given, I understand that—but all of a sudden a total disregard for geriatric issues. It is as if, well, you can look after the geriatric stuff somewhere else, and let us be what we are and have always been and what we fought so hard to have 20 years ago and all those arguments.

They are all fine arguments, but do not leave the geriatric people out of this. Those are the people that require some proper attention. We have got them languishing in hospital beds when that is not fair to them. That is no life lying around in a hospital bed when there is some other better way to be cared for in long-term care or at home or some specialized chronic care unit or something like that. That is a far more compassionate way to deal with our senior citizens. Simply because a hospital is affected by somebody's deliberations, all of a sudden just to forget all about old folks, because there are people signing petitions and because it is the popular thing to do right now, to save our hospital. Go ahead and try to save the hospital. I do not disagree with that, but do not disregard our senior citizens and people in long term care circumstances. All I am saying by all of that is let those who say we are going the wrong direction put their reputations behind what they think is the right direction. Put something on the table. I am not just going to pick away at it. I do not have any reason to.

I have a need to provide for Manitobans the right services. It is not a question of going around punishing this area and rewarding another area and this, and the give and take, and all like that. That is not what this is about. If I could get the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) to understand that, then I think we would be making better progress than we have been. I do not think we have not been making progress, but the process, I can guarantee you, Mr. Chairman, I can put together the best kind of process in the whole world. If that process does not yield the result that the honourable member for Inkster likes, he will attack the process. If we came out with absolutely no background evidence or

science or data or anything else, came out and said in all those changes we are going to do, one thing we are going to do is leave Seven Oaks Hospital just the way it is, that honourable member would not come asking me what data I used to arrive at that decision. He would say, that sounds like a pretty good decision to me, right? That is the nature of this political beast.

The honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), it does not matter where change is happening or what change is happening, or who is affected and who is not affected, if it was a Tory government that made the decision, it had to be wrong. I mean, that is a given. So that is why we tend to dismiss sometimes the points of view brought forward by the member for Kildonan, simply because they are totally, totally politically—there is too much political consideration attached to each and every comment that is ever made. I have never seen more political people in my life than New Democrats, Mr. Chairman. It is astounding to see that. Even Liberals every once in a while try to look at what might be the right thing to do, which I appreciate. That is why I am still listening to the honourable member for Inkster.

Mr. Lamoureux: I guess I like to think it is more than just the Seven Oaks Hospital. Yes, it happens to be in an area which half of my constituents utilize. The other half of my constituents utilize the Grace and Health Science Centre, as two other hospitals, but when they had the emergency strike going on, I was down at Victoria Hospital in the south end of the city of Winnipeg, primarily because again I believe in emergency services being provided for the different communities. I listened with great interest in terms of the remarks and the challenge that the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) puts forward. Bring forward a proposal and the minister will, in fact, go over the proposal.

* (1420)

Mr. Chairperson, nothing would make me happier with respect to this particular issue to put forward a proposal that would actually have the opportunity to be given very serious consideration. Now, if I started first thing after we adjourn today at three o'clock and worked endless hours into some point in time where I say, okay, my proposal is all together and here you go, Mr. Minister, give it consideration. Number one, with the limited resources that I have, I do not know if I am going to be

able to put together the type of proposal that the minister would need in order to bring back to whomever it is that is ultimately making these decisions or providing the input in order to make the final recommendation, if you like.

Now, if I had the resources and the minister recognized those individuals who were sitting around me and gave them credibility, and then I brought forward a proposal in which individuals who participated in that proposal had the respect of the minister and vice versa, then I believe that there would be a real chance of that actually occurring.

Mr. Chairperson, I would, in fact, accept a challenge of that nature, even knowing how much effort it would involve on my behalf, but it would be well worth the effort if I believed that the minister was not looking at the other option, that option which I believe is absolutely essential, the option that includes the community hospitals and the saving of dollars. I will acknowledge, yes, there is money that not only can be saved but needs to be saved. If the minister, because of the home care strike or whatever, does not have that option, then I believe ultimately, even in an opposition position, that I have a responsibility to ensure that that option is, in fact, worked out in the best fashion that I can.

I am prepared to make that sort of a commitment if the minister would be prepared to make a commitment to allow me to have the resources that would allow me to put together such a proposal, that the same sort of weight would be given to that proposal as the proposal provided by the deputy minister, and I must admit, Mr. Chairperson, that many of the individuals that the deputy minister had access to would be the same individuals that I would require to have access to, primarily because these are the individuals that know the system.

Having talking to them much like the minister himself has talked to many members of that particular committee, I believe that he has recognized that there are many problems with those recommendations. The question ultimately is, does the minister feel comfortable that there are other options there and that those options are being explored in as much detail as the recommendation that the deputy minister has provided him? If the answer to that is yes, then, quite frankly, it would be a waste of my time and the resources the minister would give me to be able to come up with an option because he feels quite

comfortable with the information that has been provided to him.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

If he does not, then there should not be too much of a problem in the sense of saying, well, look, we are still trying to get more input on the other options—and I know that the minister has requested both from Seven Oaks and I believe also the Misericordia and possibly other groups to provide more input, possibly providing ultimately that second option. If the minister is still in that sort of a process, in other words, wants to avoid duplication as opposed to setting up another committee of any degree, avoid duplication, get in all those other alternative ideas, and then if that is the stage the minister is at and my best guess is, I believe that is the stage he is at, if there is a way in which I can participate, I would be more than happy to participate.

Quite frankly, I do approach this issue with a very open mind. If the minister is prepared to share, and some information might want to be kept in a confidential manner, I would be able to entertain even doing that if, ultimately, it is in the public's best interest, and discretion would, in fact, be used.

I believe on this particular issue, at least, the minister has given the impression that he is approaching it with an open mind. Time is of the essence, and that is the reason why, once again, I do believe that there is some benefit, if the minister has not done it, to allow for the deputy ministers and other individuals who have sat around the table who brought forward these recommendations, to allow individuals who have the expertise to question them, and if not question them directly, to question them through the minister. That is absolutely essential because I sincerely believe that if, in fact, that has occurred, the minister is not going to accept these recommendations. I really believe that.

Having said that, Mr. Chairperson, I will give the minister the option if he wants to respond to that. The question that I was wanting to pose, to carry on from this morning, was to ask the minister if he believes that there is a correlation between the amount someone gets paid and the quality of service that ultimately they deliver.

Mr. McCrae: I have not detected any lack of good faith on the part of the honourable member in this whole

hospital discussion. I know where he is coming from. I think I understand the concerns that he has for a couple of reasons. He represents an area of the city that is affected by some proposed recommendations, and if I were in his shoes, I would be asking many of the same questions. I do not detect any lack of good faith in terms of what he is offering to do in regard to this debate. I am not offering to provide him a bunch of resources, but I am offering to—and I would not pick apart any proposal that he would make in good faith, a serious proposal, certainly not in any way publicly, or to ridicule or anything like that. I know he does not have the resources to back up a proposal with all kinds of statistical data and all of that.

We have resources that we can bring to bear on a proposal the member might bring forward, and we could do some analysis and compare that with some of the other things that are being looked at. That is the kind of thing that I am offering here. I am not able to say to the honourable member that we can set up another Department of Health for the honourable member to analyze, but we will use our own resources to look at alternative proposals and options.

I know the honourable member is talking to some people who have a lot to offer the health care system. Some of them are probably the same people you and I are talking to, Mr. Chairman, and I do not know if any of them want to talk to the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), but maybe some of them do out of courtesy, because you have to be careful when you talk to the member for Kildonan and people in his party. You never know where that conversation might end up.

That being said, I welcome the input of the honourable member for Inkster, and I say that sincerely. I do not have all the wisdom and I never claimed to, but I do know that I have been given a job that gives me access to people who do have a lot more wisdom than I do and we ought to listen to them. Sometimes, even when we do not like what they tell us, maybe after a careful analysis of what they have told us, maybe we should do what needs to be done. Ultimately, we know we have to, and I have not spent a whole lot of time in this Estimates castigating the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) for what his federal cousins are doing to us, or anything like that, because I recognize that, whether I like it or not, the dollars flowing from Ottawa for some of these things are reducing.

There is no point whining about it and doing that for the duration of our mandate. We have got a job to do for Manitobans and they want us to do it. They do not want us to be the official whiners for Canada in terms of things like fair share and the kind of stuff that the NDP used to do in terms of—the centrepiece of all that they stood for was to fight somebody.

Well, some people would rather fight than win, and that is not me. I would like to come out a winner. I would like the people of Manitoba and the health care system here to come out a big winner in all of this, and so I sincerely say to the honourable member, you want to put forward alternative proposals and you want to do it on the basis that you do not want to have it publicly shot down. I welcome informal input from the honourable member, and we would treat his concerns seriously. I am not saying that because I am stumbling around looking for proposals. There are going to be lots of proposals, but I am interested in knowing what the honourable members' might be and whether they can be backed up by some logic and data and stuff like that.

* (1430)

So we would apply the data. We have got it, we can do it. The cost-benefit issues, we are in the process of that. It is a long process, but once we have our methodology in place, we could probably apply it to the honourable member's model relatively easily once we have the model in place or once we have the methodology in place. I will make the honourable member this commitment, that if he does not want me to—we can work in a preliminary way, so he does not have to be tied to any particular proposal that he makes until he finds out himself whether the data or the evidence is there to support what he is suggesting.

There are proposals ranging with respect to the geriatric issue to the total transformation, for example, of Seven Oaks Hospital into a geriatric centre. Well, then, you can do it the way we presently do it, only get a little better organized at it, and see that function spread throughout the system.

There are all kinds of different ideas that can be looked at, but I do say to the honourable member, he knows the numbers—\$53 million has to come out of the hospital system of this province and has to come out this year. We do not pretend that we can just not make any

decisions; we have to make them. The more we do not do it right, the more we end up with the NDP solution which is just to hack and slash.

So that is not my approach. It has not been to this time. The only closure going on is the Brandon Mental Health Centre, and that has is being done in a staged manner. It was the total subject of debate for a long time, and an election was even fought over it. Those who wanted to cling to the asylum-type approach to mental health care delivery, i.e., those in the New Democratic Party lost that battle, and the patients won, thank goodness for that.

You can call that a closure, if you are a New Democrat, or you can call it a better way to deliver mental health services if you are everybody else. So we are pleased with that.

The honourable member wanted to talk again about home care and about, yes, the concept that if you are paid less, you are going to deliver an inferior service. I was asked that today by a reporter for a privately owned television company, that same question. I said, I do not know if you make as much as the employees in the publicly owned television company, but are you seriously suggesting that you do your work less well than somebody over in this publicly owned broadcasting company? Are you trying to tell me that because maybe your wage rate is a little less that you approach your job in a different way than the person over in this publicly owned company, this broadcaster?

Well, it was hypothetical and rhetorical. I was the one being interviewed, so he did not really want to answer that question. But I could see in his eyes that he accepted that I had a point there, and I gave a little example of my own experience, and maybe it is always a dangerous thing to do because somebody in the New Democratic Party will probably make that the subject of some public information campaign where they can smear and maybe have a little more fun. But, Mr. Chairman—

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: I sit here and constantly hear the minister make accusations that are not factually correct, but to indicate that the NDP are engaged in a public smear campaign I think is not an appropriate choice of

words, not an appropriate thing for a minister of the Crown to say, and I ask you to ask the minister to withdraw that statement. A public smear campaign, Mr. Chairperson, I think is totally inappropriate for the minister to suggest.

Mr. McCrae: I am not so sure that is what I said. I did not mean to imply that the member for Kildonan or his colleagues are engaged in some organized smear campaign against me personally, but I know that a lot of things have been said about me personally that are very, very unpleasant and unkind, profoundly unkind.

Mr. Chairperson: I am going to take that matter under advisement and see what was put on the record. I did not quite hear what the minister had to say, so I will just take it under advisement.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to continue.

Mr. McCrae: Well, what I was getting to, looking at my own experience, my first job was, I guess the New Democrats would call it a McJob, because my job was in a hamburger place, and it was my job to make hamburgers and sweep the floors and peel onions and chop onions and clean out the chipper, and all those sorts of things you do in a restaurant operation, and my pay was 80 cents an hour. That tells you a little about how old I am, that was a little while ago. Eighty cents an hour and I was proud of myself. Someone actually had enough confidence in me to hire me and to keep me for quite a long period of time on that job.

Well, then I got another job after that and I will be darned if that job did not pay me \$1.45 an hour which is a big increase from 80 cents. I do not remember putting more into the \$1.45-an-hour job than I put in the 80-cent-an-hour job. I was proud to have the job, I did the best I could for my employer and for those who were the customers of the employer.

The NDP and their union boss friends would have you believe that a person's attitude can be bought and paid for. That is implicit in the member for Inkster's question. I hope he does not mean that. I will bet that every job he has ever done he has done it well. I say that because I see the way he does his job as an MLA, and I bet every job he has ever done he has given it his level best. Is the

honourable member trying to say that his fellow Manitobans are different from he and I?

Mr. Lamoureux: Ultimately, if you privatize and for profit, what will happen is the companies, private companies, will say here is the criteria that has to be met, or the standards that have to be met. Now it is a question in terms of who can we get to administer what has been requested of us, and ultimately they will try and attempt to get the cheapest labour possible in order to administer that.

If you can get someone for \$5.50 an hour to do a job and those individuals that are more inclined to take that \$5.50 job are provided another potential job at \$6 an hour, there is a very good chance that they will take that \$6-an-hour job. That does not necessarily mean that they did not give it their very best at the \$5.50-an-hour job. Whatever job anyone has, one would anticipate that they do the best that they can, and I think that that is a fair assessment of people as a whole, generally speaking.

If you want to be able to retain individuals, if you want to be able to give incentive for individuals to get further training programs to enhance their skills so that they can deliver a better service, if you expect individuals to make more of a long-term commitment, to make a career out of a job, the wage and the amount that is actually being paid does have a very significant, I would say at the very least, is possibly the second priority that many people that enter the workforce actually have. So, if you want to promote the type of individual that wants to take this occupation as a career, you are going to find it very difficult to attract someone at a borderline minimum wage job. What you are likely going to end up seeing is a structure within the private sector that will have those individuals that have the benefits or the extra services in addition to the core services, the individuals that are administering those jobs will be the employees that are more career oriented. Maybe they have been there for a year or two, they have shown initiative, and they are upgrading their skills and so forth.

* (1440)

The individuals that receive the bare core services, unfortunately, from a private company's perspective will get the individual employee that might be at the lower end of the scale, and taking that job and doing a

wonderful job, doing the best that they can with their abilities and the experience and the training that they have been provided, and continue on that job until quite possibly another job becomes available that pays a little bit more, depending on whatever that employee's economic needs are.

So what you are doing by not allowing for some sort of wage scale, if you like, Mr. Chairperson, is that you are in essence going to have many people that we could have retained in this area of home care services and upgrading themselves to deliver a better quality service leaving, because they will not be able to afford to remain in an area in which they could, in fact, not only enjoy but want to be able and have a desire to want to be able to continue on in that particular occupation.

Mr. Chairperson, what would happen—if we have construction and the construction industry set wages that are quite often attributed to individuals that have expertise. I do not know, and I guess this is where it would have been beneficial, if the minister could indicate in other home care services throughout Canada, are there in fact wage scales in the private sector that are followed? These, I think, are very valuable questions that need to be answered. Is there benefit to the client by ensuring a certain standard through a wage scale?

I believe that the answer to that question is, yes, the client will benefit by instituting some sort of a wage scale. The member from, I believe it was, Emerson (Mr. Penner) was saying, well, tell us at what level, at what dollar do you want to start it off at? Again, I am very reluctant to say, here is a dollar amount. One might want to look at the VONs and see in terms of what it is, the type of service that they are providing compared to what the services being provided through the Manitoba government, and possibly come up with something. What actual amount I could not say per se. All I do know is that the borderline minimum wage is not necessarily going to be, in the long term, in the best interests of the client, especially the client that is going to be receiving the core services and does not have the economic means to receive anything more than that. What I would envision is that, if you do not have some sort of a salary floor, what will happen is the higher, more transient employee will end up going to that sort of a client.

Mr. McCrae: I do not think the honourable member for Emerson was trying to make life difficult for the honourable member for Inkster by asking, well, how much? How much should a person whose job it is to do cleaning and laundry, how much should that person be paid?

What standards are associated with doing laundry? What kind of training ought a person be required to have to wash clothes, for example, or to vacuum the floor? What kind of training ought there to be for the preparation of a meal? What kind of wage rate ought to be in effect for the preparation of a meal, for someone who assists someone with their toileting routines? What training ought to be required that is set down, I think, in the kinds of standards that we require in these areas? What kind of pay ought to be in place for people who provide these different kinds of services?

The honourable member said earlier today, I understand, that he trusts the free market system and he believes in it. Well, if that is true, why does he want to make an artificial market in these particular areas? They argue, certainly the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) wants to argue that you get a bad nurse if you do not pay them a lot of money. Well, excuse me, what does the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses have to say about that? That is a professional organization. There are no bad nurses or else they do not get a licence, and if they are bad, they do not keep a licence.

But members opposite in the NDP say, well, if you pay a nurse \$5 more, you are going to have to get a better nurse out of the deal. Well, I go back to where I was, flipping hamburgers. It did not make me a better hamburger flipper to pay me a nickel more or a dollar more or whatever, 80 cents is what I was getting, by the way, but I was the darndest best hamburger flipper around, and I was proud of what I did. [interjection] Well, I do not know what my future is or anybody else's future is, but I do know that if people in the future are like the people now and in the past, they simply are prepared to give you a good, solid day's work or a good, solid hour's work for the pay that they have agreed to accept in return for that. That is what people are like.

The people I know simply want to work and do their darndest best for what they are being paid. I do not know how the member for Kildonan felt when he got his first

job or his second job, but I know how I felt, happy and proud that someone would have enough confidence in me to hire me to do something and pay me money to do it, even though at 80 cents—that tells you a little bit how old I am, 80 cents. It was a little while ago. [interjection] It was not that good. It was the minimum wage.

But the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) wants to inject something artificial into all of this, and do you not think it is having an artificial economy that has got us into all of this trouble in the first place? Why do you think \$600 million is being spent this year to pay interest on debt? Because governments of the past liked to borrow money, even though they did not need to. They taxed like never before in the history of the world, and that was not enough to satisfy their spending appetites. They had to borrow money to boot.

The legacy is there. Future generations, I am sorry to say, are going to be impacted by that, but here is the good news. Thanks to our balanced budget legislation, in only 30 years we will have paid off the debt in this province, just 30 years, and yet there are people in this House who want to carry on that debt, the piling of debt onto debt onto debt for year after year and never pay it off, just pay it back, every single year.

Do you know how much money \$600 million is? We were talking a little while ago about Seven Oaks. What is it, about a \$40-million budget over there at Seven Oaks? [interjection] Forty-two? Well, just round it off to 40, so what is that? Do your arithmetic. How many Seven Oaks hospitals are run with \$600 million? My arithmetic is terrible. [interjection] About 14 or so? I will take your word for it. The point is the New Democrats would rather send all of that money to the bankers in New York and Tokyo and Zurich and all these places than to spend it on health care. Why can I say that? Because they stood to their feet, and they voted against living within our means by way of a balanced budget legislation. They voted against that. Shame on those New Democrats for doing that.

* (1450)

Now the Liberals, what did they do? They voted against it, too. I mention that because it is important that we put a stop to this. It is a very bad example to set for young people, that you can just borrow your way through

life. We have to stop doing that because we are robbing a future from them. It is their tax dollars that are going to keep on paying these hundreds of millions of dollars every year for at least 30 years to pay off the horrible, horrible debt mountain that we built for them in this province, and we are one of the better provinces. Think of the poor young people in the other provinces where it is so much worse. Anyway, I am glad that we are not the worst, because we are not. We are far from it.

We have people in this House, over on that side, who go public and speak to the public and say, oh, this is not a bad deal; it is only about 10 percent of all of our spending. But think about it this way. We are talking around here in this House for hours and hours and hours about 0.000 percent of spending when we are talking about the reduction of a program or something like that, and members make a really big deal about that. They forget that spending for health in Manitoba with the Filmon government has been at the highest levels ever in the history of this province, the highest level as a percentage of all of our spending in health.

No government has ever shown the priority for health care like the Filmon government has, and yet we spend hours and hours and hours talking about it. It makes you kind of wonder why. There is certainly no question about anybody's commitment to health care. Those who have the biggest hearts, in my humble opinion, Mr. Chairman, are those who use their brains when they think about the future.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I would like to bring to the attention of the committee, we have a group of visitors with us today, the Lloydminster Malanka Dancers under the direction of their president, David Skoretz.

Mr. Chomiak: I just wanted to say on behalf of all members in this Chamber, Bitamo da nasha Legislature [phonetic] which is welcome to our Legislature. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Lamoureux: With the member for Kildonan's background in Ukraine, I would not even attempt to repeat what he said, but welcome to the Chamber.

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Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, the minister makes reference to the free market process, that we should not be overly fearful in the sense that if we have faith in the free market process, we should not have to put up a safeguard of this nature.

Well, I am wondering if we had faith in the free market process, I can guarantee the Minister of Health that we could find 57 Manitobans that would love the opportunity to do exactly what we are doing at minimum wage, yet we do not see MLAs being paid at a minimum wage. Mind you, if you factor in the number of hours that many put in, it might get pretty close to minimum wage, but, in essence, we are not paid minimum wage.

If you have the conversion over to privatization of home care services, there are going to be a number of nurses, in particular, or health care professionals that are now going to be receiving a substantial decrease in pay. Substantial, you know, could range anywhere from 10 percent to 40 percent; those are the numbers that are being talked about.

For many of those individuals, they will not be able to continue on in health care or home care service delivery, not because they do not care or there is a lack of concern for their clients, but rather because economic reality will not allow them to. Just as I am sure that if tomorrow we decided to make being an MLA a minimum wage job, there might be a number of the MLAs that might not be able to run in the next provincial election or would step down.

I appreciate the trust as expressed by the Minister of Health with the free market process, but at times there is a need to give some assurances to different occupations that there is a standard that is expected. That standard can be ensured by the government through the tendering process and the criteria that it sets out in that process.

If the government states, for example, that we anticipate that all individuals that submit a bid will have a pay structure that will reflect whatever, what will happen is that we will see more individuals that will be able to participate in home care service delivery as a career. Ultimately, we believe in the Liberal Party that it is, in fact, a worthwhile career, that people do it not just

for the money. You are right, they do not do it just for the money. They do it primarily because they care, they want to provide a very compassionate service.

If they are strictly minimum wage jobs, you are limiting many of those individuals from being able to participate. My question to the minister is: Does the minister believe that, with the layoffs that are going to occur and all of those individuals that are going to be expected to work in the private, for-profit companies, are they going to be able to continue on in a profession in which they have enjoyed? I am talking about the individuals that have been there for 12, 14 years. What assurances are these people going to be given that this is not going to be a minimum wage job, that there are going to be standards and expectations that these companies, the private companies in particular, are going to be held accountable for?

That is why, if the minister was more willing to share some of the more detailed information that he has in terms of the criteria and the standards, that it might alleviate a lot of the concerns. A lot of the concerns would be alleviated if the minister said, look, we look at this aspect of home care services, anything that is medically related in terms of a service treatment, as warranting this sort of a standard, and it is dictated through a particular salary scale, Mr. Chairperson, I

would hazard a guess that many individuals that are currently out on strike today would feel a bit better and not as intimidated or fearful about what the government is ultimately doing.

Now keeping in mind, Mr. Chairperson, I say this only because I believe the government needs to be more open minded. I still believe and maintain that we are making the mistake in terms of moving in the direction of privatization or additional privatization of home care services, that really that one year moratorium is needed. I hope that the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) will respond at the next opportunity and give us some reasons as to why the correlation between wage and service that is being delivered—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 3 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): The hour being after 3 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 26, 1996

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