



Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(Hansard)

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

Name	Constituency	Party
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David	Riel	P.C.
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupert Island	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 3, 1996

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

PRAYERS

Home Care Services

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford). It complies with the rules and practices of the House (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Teachers—Collective Bargaining and Compensation Review

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Donna Goodman, Anita Kinlet, Ingrid Riesen and others urging the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) to recognize the true value of teachers and reject the recommendation made in the May 1996 paper entitled Report of the Teacher Collective Bargaining and Compensation Review Committee.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Home Care Services

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Lilly Berntzen, Dan McConachy, Julia Buffone and others requesting the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Dave Brown, Dale Swirsky, Tom Wiley and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Norm Bickell, Bruce A. Bickell, Glen McCombe and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Rita Wenzoski, Mike Samborski and Delia D'Auteuil requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). It complies with the rules and practices of the House (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Home Care Services

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway). It complies with the rules and practices of the House (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos). It complies with the rules and practices of the House (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli). It complies with the rules and practices of the House (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Teachers—Collective Bargaining and Compensation Review

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes? The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT the May 1996 report of the Collective Bargaining and Compensation Review Committee is a direct attack on the collective rights of all teachers and consequently will negatively affect the quality of education in Manitoba; and

THAT by pursuing the direction and recommendations suggested by this report, teachers will be stripped of any powers they have with regard to collective bargaining; and

THAT teachers, by educating our youth to compete successfully in the knowledge-based economy of the 1990s, are generators of wealth; and

THAT any changes to the teacher's compensation process only be undertaken with the idea of improving the present system and not by attacking teachers' ability to bargain.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Education to recognize the true value of teachers and reject the recommendations made in the May 1996 paper entitled: Report of the Teacher Collective Bargaining and Compensation Review Committee.

Home Care Services

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson of Committees): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* (1340)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act): I would like to table the third quarter report for the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 76—The Gaming Control and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), that leave be given to introduce Bill 76, The Gaming Control and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur la Commission de régie du jeu et apportant des modifications corrélatives), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House, and I would like to table the message of the Lieutenant Governor.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 203—The Public Assets Protection Act

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), that leave be given to introduce Bill 203, The Public Assets Protection Act (Loi sur la protection des biens publics) (and that the same be now received and read a first time).

Motion presented.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, in accordance with our rules, I have a brief statement on this bill. The purpose is very clear. It is to protect the people of Manitoba from the likes of this government which is now selling off MTS with no mandate from the people of Manitoba.

It would require that the issue of the sale of Crown corporations, whether it be MTS, which is currently being sold off, or Autopac, which is under threat, or Hydro, which is under threat, a number of other Crown entities, could not be sold off unless there was a vote by the shareholders of those Crown corporations. By the way, that is the 1 million-plus Manitobans.

I recommend this to the House. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon fifty-six Grade 5 students from Bonnycastle School under the direction of Melanie Vermeylen and Mrs. Munro. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Mrs. Vodrey).

And, we have twenty-two Grade 4 students from Tyndall Park School under the direction of Mr. Colin

Stark. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Health Care Facilities Capital Projects

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, we have been raising questions about the state of Manitoba hospitals since 1992. During the election campaign the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province promised a \$600-million capital program, \$160 million of which would be used for health care and \$112 million, I believe, for the Health Sciences Centre.

Since that election promise which was made specifically on March 22, which was both a health promise and a job promise with the infrastructure program, the government has broken that election promise and we have asked numerous questions about the impact of that broken promise on health care programs in Manitoba and specifically referring to a Health Sciences Centre memo that we released in this House. We have asked questions about the impact on patients, the critical impact on adult and pediatric surgical suites at the emergency wards and the emergency wards at the Health Sciences Centre.

I would like to ask the Premier, when is this government going to keep its word and honour the promise made by the Premier last year, which the government is now breaking? When will it honour its word on capital spending in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, we have been as a department working very hard to recognize the appropriate priorities of Manitobans in our capital construction program, and we have done a lot of work with representatives of the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation, and we are looking, hopefully, towards a resolution of the issues there.

Similarly, with Health Sciences Centre, we are working with that hospital, and all the other hospitals in the city

of Winnipeg, through the Urban Planning Partnership to make sure that we have appropriate acute care and tertiary care facilities and services available for people for many years to come.

I do caution the honourable Leader of the Opposition in this regard, mind you, you cannot on the one hand ask that all the services at Health Sciences Centre be moved to the community hospitals and then complain that there is no huge capital project going on at Health Sciences Centre. Maybe the honourable member would be happy to see all the patients removed and we would be like that hospital on Yes, Minister where they have all the staff, all the equipment and no patients. So the honourable Leader of the Opposition has to remember to safeguard his own credibility on this one.

* (1345)

Mr. Doer: I would be happy if this government, this minister and this Acting Premier kept their word to the people of Manitoba.

You promised on March 16, 1995, and again on March 22, 1995, that you would proceed with the operating rooms at the Health Sciences Centre, the Children's Hospital. You made that specific promise. You did not say that this promise was contingent upon breaking your word to other hospitals in the urban area.

Is the minister now saying that he was not telling the truth about other hospitals in Winnipeg when he made his promise on the capital commitment? When is he going to start looking at patient care and his own word rather than breaking his promise?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, again, I remind the honourable Leader of the Opposition that his own Health critic, day in and day out, has been pressing for some movement out of Health Sciences Centre and towards community hospitals.

You will notice it was not the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) asking the question today. They had to put the honourable Leader of the Opposition up for this question because they are asking that we spend \$112 million for capital construction at Health Sciences Centre; meanwhile, they want us to remove all the patients from Health Sciences Centre. They cannot

have both because we are not going to spend \$100 million for a place where nobody is going to be.

Mr. Doer: I have the government's promise on health care and I have all their promises from the election campaign. Is the Minister of Health telling us today that they had a secret political agenda, that the Health Sciences Centre capital projects were contingent upon other decisions that affect other urban hospitals such as Seven Oaks and Misericordia, and if they did have that secret political agenda, why did they not have the honesty and integrity to tell the people of Manitoba that? If they did not have that secret agenda, why do they not proceed with their election promise to spend the money at the Health Sciences Centre, as the Premier (Mr. Filmon) promised during the election campaign?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, it would have been useful if, like the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), the Leader of the Opposition had taken more interest in the whole discussion about health in Manitoba over the last few months.

We are working with our partners throughout the city of Winnipeg to build an integrated hospital care system for the city of Winnipeg, and the Health Sciences Centre obviously has an important role to play in the future.

But by the honourable member's questioning today, he really embarrasses his critic, the honourable member for Kildonan, who has been pressing for movement away from Health Sciences Centre to the community hospitals.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member for Kildonan today says no. Well, obviously he does not want to feel the sting of the embarrassment here, Madam Speaker.

What we have is a Health critic on the one hand saying, get everybody out of Health Sciences Centre, and on the other hand we have the Leader of the Opposition saying, keep your promises and build hundreds of millions of dollars worth of capital construction, all the while silence from the Liberals because it is they who are cutting back \$220 million from the budgets of this province for next year. The honourable Leader of the Opposition's question comes as if there was no reality to that. Well, Madam Speaker, there is a reality to that.

Health Care Facilities Public Consultations

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, this government has cut over \$100 million out of hospitals since '92-93 and is cutting \$53 million this year. Now the minister who has made a mess of health care with his consultants, his secret committee meetings, is trying to do the same thing to the hospital sector.

When will the minister who has recommendations from KPMG, million-dollar consultants, who has recommendations from the urban advisory committee, when will the minister do something that the government has never done and put these recommendations, not final decisions, before the public of Manitoba and let them have input into these decisions?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the honourable member, quite unintentionally, I am sure, is misleading everybody when he talks about all these secret committees and everything. We have had repeated information bulletins to everybody involved in the planning partnership and the design team structure that has been going on. It is a very, very open process. The debate obviously has spilled over into this Chamber, which is quite appropriate that that happened. We have a very public and open process. It will result in better health care for Manitobans in general and Winnipeggers in particular with respect to the hospitals that we are talking about.

The process will result in a more appropriate use of all of the various facilities that we have and an integrated approach—

An Honourable Member: Be efficient.

Mr. McCrae: Oh, yes, Madam Speaker, an integrated approach to acute care services in the city of Winnipeg. The honourable member's messages and those of his Leader are very mixed. Maybe the two of them should go away and have a little chat and come back united in their approach.

* (1350)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, I understand the minister's sensitivity since even his business friends at Manitoba Business have seen fit to criticize his policy.

My question to the minister is, will the minister admit that his policy, his secret reports, consultants, deal making has pitted hospital against hospital, CEO against CEO, community against community, and will the minister not commit today to put the recommendations before the public and let the public who own these facilities, who own these hospitals have an opportunity to have input into these decisions?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, everybody knows that Health Sciences Centre is in need of attention. I mean, certainly for 10 years under the New Democrats, there was a crying need then, so nobody is going to say there is not today.

Today, the honourable member for Kildonan has made a big, big mistake because he knows and I know that at Seven Oaks Hospital there are modern operating rooms ready to be used. He knows that at Grace Hospital and at St. Boniface Hospital there are operating rooms, but now, no, he wants us to build a whole bunch at Health Sciences Centre so that we cannot use the ones at Seven Oaks. Well, I say to him, let him be consistent. Does he want to stand up for Seven Oaks Hospital or is it because it was in the newspaper over the weekend, maybe to make a comment about the Health Sciences Centre today would be a good day to do that? Somebody has to be consistent around here. Honourable members on this side are prepared to do so and are prepared to face the public and discuss it publicly and openly with them.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, all we are asking the government to do is to live up to its commitments that the government made during the election campaign, which is that the government will not only upgrade the facilities at Health Sciences but will keep the community hospitals like Seven Oaks and Misericordia open as they promised and as we have asked them to do and as Manitobans believed they were doing when they voted.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, just in case it was not enough for the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) to blow his credibility today, the honourable member for Kildonan seems to insist that he needs to do that too.

Madam Speaker, what he wants us to do is ignore the federal Liberal cuts, ignore the fact that it is the law in Manitoba that we live within our means, and forget about all that and just spend, spend, spend in every area

regardless altogether of what goes on throughout the rest of this country—no eye at all for the realities of the '90s and beyond that we live in, absolutely no sense of reality over there. I think it is time they got together and had a long meeting.

Young Offenders Mandatory School Attendance

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

In the last few weeks I have had the opportunity to speak to several school principals and a school superintendent who have told me they are very concerned about their schools being used more and more as jails for many of our young offenders.

This minister has talked about co-ordinated services through the Youth Secretariat, but we know that no resources have come from her Department of Justice to the Department of Education. Can the minister tell us how many young offenders have mandatory attendance at a school as part of their sentence or probation order?

* (1355)

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, as the member knows, we are in the Estimates of the Department of Justice now. If she is referring to young people who may be in open custody who are attending schools, I will be happy to review the matter with her through the process of Estimates. We do believe that the community does have a role to play in terms of assisting young people in their return to the community. Interestingly enough, that has been the position of the other side until now, and now we seem to have another position being raised by the member for St. James.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, clearly, we would like young offenders to have the proper supports in the community.

Can the minister tell us how her department checks if these young offenders are actually attending as their sentences require? Are they in the schools, or are they not?

An Honourable Member: Sentence them to school, that is pretty severe.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, we hear the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) saying, sentencing young people to school, that is pretty silly.

An Honourable Member: Severe, I said.

Mrs. Vodrey: Sentencing is done by the courts. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, the minister did not hear my comments. I did not say it was "silly," and I would like to ask her to withdraw that. If she is going to put comments on the record from other members, she should be very careful in putting them on accurately.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order by the honourable member for Thompson, he does not have a point of order. I did not hear the comment and, obviously, the honourable member was not recognized so the comment is not on the record.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Justice, to complete her response.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, again, I would encourage members opposite to have the courage to put their views on the record. That is an important way for us to finally know where they stand. It has been very difficult to ever figure out where the other side stands on youth crime. We have asked for support in the area of the Young Offenders Act—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, Beauchesne Citation 417 is very clear that "Answers to questions should be as

brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

A very serious question was asked. The minister was lecturing this House in terms of taking positions on justice issues. We are prepared to debate justice issues any time, any place with the minister, but this is Question Period. It requires answers from the Minister of Justice, not the kind of irrelevant debate we are seeing in the supposed answer to this question.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I would remind the honourable Minister of Justice that she should respond to the question asked and her comments should be as brief as possible.

* * *

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, as I said, this government has put forward a number of initiatives dealing with youth crime. It always would be helpful to have the other side also supportive of initiatives which deal with prevention, which deal with intervention, deal with consequences. It is a position of this government that young people who have been sentenced, whether they are sentenced to closed custody within the Youth Centre, or outside, should attend school. The other side seems to have some problem with that. As a matter of fact, we were the government that said that school will operate within our institutions 12 months of the year, because we believe that young people should have the best opportunity they can to maximize their skills for their return to the community.

* (1400)

Ms. Mihychuk: Well, I will try one more time. Will the minister admit that there is no communication with schools about even the basic information such as which students are under these sentencing requirements and for what offences they were sentenced?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, as I said to the member, we are in the Estimates of the Department of Justice. In those Estimates—[interjection] Well, members opposite have trouble with that, but we will have the opportunity to speak. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) does not want debate. Questions can—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice, to complete her response.

Mrs. Vodrey: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and as I said, we can look at answering those questions more fully. As the member knows, there are, in some cases, some legal reasons why certain information is not able to be shared. That is the difficulty, though this government has taken great steps towards the co-ordination through the Child and Youth Secretariat, which is our way to co-ordinate in all legal ways the sharing of information between Health, Family Services, Justice and Education. However, there are some laws which govern the sharing of information and those laws are ones which we believe should be respected. Perhaps others have another view.

Public Housing Property Sales

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, over the last few weeks we have seen this government put public assets up for fire sale. They have given away public assets with no studies, no plans and no consultation.

I want to ask the Minister of Housing, how many Manitoba Housing Authority units are up for sale this year, and how many are being appraised for sale at this time?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, with any type of analysis and priorities of spending, all avenues are looked at in regard to where the allocation of fundings are going. At the present time, there is an evaluation going on throughout the whole department as to what should or should not be looked at. There has been no decision as to whether there will be a mass sale—as the member is referring to—that we are unloading or downsizing.

I should point out though that the federal government has indicated that they are getting out of the social housing and they are in the process of wanting the provinces to take over this part of their portfolio. That is under active consideration but no decision has been made on that either.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, I want to table a letter from the former Minister of Housing where she said that

there were no plans and no studies to privatize any housing stock other than 35 individual units and one boarded-up complex. In view of that, I want to ask the Minister of Housing how he can explain the sale of a 20-unit complex in St. Vital that was in good repair and as recently as last summer had thousands of dollars invested in it for repairs. How can he explain the sale of that complex?

Mr. Reimer: Madam Speaker, I am not too sure which unit the member is referring to when she says a unit in St. Vital. We have units in all areas of the city. Granted, there are units in St. Vital. As to what unit it is, unless I know specifically which area it is, I could not comment on it.

But I should point out that once units are declared surplus and they have not shown that they are in the portfolio, they are then put through the normal process of resale. So this is an ongoing matter, an ongoing process when a unit or a home is declared surplus—that we do sell it.

Ms. Cerilli: I would ask the minister to clarify his answer, especially in view of the first question which was, how many social housing units are up for sale in this province at this time? Can he explain to the House why we are putting up for sale and demolishing 20 units of good-quality social housing so that there can be built a hardware store?

Mr. Reimer: Madam Speaker, I believe I understand where the member is coming from in regard to what she is referring to in St. Vital. There has been no sale of any unit there in St. Vital—that she is referring to—for demolition for a hardware store. There are ongoing negotiations. There have been meetings. There have been conversations, but there has been no decision as to the sale of the unit.

As I stated before, units that become surplus, units that are not used anymore, these are units that we put up for sale.

Restorative Resolutions Program Funding

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

As a police officer, I am disappointed by the lack of vision demonstrated by this government and the official opposition in the area of criminal justice—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing great difficulty hearing the honourable member for The Maples.

Mr. Kowalski: As I said, as a police officer, I am disappointed by the lack of vision demonstrated by this government and the official opposition in the area of criminal justice.

Pandering to the mob, both the minister and her NDP Justice critic talk about locking up more criminals for longer sentences as if that would solve the problem. What they forget is that, if you are arrested for a property crime and you are locked in Headingley, you are going to be back on the streets in less than two years, often in better shape, a little meaner after earning your undergraduate degree in criminal activity. What is even more ridiculous is that these fantasy solutions cost the taxpayer more and do nothing to make restitution to the victim.

My question for the minister: Will the minister, if she is concerned about safety and crime prevention and not her 10-second video clip, which she shares with the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), stand in the House today and commit this government's support for the Restorative Resolutions program?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, the Restorative Resolutions program is one which is at the moment undergoing an evaluation.

We have the member for The Maples who, without evaluation, without any kind of reference points, says that this should just continue. Well, our government has in fact provided significant support, even more support than the member might have found in an article which appeared today. Our government funds this program to approximately \$120,000 annually, including two staff who are seconded and also operating funds.

The difficulty, however, seems to be that the federal Liberal government has not made up its mind whether it will continue to fund, and our indications are that their money may be withdrawn.

Corrections Alternative Programs

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Will the minister now admit that, as stated in the document *Achieving Balance for Community and Correctional Services* released by the New Brunswick Solicitor-General, the success of provincial community-based correctional programs such as alternative measures, fine option program, community service orders, and others, are proof that focusing on rehabilitation instead of simply incarcerating offenders reduces public risk?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, again, for those people who are eligible—and that is really the criterion—this government does support alternative measures in the way of mediation and in the way of Restorative Resolutions, but we cannot get away from the main fact here. The federal Liberal government also has a part in the funding of Restorative Resolutions. We have had no confirmation, as usual, from the federal Liberal government that they are in any way willing, even based on the evaluation, to continue their support. Now, this government cannot continue to backfill for a federal Liberal government who simply gives up on its responsibilities.

* (1410)

Mr. Kowalski: Will the minister agree that contrary to public statements about rigorous confinement, restorative programs for nonviolent offenders that compensate the victim and make the criminal accept responsibility for their actions lessen crime better than some medieval idea about locking people up and throwing away the key?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, the member as a former police officer shocks me. He makes no comment about what communities would do with high-risk offenders, and in fact this is the pressure that we are trying to put on the federal Liberal minister now, is to deal with high-risk offenders.

As I said to him in my answer, for those people who commit a criminal activity and who are eligible, this government has in fact supported through mediation. We are recently supporting a new mediation program in Brandon, the Westman mediation. We support mediation services here in Winnipeg, and to the tune of \$120,000 including two staff, this government has supported Restorative Resolutions.

But he has to get it straight. He has to talk to his federal Liberal colleagues who are the ones whose money may not be on the table, even though the evaluation is there, so that is where to put the pressure. I will be very interested to see if he is willing to follow through with that or if he thinks the people of Manitoba should continue to backfill for the failed promises of the federal Liberal government.

Manitoba Telephone System Privatization—Rural Manitoba

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, earlier today we introduced legislation that would give Manitobans a say over the future of their Crown corporations. We are seeing now, with the release of details from the Minister responsible for MTS, just why Manitobans should be concerned about the future of our telephone system, Manitoba Telephone System.

I would like to ask the minister, to begin with—and looking at the few guarantees that are in his proposed sell-off of MTS which include basically a majority of the board being from Manitoba and that the head office be here in Manitoba—can he confirm then that there will be no guarantee of any of the rural and northern offices, the several dozen offices that are a significant source of employment for rural and northern Manitobans and provide more than 1,000 jobs across this province?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Telephone Act): Madam Speaker, thank you for an opportunity to comment because certainly telephone jobs all over rural and northern Manitoba are very, very important. As the member knows, a lot of technology is taking place that has allowed the corporation to downsize by some 1,400 positions over the last four or five years with only about 45 layoffs.

I can assure the member that the corporation understands the value of its rural and northern customers, and delivering service by having people employed there is a critical part of being an acceptable company. The majority of Manitobans will ultimately own the company through the share offering because the majority of Manitobans have the first right of opportunity to purchase. So the owners of the company will be living throughout Manitoba and naturally will want service from their company and therefore will be able to direct that the employment stays in the similar basis that it is today.

Mr. Ashton: I would like the minister to explain how rural northern Manitobans right now can have any sense of security in what is going to happen with employment when senior managers of MTS are saying that, beginning under privatization, they will be looking at eliminating positions. These are statements made to employees. When the draft act itself includes up to 25 percent foreign ownership and has no specific guarantees over Manitoba ownership other than the shares being offered to Manitobans first, will the minister admit today that there will be significant job losses in rural and northern Manitoba as a result of his privatization?

Mr. Findlay: The answer is no. The member is wrong.

Mr. Ashton: Well, if the minister will not admit to what MTS senior staff are telling people, will he also indicate that, under his vision, this government's vision, nobody else's vision for the MTS, the only statement in the act which makes any reference to rural and northern Manitoba in terms of access to service is a statement to provide access to telephone service to residents of the province? Will the minister indicate that Manitobans, and especially in rural and northern Manitoba, will have no guarantee of the kind of first-rate, first-class service they have had under a publicly owned phone system, under this sell-off of our public assets?

Mr. Findlay: Telephone service in Manitoba has been supplied by a very competent company and will be supplied by a very competent company. A good, effective, competent company is one that has a definite debt-to-asset ratio that is responsible. When those members were in government they lowered the debt-to-asset ratio to 9 percent to asset, in other words, 91 percent debt. That is what those members opposite put

that company in, the worst position of any telephone company in Canada.

During our tenure it has improved to 78 percent, and under the public share offering it will be in the 45 percent range. That is positioning the company to be a very significant offer of services in the telecommunications industries of the future for Manitoba and Canada. This company has improved and strengthened dramatically along with the private line system that we put in place that took away 47,000 party lines that those members did nothing about.

School Boundaries Announcement

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): In 1993 the government commissioned a report on school boundaries. In 1994 Mr. Norrie reported. In the summer of '95 the people of Manitoba responded to Norrie's proposals, making clear in hundreds of written submissions that the majority did not consent to the proposed boundaries.

The Minister of Education has promised to make her announcement on boundaries this spring. We are now in June, and I want to ask the minister, will she undertake to bring this announcement to the Legislative Assembly this week so that we can have the open public debate that this issue deserves?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the member knows that we have been taking a tremendous amount of time to study this issue. I am pleased to see that at least on one issue she agrees with the amount of time we are taking to study. Most other issues, she says, do not take time to study, rush through. If we rush through, we are accused of not taking enough time. If we take time, we are accused of taking too long. Just negative for the sake of being negative.

The report is soon to be announced, and it will be announced, as indicated, this spring.

Ms. Friesen: I wonder what the minister is afraid of. Why will that not be brought to the House now?

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

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, the member should learn not to judge other people by her own standards.

* (1420)

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I will not, I think, respond to a comment which was—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Wolseley she was recognized for a final supplementary question which requires no postamble and no preamble.

The honourable member for Wolseley, to pose her question now.

Ms. Friesen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to ask the Minister of Education to confirm that she specifically rejected the Norrie commission's recommendation on the city of Winnipeg, to divide successful school divisions to create, in the words of Glenn Nichols's research report, quote, an elite school division in Winnipeg.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I should indicate, contrary to the member's assumption, there is no fear on the part of this minister to bring forward decisions once they are made. I do indicate to the member that we are at the final stages of making our decision. The decision is, in effect, soon ready to be announced. As I indicated, that will be announced this spring. There is no fear on the part of this minister whatsoever. I look forward to being able to have—

An Honourable Member: Bring it to the House.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, could you call the—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. McIntosh: The interruptions are most rude.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would remind all honourable members that this Speaker will not recognize a member to either stand on a point of order or be recognized until I have order because I cannot hear the honourable member over the roar from one side to the other.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, I will not read Beuchesne Citation 417 again. I have read it once already in this Question Period, but I would ask you not only to call this minister to order but ask her to withdraw those absolutely inappropriate and unacceptable comments. She should not lecture anyone in this House about being rude.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, on the point of order, the member had asked a question which I was attempting to answer. All during my attempt to answer the question the same member who asked the question was heckling from her seat, clearly not listening to the answer and distracting this side from providing the answer that I had thought they had requested.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order, I will take the matter under advisement so that I can accurately refer to the comments made in Hansard.

Fleet Vehicles Agency Board Membership

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Government Services. This government continues to reward its friends and political supporters with the recent revelation that the government fleet of some 2,300 vehicles has been opened up to leasing competition.

I would like to ask the minister, can the minister confirm that members of the auto industry sit on the board of the Fleet Vehicles operating agency?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, the Fleet Vehicles Agency was our first special operating agency in this government and has effectively harnessed many of the benefits for the taxpayers of this province that imitating successful small businesses of our province would cause them to. They have had, as part of their plan as a special operating

agency, part of their original mission, in fact, the desire to be able to compete, to offer services and compete with any other agency that might choose to offer those.

The benefits to the taxpayers of this province of that type of mentality are evident in the fact that the Fleet Vehicles Agency already operates with 20 percent fewer vehicles than it did just three years ago. The taxpayers of Manitoba want to see us offer government services in a cost-effective way and that is precisely what we are doing with Fleet Vehicles and with many other of our special operating agencies in this province as well.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, my supplementary to the same minister since the minister did not answer the question. The question was, are there any car dealers on the board of the agency?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, through the ongoing analysis that is done of the special operating agencies—and Fleet Vehicles Agency is no exception—we have determined that our agency, which is now in its fourth year, is capable of withstanding the pressures of competing and is able to offer services to government departments on an optional basis. Now, as part of that analysis—

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, if the minister wants to follow Beuchesne Citation 416, and that is that a minister may decline to answer a question, the appropriate thing to do would be to stand up and say, I am not going to answer this question, and sit down. Instead, the minister has violated Beuchesne's Citation 417, and perhaps I should read it again, which is: Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised—I will repeat that—deal with the matter raised, and should not provoke debate.

Madam Speaker, the member has asked twice whether car dealers sit on the board, and the minister should answer that question.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, in all fairness the minister was just beginning his comments, and I am—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson raised the point of order now on the supplementary question, and the minister had just commenced his response. I am—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The opposition knows full well a minister is given approximately one minute to respond. My watch indicates that he had just commenced his comments and that 10 seconds had elapsed. So, therefore, I am not in a position at this point in the interruption with the point of order to determine if he was about to respond or not.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired. I have two rulings for the House.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I believe you were ruling that I did not have a point of order, and I am not challenging that, but if that is the case then we anxiously are awaiting the minister to finish his response, which is the normal procedure in Question Period, and if it takes leave to actually get the minister to actually answer the question, we are prepared to give it.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

* (1430)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind all honourable members that the clock continues to run when I am attempting to restore order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Now, is there leave for the honourable minister to complete his response? Leave?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, I think it is only fair and reasonable to point out that without the constant interrupting of the member for Thompson the members

opposite would get a heck of a lot more questions in, in Question Period.

But suffice to say, the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), who is the fellow who asked the question, has on several occasions complimented our department and myself on our openness. In fact, if one would peruse Hansard and the debates that took place during the Estimates process where the member had the opportunity to put these questions and chose not to, one would find that the member for Elmwood has complimented our department and said that I myself and our department are the most open and disclosing of information of any department that he has had to criticize and work with. On an ongoing basis, we provide information to the member such as I am doing now. I will continue to do that and try to set an example of openness to the members opposite.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: Yes, I would like to rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker, and now that the minister has had that one minute, I would like to ask you to rule whether indeed he was violating Beauchesne Citation 417. I do not believe I heard an answer again, and I heard the minister being totally irrelevant.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I would agree, indeed he does have a point of order. The honourable minister responsible, I would remind him to respond to the question asked.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Madam Speaker: The opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton) on May 15, 1996, raised a point of order which I took under advisement in order to check Hansard. In raising his point of order the opposition House leader stated that the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) from her seat said that the NDP MLAs supported attempted murderers. In examining the Hansard transcript of May 15, I find that it shows an honourable

member saying: "I never said . . . I said attempted murder."

I listened to the tapes of the proceedings on several occasions, and I was unable to make out any comments of the Minister of Education other than what appears in Hansard.

Beauchesne Citation 486.(4) instructs us that "Remarks which do not appear on the public record and are therefore private conversations not heard by the Chair do not invite the intervention of the Speaker." However, I know that past Manitoba Speakers have undertaken to review audio tapes to see if comments made by a member while not in possession of the floor can be heard. As I indicated earlier, I could not hear any comments made by the honourable Minister of Education along the line of what the opposition House leader referenced in his point of order. Therefore, I must rule that there was no point of order.

I would at this time again remind all members that debate of issues and questions takes place when members have legitimate possession of the floor. A certain degree of heckling is also a part of our history and practice, but I am quite sure that all members will agree that the events of May 14 and 15 were not this House's finest hours, and I would encourage members on both sides of the Chamber to exercise caution in the language they use in exchanges across the floor so that a recurrence of May 14 and 15 does not happen.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): I challenge your ruling, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of sustaining the ruling of the Chair, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Ashton: Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker.

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

Order, please. The motion before the Chamber is, shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

Division

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

Yeas

Cummings, Downey, Driedger, Dyck, Enns, Ernst, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, Lamoureux, McAlpine, McCrae, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Newman, Pallister, Penner, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reimer, Render, Rocan, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey.

Nays

Ashton, Barrett, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Evans (Brandon East), Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Hickes, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Sale, Santos, Struthers, Wowchuk.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 28, Nays 19.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I was paired with the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), as my colleague the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) was paired with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson). If I had an opportunity to vote, I would have voted in support of the Speaker's ruling.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Nonconfidence in Presiding Officer

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege and, as

are the rules of our House, it will be followed by a substantive motion.

My matter of privilege, I believe, meets the basic qualifications set out in Beauchesne and our rules, first of all, that the subject matter rarely comes up, and it is with regret that I will be raising this particular matter of privilege.

It also, I believe, meets the provisions of Beauchesne Citations 114 and 115, which require that this matter be raised as soon as possible and, essentially, I will be attempting to not only make the prima facie case of privilege but also recommend that this matter be put directly to the House.

This arises partly out of the previous ruling, and I want to stress just how concerned members on our side are about not only the ruling but a number of rulings that have been made, Madam Speaker. That is why we are using this mechanism, about the only appropriate mechanism for raising this kind of matter, which will be followed by a substantive motion, to put on the record our very grave concerns about what is happening in this House.

We just dealt with a matter that involved comments made by the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) that are unprecedented in this House. I have never heard a member accuse any other member, as the Minister of Education did in this House on May 14 and May 15. She accused members of this side of the House of supporting attempted murderers, bombing and slashing of tires. In fact, between the 14th and 15th she went from stating murderers to stating that it was attempted murderers—hardly a clarification that gives any comfort to members of this side of the House. Everyone heard that.

I would like to table a letter which I received signed by Edda Pangilinan and it was signed also by many other Manitobans. I would like to table copies for the House. This Manitoban wrote to me—and she was a home care worker and we may remember there were many home care workers in the Legislature at the time—to complain, and I quote about “the very grave accusation of the Minister of Education Linda McIntosh when she told you that”—and these are her quotes—“You the NDP's support the attempted murderers, bombing and slashing of tires.” She went on in the letter to say that she found this

absolutely incredible that this kind of statement could be made by the Minister of Education. I might add, that many home care workers took that comment personally because, indeed, they were involved in a labour dispute and they were extremely, extremely frustrated by the comment. But beyond that, she expressed concerns about the foolishness of the comment, the irresponsibility and also reminded—and I will quote, “We must remember that as Minister of Education, Miss McIntosh should be role model among the children and to all citizenry and act accordingly.” Everyone heard those comments.

Madam Speaker, there were disruptions on the 14th and 15th in this House, and the disruptions came because the Minister of Education made comments on the 14th. She made comments on the 15th. She made comments on her feet. She made comments in her seat that were heard by members on this side of this House, by members in the gallery. She had the opportunity to withdraw those comments. She never once withdrew those comments and even again today she did not withdraw those comments. I want to say that that is absolutely unacceptable on behalf of any member. All members of this House are honourable members. All members of this House oppose violence, slashing tires, bombings. For this minister to make an accusation against me, as a member of this House or any member of this House, of any nature of that type is absolutely unacceptable.

* (1540)

Given the evidence, I would suggest to you the only appropriate thing, if this minister was not to show I think the appropriate integrity of standing and removing those comments, would have been, Madam Speaker, for you to have ruled her comments out of order. This is not the first time nor will it be the last time, and I find it amazing that in this House we cannot talk about racist policies, but apparently the Minister of Education can accuse people of supporting attempted murderers, bombing and slashing of tires. That is absolutely unacceptable.

I want to refer, Madam Speaker, to one of the key roles that the office of Speaker plays, Beauchesne Citation 168, and that is in enforcing the authority of the House. In fact, it states—and I will not read in its entirety—but the chief characteristics attached to the office of Speaker in the House are authority and impartiality. When we are accused by a minister of the Crown with those kind of

despicable statements, we ask two things only of the Speaker and that is use your authority in an impartial way and have order restored to this House in the only way possible, and that is by having those remarks expunged from the record and have the minister make an absolute unconditional abject apology to all members of the House. That is the only way that we can ensure impartiality and authority.

Madam Speaker, what really frustrates me again is if you look at the tradition of our parliamentary system, we have a long tradition indeed in this House of healthy debates and indeed at times disruptions, but I have never yet heard any member of this House accuse anyone else of supporting attempted murder, and some of the members apparently take some—they smile at those comments, and you know what? Those comments were absolutely offensive.

But, Madam Speaker, in your ruling that you have just brought forward to the House in which you indicated there was no point of order, I want to take grave concern with the statement, and I quote here from the ruling, that I am quite sure that all members will agree that the events of May 14 and 15 were not this House's finest hours, and I would encourage members on both sides of the Chamber to exercise caution in the language they use in exchanges across the floor.

Madam Speaker, no one on this side of the House accused any member of that side of the House of supporting violence, or bombings, or slashing tires. Not once.

Madam Speaker, if you are to direct your authority as Chair, it should be to the side where the disruption originated, a disruption that was the subject of this letter which was seen by everyone in this House, heard by everyone in this House, including members of the public. The appropriate thing would have been to direct the comments where they came from.

You know, Madam Speaker, when any member of this House on our side makes comments that are disruptive, we accept that. I, on occasion, have had to withdraw comments, but on May 14 and May 15 there was only one source of the disruption, the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), only one source of disruption.

Madam Speaker, if members of this House are not to understand that members of the opposition are going to take objection to it being said that they support attempted murderers, if they do not understand that, then they have no sense of what our parliamentary system is all about, which is to recognize that all members are honourable members.

I have never yet, Madam Speaker, never once in the years I have been in this Chamber, ever made any kind of accusation against any member of the opposition of that nature, nor has any member of our caucus, and the bottom line is that the minister could have withdrawn and she did not.

But, Madam Speaker, in your ruling, you admonished both sides of the House. This has happened on other occasions as well where we have raised points of order citing disruptions by members opposite, and then in the point of order we have been admonished ourselves.

Madam Speaker, there are times where there is one offending party. It was clear in the evidence with the Minister of Education that she was the offending party to the disruption. She confirmed it not only from her seat, but also the comments are included in Hansard. There are witnesses throughout the Chamber, including members of the public.

The appropriate thing, Madam Speaker, on this point of order, which we took very seriously, would have been for you to use your authority in an impartial way and ask the minister to withdraw, not to admonish members on this side of the disruption because we make no apologies for having stood up to the kind of comments, the despicable comments, put forward by the Minister of Education on the record. We make no apologies for that, and until you enforce, use your office to enforce the authority of this House to bring members such as the Minister of Education to order, or the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) who made similar comments in committee, although I understand he has in the past been brought to order and had to withdraw, until you use the balance of the authority and impartiality, we will not have this House brought to order, we will not have decorum. Because what are we supposed to do on our side of the Chamber? Let the minister continue and make these types of comments? Let the Minister of Health continue to make these kinds of comments? Have Manitobans like

the individual I mentioned before see what is happening in this House, and we are not talking about minor disruptions. We are talking about major, major, major accusations.

That is why I am rising on this matter of privilege because I believe this goes to the very root of privilege which is the authority of the House. I want to indicate that it is with regret that our substantive motion is going to state our lack of confidence in you as a Speaker, and I think there is a precedent, Madam Speaker, in raising this matter on a matter of privilege. In fact, Speaker Walding was subject to a similar motion by the then-Conservative House leader. At that time, since the role of the Speaker is to decide on normal situations with a prima facie case, but given the obvious difficulty involving the Speaker at that time, Speaker Walding put the motion directly to the House, and I would strongly recommend that that take place.

But before moving the motion, I want to ask once again not just, Madam Speaker, in terms of fairness, in terms of rulings, but ask that the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) realize the gravity of what is happening, that the Minister of Education does have the opportunity, as others in this House do on a regular basis. She can withdraw those comments. I know members on her side, members on our side, do that frequently. The First Minister (Mr. Filmon) may make comments that we disagree with, but I think he has withdrawn comments on a regular basis in this House.

I believe that would have contributed very significantly to avoiding this situation, but when we have a situation in which we have a Minister of Education makes comments like that on the record, and when we have a situation where we have a ruling in which we are being admonished for the disruptions as much as the offending party in this case, which is the Minister of Education, and when this is not the first time this has happened, and when we on the one hand cannot talk about racist policies—not racist individuals but racist policies—but the Minister of Education can accuse us of supporting attempted murderers, bombings and tire slashings, we have no other option, and I move to move this motion.

I move, seconded by the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), that this House has lost confidence in the Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When a matter of privilege is raised in the House there are two things that the Speaker has to judge. One is whether it is the earliest possible time for bringing in that motion and secondly whether there appears to be a prima facie case as to the motion of privilege. In this case I believe that both conditions apply.

I believe that the subject matter of this particular motion is sufficiently important that the House would want to deal with it at the first possible opportunity, and it would not serve the purpose of this House to have this particular motion hanging over the proceedings for the next little while. I will therefore leave the motion to the House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a very serious matter that has been raised from the member for Thompson. The Liberal party takes it quite seriously. You know, a couple of things come to mind. I believe that the New Democratic caucus over a period of time have tried to be able to demonstrate that the Speaker, being you, has not been doing a good job as a Speaker. In essence, what they are saying is that they would like to see you replaced with yet another Speaker, and I could speculate as to whom that Speaker might be.

I have had dealings now over the last eight years with both you and the previous Speaker. I sat very patiently listening to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), and I would ask that the New Democrats do likewise. In my eight years, if I was to go over the negotiations that I have had both with you and the previous Speaker, even though you and I have had some fairly serious disagreements, we still have disagreements, and some of those disagreements is something in which we will strive to change, such as concerns regarding Question Period, concerns regarding other issues such as when we can speak and when we cannot speak as a political party. Those issues we will continue to address, but when I reflect on Speakers, I find that you are no more difficult than the former Speaker before you.

* (1550)

If the opposition feels that you are a more difficult Speaker, I am at loss in trying to find out how it is or who it is that they are comparing it to, because I have been in essence discussing and having discussions with

Speakers for the last eight years. I have found both Speakers to be relatively fair in their approach in dealing with us even though I have had numerous complaints. But I would say that you are no worse nor any better than the previous Speaker. But to move a motion of nonconfidence in the Speaker is a very serious matter. I look at the ruling that you just finished coming down with. You stated: I could not hear any comments made by the honourable Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) along the line of what the opposition House leader referenced in his point of order.

Madam Speaker, if all members believe in the integrity of each and every one of us, we should believe what it is that you are saying as being truthful. You listened to the tape. [interjection] The Leader of the New Democratic Party says it is in Hansard. Well, I can give you the same identical example with the former Speaker, where that former Speaker said that he did not hear it and it appeared in Hansard. I can clearly show that. Why did the New Democrats not raise a matter of privilege and nonconfidence then?

Madam Speaker, what we are talking about is words which you have put on Hansard with respect to this particular ruling, and what they are doing is they are calling into question what you heard on the tape. The question that I would pose, and I look at my friends in the New Democratic caucus: Did any one of them appeal to listen to the tape? Did any one of them? I know, when I did, I did appeal. Did any members of the New Democratic caucus appeal to listen to the tape? I think that is a critical—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. This is a very serious matter, and the honourable member for Inkster has been recognized.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on what the member from Burrows (Mr. Martindale) said from his seat. He said, we were never requested. Well, you do not have to wait until you are requested to listen to a tape. If you are calling into question something you said, you can approach the Speaker and ask. I have done it in the past. The New Democrats know that they can, too, they also can do that, but it does not fit their agenda, their personal agenda, whether it is to do whatever they can to dump—and when you are an opposition party of 23, you can be very vocal, you can be very loud, you can be

very intimidating, and they have been quite intimidating against you as the Speaker. We have seen that from our perspective. The New Democratic Party has been.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, this is a very serious matter, and I would ask for you to call the member for Inkster to order. We have a motion before the House. He should not be making accusations about intimidation. I would like to ask you to call the member for Inkster to order and address the matter, a very serious matter, before the House.

Mr. Lamoureux: On the same point of order, Madam Speaker, I am speaking as I see it. The member from Thompson does not have a point of order, as he regularly does not have in Question Period. It is a dispute over the facts. What I see is what I am saying. [interjection] Well, then cite, Steve. Cite it from—[interjection] If I—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I would remind the honourable member for Inkster that the motion before the House is a motion of censure against the Speaker, and I would ask that he keep his comments relevant to the motion.

* * *

Mr. Lamoureux: The New Democratic caucus as a whole has been doing what they can in order to try to undermine you, Madam Speaker. [interjection] It is not against the—well, if we take a look at Beauchesne, and maybe that will relax members from the New Democratic caucus, if we look on page 149, Beauchesne's 6th Edition, Citation 491, "The Speaker has consistently ruled that language used in the House should be temperate and worthy of the place in which it is spoken. No language is, by virtue of any list, acceptable or unacceptable."

The incident which the member for Thompson refers to, he tries to say that, look, it is just the one side of the House that is bringing up areas that would be unparliamentary. I sat back, as other members, and there is heckling that goes on back and forth, quite frankly. I have heard opposition members that say, for example,

that the minister is corrupt, that the minister is in the pockets of so and so and so on. We even had the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), who stood up and apologized after making one statement and we applauded the minister. But you see, Madam Speaker, you can say, virtually in any Question Period you could find something that is unparliamentary and bring it up as saying, that is unparliamentary, the member should not have said that.

Well, a lot depends in terms of the context in which it is being said, and that is something which has to be taken into consideration. If we are looking at a Question Period where it gets somewhat uncomfortable in the sense that you have members from both sides of the House participating in heckling from across the side, well, you cannot say that it is all one individual's fault. I can recall when I have seen members from the New Democratic Party virtually out of their seats standing on the third there yelling over the side the Chamber and along with one of the ministers doing the same thing. That does not look good for the decorum of this particular Chamber, and the Speaker does what one can to try to bring things back to order.

Well, Madam Speaker, I look at the ruling that you have made and you, in essence, said that you reviewed the tape, you did not hear anything on the tape, and that is, in essence, what you are reporting. Now, if we do not believe that you are being accurate in what you said, then we are saying that you are in essence misleading this House.

An Honourable Member: What is in Hansard?

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, even if it is in Hansard, the question is, did the Speaker hear it? That is what the ruling is about. Madam Speaker, that is something which the New Democratic Party should have done, is listen to the tape, make some observations to the Speaker. That is what in essence has been lacking, and the intimidation that we have seen over the last number of days is a serious attempt to undermine your authority, and in essence we have even seen a waste of time.

* (1600)

Like, we just sat through bells. We have the opposition and the government that want to be able to sit in the Estimates process, and then the bells ring for an

hour, well, on more than one occasion. Yet we as a caucus of three will be asked for leave in order to sit additional hours in order to accommodate additional Estimates time when many of the things could have been resolved as a question of division. It would have had the same ultimate outcome as having a recorded vote, and we would have been in discussing the Estimates or putting forward questions and answers—[interjection] It has a lot to do with the motion.

If the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) would have listened, she would understand that, but rather, Madam Speaker, when you were making the ruling, the member for Wellington was yelling and pointing from her seat her thoughts of the Speaker. Well, you know, it goes both ways and the New Democrats have to realize that at some point in time, like we did last June. We actually had to go and sit down with the Speaker's Office to try to negotiate some sort of a role within Question Period. Even the official opposition sits down with the government House leader and the Speaker in order to negotiate what happens within Question Period and outside of Question Period, but this is something in which, from what I understand, is very important in terms of parliamentary tradition.

When you talked about parliamentary tradition, you made reference to the fact that there is heckling that occurs. We agree there is heckling that occurs and it goes both ways. If you dish out the heckling, you better be prepared to receive the heckling. The New Democrats are not prepared to receive the heckling. Every Question Period, we could stand up just as often as the New Democrats do on a point of order to talk about problems that the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) stands up and points out with the government. Well, yes, the government is wrong in 90 percent of the times when the member for Thompson points it out. If we stood up every time that the New Democrats were wrong, we would be on our feet just as often as the member for Thompson is on his feet. Yet—[interjection] and some of them challenge us to do it. Well, Madam Speaker, maybe that is what we will just have to do, and then you will be coming in making rulings on all three political parties that more often. But having—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, Madam Speaker, I disagree with the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) when he says he does not like to hear about garbage. I believe that this is, in fact, a very serious motion. I believe that the New Democrats should have caucused this particular motion and thought it through.

Why is this motion being moved at this point in time? Demonstrate to us, to the Liberal caucus, why it is that you believe that this Speaker does not have the confidence of this House? You believe, as a political party, that she does not have your confidence because it does not fit your personal agenda, whatever it might be. From our perspective, and from my personal perspective of being someone that has dealt with Speakers for the past eight years, there is a certain amount of negotiations that have to occur between Speaker and representatives of each political party.

Madam Speaker, I do not believe for a moment that you have been given the opportunity to be able to be the Speaker for the official opposition, not because of you, but because of the New Democrats' inability to be able to sit down and try to negotiate in good faith more than anything else.

That is the reason why we have this motion here today. It is because we have an official opposition that is getting frustrated with their inability to be an effective opposition and, as a result of that, what they are trying to do is, they are trying to make issues where in this particular case an issue is not to be made. They have an excellent opportunity to be able to make issues of the day. They have nine on average, eight, nine questions, and if they utilized those questions, if they used those tools that they had with them, then we would not have to see a motion of this nature.

Madam Speaker, this is how I am going to conclude my remarks, and I know that the New Democrats will be happy to hear this. This is how I would conclude. Sitting in here, I have had other members in different ways, members of the government at times has recognized it, members of even the official opposition recognize that there is a certain amount of intimidation that occurs. I do believe that there is even intimidation that has occurred during my comment on the matter of privilege, where some are not content with what it is that I am saying, where they disagree for whatever reasons.

One thing I do know, Madam Speaker, and that is that I am not going to be intimidated by any group of individuals or any individual. I will say what I believe is accurate and what is fair. I believe that you as the Speaker of this Chamber should not be intimidated by the official opposition even though they have 23 members inside this Chamber. When we see, for example, the Speaker trying to get decorum inside the Chamber, and we see the New Democrats and the government yelling and heckling from their seats as you attempt to get decorum—and at times we, too, do heckle in the Liberal caucus. I, for one, do my fair share of heckling, but do you know something? I am also prepared to receive the heckling. Therein lies the difference.

* (1610)

If you are prepared to criticize someone on the opposite side of the bench, whether it is government to opposition or opposition to government, or Liberals to NDP and vice versa, Liberals to government and vice versa, if you are prepared to dish it out, you better be prepared to receive it, because the bottom line is, according to Beauchesne, it is the context in which things are put into place. If it were up to the New Democrats, what they would like to see, Madam Speaker, is for you to step down as the Speaker of this Chamber.

We in the Liberal caucus do not believe that that is necessary, and New Democrats can say whatever they want. I have heard them say this is kissing up and whatever it is they want to classify it, Madam Speaker, but, quite frankly, I did not see one New Democrat who was standing up for the Liberal caucus at the beginning of the session when we were forced to go without being able to ask questions, and we did not hear any sympathetic ears. We did what parliamentary tradition has clearly demonstrated in the past, and that parliamentary tradition in history was that we go and we negotiate what it is that we can possibly get, and if we did not accept or agree with it, we would continue to lobby with whatever tools and mechanisms that we had.

To move a motion of nonconfidence in the Speaker, I believe it was absolutely essential that the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) bring forward information that would clearly demonstrate that the Speaker is incompetent and unable to rule this House in a fair fashion.

I would challenge the New Democrats, whether it is right here or in front of Jennifer Dundas or any other member of the media, to come in front of any individual and show me how this Speaker, in what way is worse than the former Speaker. Madam Speaker, I make that challenge in hopes that, in fact, they will accept it because, in the last eight years, I have had hours and hours of negotiations and I have got a pile of examples that I can give.

I have an exact same example of what the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) is talking about today, Madam Speaker, that I could cite, and that is where the member for Pembina, the former Health minister, Mr. Don Orchard, stood up and said something and I took great exception to it and what I did is, I stood up and I said, geez, Mr. Speaker, I want to hear the tape. The member for St. Boniface went to listen to the tape. It was not on the tape, yet it appeared in Hansard.

You know, there are endless examples that are there. Why did the New Democratic Party or caucus not approach us, Madam Speaker, and say, here are the concerns that we have with respect to the Speaker and then try to ensure that there is unanimous support?

That is absolutely essential. If you had all members on the opposition side of the House concurring or agreeing that in fact you are not doing the job that you have been mandated to do, then I think that there would be some potential merit to it. But that never occurred, and one would have anticipated on a motion that is as serious as this particular motion that there would have been more dialogue, there would have been more examples of where it is that you have been biased.

Madam Speaker, I have complaints. I have had opportunity to meet with you and I have expressed the opinion, you know, that at times I think you need to look a little bit more at the Conservative government when you are criticizing and I think that is a valid complaint. We will continue to lobby for some of the changes that we believe are necessary inside this Chamber, but we do not support the motion that the New Democratic Party has brought forward and in fact if they were honourable, quite frankly, they would withdraw the motion.

Failing that, I hope that at least one of the New Democratic Party will take up the challenge that I have

put forward and try to convince me why it is that a motion of nonconfidence in this Speaker is more warranted than a motion of nonconfidence in the previous Speaker, Madam Speaker. Both Speakers have in essence been fair, and the opposition parties, along with government, including the Liberal Party inside this Chamber have a responsibility to sit down and work with the Speaker in doing what we can and, if we are not satisfied with the results, to continue to lobby.

A good example of that would have been, Madam Speaker, had you not recognized the Liberal Party for a question in Question Period, I would have continued to stand up every day inside during Question Period at every question, and I would have used other tactics prior to have gone this far. [interjection] Well, you know, the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) brings up a point which I believe he regrets he has already said. I am going to bring it up because it is very important, because it is something which the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) and I have heard time and time again.

You know, the New Democrats and the Tories are very disappointed with the treatment that the federal Tories and the federal New Democrats get in Ottawa. You would not believe how many times I have heard it from both sides of this Chamber in terms of, well, why should we be sympathetic to you when in fact, Madam Speaker, look how bad you guys are being to us in Ottawa.

Well, I want to remain relevant to the motion, so that is something which I could talk about for a while. I do not feel that it is necessary to talk for a while on this particular motion, given its seriousness and, Madam Speaker, I would encourage the New Democrats to rethink—you know, even if they want to go ahead and ring the bells again, I guess they can ring the bells again. Let us ring for an hour, whatever it might take in order for them to re-caucus, because I am sure that the taxpayers' dollars are somewhat on the top of their minds, but I will leave it that.

I appreciate the patience of the House in terms of listening to me, and I trust and hope that you will digest all of the information that has been presented to you prior to making any sort of a decision. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, this is a very serious issue raised for the second time, I believe, in this session, and that is a motion of censure against the Speaker.

Notwithstanding all of the allegations and comments and so on that have gone on before, the fact of the matter is that member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) made no prima facie case. Madam Speaker, I refer to your ruling. It said: "I listened to the tapes of the proceedings on several occasions and I was unable to make out any comments of the Minister of Education other than what appears in Hansard."

Madam Speaker, Hansard is the official documented version of what transpires in this Legislative Assembly. If we are going to quote from Hansard at all, then we have to collectively believe that Hansard accurately reflects what occurs in this Chamber. Hansard is transcribed from audio tapes that occur as a result of the electronic information gathering system that forms part of our deliberations here in this Chamber.

The fact of the matter is that nowhere in Hansard, nowhere on the tapes, from what your ruling says, were any specific allegations claimed by the member for Thompson attributed to the Minister of Education. So, for the member for Thompson to stand up and suggest that this needed to be expunged from the record, it is not on the record. There is nothing to expunge, if we believe that the tapes and the resulting transcription from the tapes of Hansard is in fact an accurate reflection of what occurs in this Chamber. So certain words are attributed to "An Honourable Member" in the Hansard, but not to the Minister of Education. So the member for Thompson stood up and made all kinds of allegations related principally to his point of order raised on May 15. Now all those allegations were made again, and certain comments were made with respect to the allegations again. The fact of the matter is, there is no prima facie case because there is nothing on the record to expunge, nothing on the record attributed to the Minister of Education.

In my view, there is no prima facie case; there is no point of privilege. It should be ruled out of order.

Mr. Ashton: On the motion, and for the government House leader, the Speaker has already put the motion to the House, so we are dealing with the motion as it stands.

I place my comments on the record. I think everyone in this House knows what the Minister of Education said, and in fact that is reflected in the Hansard. I refer again, and perhaps if the government House leader has not seen this letter from a member of the public who was in the gallery, it was very clear.

* (1620)

I just wanted to respond to a couple of the comments from the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). I want to indicate, first of all, that we in this House, in the New Democratic Party, are the opposition. This is our forum. We believe—[interjection] Well, to the member for Inkster, this is our forum. As members of the Legislature, it is very important for us to assure fair treatment in this House. I want to say to the member for Inkster that this why we have raised this—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Ernst: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, far be it from me to want to restrict debate of any kind in this House, but the fact of the matter is, the member for Thompson had his opportunity to speak earlier in putting his motion and in putting his point of privilege.

Now I would seek your guidance with respect to an additional opportunity for him to speak again. If that is the case, we may well be debating here the rest of the afternoon.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable government House leader, indeed I dealt with the fact, and in my opinion the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) is now speaking to the motion. I made the ruling that we should be dealing with this immediately so as not to have it hanging over the House, and my particular comments were that he did deal with it in the first possible opportunity, and it would not serve the purpose of this House to have this particular motion hanging over the proceedings for the next while. I will therefore leave the motion to the House was my ruling on whether there was a prima facie case established. So now it is my understanding that the honourable member for Thompson is speaking to the motion, and all members, should they desire, have that same right.

* * *

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, indeed I am speaking to the motion. I want to indicate to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) that his comments create a great deal of concern. Whatever our views on this particular motion or matters before this House, I think the member for Inkster should understand that when it comes to the principles of this House and the way this House functions, the position of our caucus is, that is not negotiable. That may be something that is news to the Liberals and the member for Inkster who has been talking about negotiating matters. We are not talking about how many questions one received. We are talking about the ability of members of this House to function.

I also want to indicate, particularly to the member for Inkster, how he can even talk about taking things in context. Accusing people of supporting attempted murderers, of bombings and slashing tires, can only be taken in one context, and it was inappropriate. It was on the record. It is recorded in Hansard. [interjection] It is in Hansard. The government House leader should read what is in Hansard. Everyone in this House, members of the public know what was said. I still wonder why the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) did not do the right thing and stand up and withdraw those comments. That would have solved a lot of the difficulties that you, Madam Speaker, now find yourself in.

I leave, Madam Speaker, my final comments. I really regret having to bring this motion before the House. I wish this matter and other similar matters had been dealt with before, and I plead with the Minister of Education to do what she did not do on May 15, which the person I read the letter in on the record said, show an example to the people of Manitoba. Do the right thing and withdraw those despicable comments now so that we can get on with the business of the House.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, as has been indicated by our House leader and other members, this is an extremely serious matter that has been raised before this House and this Chamber. I think it is important to point out, as our House leader has done, there is nothing that has to be withdrawn as it relates to the accusations made. You have clearly ruled on the matter of which the evidence that you had before you, and I think the other

point that has to be raised and raised again is, the members of the opposition, if they had questions as to the tapes, have every opportunity to ask to hear those tapes if they are not satisfied as to what has been presented. That is obvious that it has not been done.

We, Madam Speaker, the government of this province, have all the confidence in the world in your fair and honest judgment, and we will stand to support you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

The question before the House is—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. It has been moved by the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), seconded by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), that this House has lost confidence in the Speaker.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Mr. Ashton: On division, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: On division. The motion is accordingly defeated.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

10th Annual Soldiers Run Children's Hospital Research Foundation

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, a very special anniversary was celebrated today. It was the kickoff of the 10th annual Manitoba's soldiers run for Manitoba's children.

Over the last 10 years, soldiers from the Lakehead Manitoba Army Reserves have run over 12,000 kilometres and raised over \$200,000 in support of the Children's Hospital Research Foundation. In particular, this morning, I joined the Manitoba Lakehead District Army Reserves under the direction of Captain Mike Lagace and Captain Chuck Howard.

The event was kicked off today at the Children's Hospital at ten hundred hours. I was there and I was proud to join the legion of soldiers and school children from École Assiniboine, as we ran through the city to Portage Avenue and eventually to the Perimeter Highway. Over the next six days, the soldiers will run day and night. In the process they will reach over 65 communities throughout Manitoba, and they will take this time to meet the children from these various towns.

The camaraderie of this event is of course very contagious. As the soldiers encounter these villages they will be joined by thousands of students and teachers who will temporarily join the run to demonstrate just how much kids count in the province of Manitoba.

This year alone it is expected that the run will generate over \$30,000, and the runners will present their donation to the Children's Hospital Research Foundation at the Winnipeg International Air Show on Sunday, June 9. The presentation can be seen during the Children's Miracle Telethon, June 9, on CBC television.

I was proud to be a part of the kickoff celebrations for this most worthy cause. For the soldiers and those who joined them in this running, I wish for you that the wind will always be on your back and may God bless your efforts.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Louisiana-Pacific Forest Management Activities

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, last week the government made an announcement that they would be issuing the licence to Louisiana-Pacific on its forest management activities in the Duck Mountain. I want to put clearly on the record how disappointed I am in the government that they refused to deal with the serious issue, that they have refused to deal with when this agreement was first announced. First of

all, treaty land entitlement and then wood allocation for independent loggers.

From the time of the initial announcement bands in my area, namely Wuskwi Sipiik First Nations and Sapotaweyak Cree Nations said that they wanted their treaty land entitlement addressed, that they would know how they fit into this agreement. However, the government has refused to address this issue.

There is also the concern from the independent loggers, who have said time and time again that they want to be assured that their sawmill operations can continue to operate. The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger) promised during the election that this would be addressed. Unfortunately, it has not and timber permits which is the way they have been getting their wood till now have been cancelled.

* (1630)

I am also concerned that the government has weakened the recommendations of the Clean Environment Commission on this, and now the very vulnerable areas in the park of the Roaring River valley and the Shell River valley are in jeopardy. If the government really believes that there is as much wood and that there is an adequate wood supply in the area, why would they even consider allowing cutting in these vulnerable areas? The government likes to play it both ways when they say that I say one thing in this House and another thing out in the constituency. Nothing can be further from the truth. It is the government that is playing games with this issue and has tried to play games with it before the last election.

We want jobs, but we want a sustainable harvest and we want to ensure that the workers have a safe environment to work in, and we want a space set aside for recreational areas and protection for unique areas. It is the Premier (Mr. Filmon) who is wrong when he says you cannot have it both ways. Madam Speaker, you can have jobs and economic development, but it can be done in a sustainable way and that is the assurances that we are looking for from this government and they have failed to provide in this licence.

Youth Drop-in Centre Gimli, Manitoba

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to rise this afternoon and tell all members

present about a true community leader from the Gimli constituency. Usually when one thinks of a community leader, the image that comes to mind is an older man or lady, someone who is to be referred to as either Mr. or Mrs., someone who has spent their life to improve the area in which they live. However, in this case, the community leader is a fresh-faced, 17-year-old young lady named Lindsey Troschuk.

Lindsey presents in a manner completely opposite to what one would originally envision. Do not, however, think for one moment that she is anything but a determined community leader, a community leader with a vision. This 17-year-old Gimli high school student has for the past year consistently tried to increase public support and awareness of the need to establish a youth drop-in centre in the town of Gimli. Armed with the belief that area teenagers require a place to call their own and given the fact that most stores and businesses close at 10 p.m., she took the initiative to make a difference and ensure there was such a place. Lindsey was of the opinion that with no place to hang out and be together, especially during the evening, teenagers may be more inclined to be involved in trouble. An alternative for teens was necessary.

Like all community leaders, Lindsey realized that no one can do it on their own. Community leadership requires community involvement so Lindsey has gathered approximately 20 fellow students together and coordinated with members of the New Horizon Seniors Club as well as Gimli Healthy Communities committee. The youth drop-in centre will be located at a site given to the teenagers by the Gimli New Horizon Seniors Club. Locating at the seniors complex is beneficial because many of the programs the youth want to develop involve learning from and helping seniors.

The drop-in centre will be run by the students, and once the centre is fully running these youth intend to offer a number of programs. The centre may one day support a youth volunteer service which would match youth volunteers with worthwhile community projects. Also in the works is an adopt-a-grandparent program, sports fundraisers and an arts program. Lindsey's effort to work for the community good does not end with the drop-in centre. She is also a member of the Gimli and area RCMP consultative group and a member of the Ukrainian

dance group, Barvinok. Community leaders are an important—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

User Fees Legal Aid Applications

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): The former Conservative government of Sterling Lyon and Gary Filmon imposed a user fee on applications for Legal Aid which a study then found did not work. As applications dropped 48 percent in the first month and then on an average of 112 applications a month thereafter, it was scrapped.

As a representative of one of the poorest constituencies in Manitoba, I cannot understand why this government has not learned from the mistakes of the former Conservative government. I am appalled that this government is imposing a \$25 user fee on all applications with no exceptions for hardship cases except for those on welfare. This government is, once again, attacking the poor in this province. This regressive tax which has been imposed on the working poor will affect about 50 percent of Legal Aid clients. Legal Aid officials themselves sent out a memo expressing concern over this initiative. Many people will simply give up and go to jail or pay fines even though they are innocent but cannot afford a lawyer and that the current Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) would bring in such a fee comes as little surprise.

This minister who likes talking tough while doing nothing has cut Victims Assistance grants by 40 percent. Her convict cleanup crew worked a total of 12 minutes in three weeks dusting the buildings not affected by the riot. In-your-face corrections, to use her phrase, is another excuse to hit the seniors, the poor and those on low incomes. This cut is another tax on the poor like the cuts to Pharmacare, the ending of eye examinations and other cuts to services used by the poor.

Conservative Party Charitable Barbecue

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I had the occasion on Thursday of last week to host a community barbecue jointly with Premier Filmon and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ernst).

We extended the invitation to people of all political stripes in our area to give them the opportunity to meet their elected representatives on a more casual level than is often in the case in the rarefied atmosphere of the Legislature. The proceeds from the barbecue were donated to the Foundations for Health which seeks to construct a state-of-the art medical research facility in Manitoba.

I would like to pay tribute today to all the people from the community who worked so hard over the last couple of months to make this event such a success. Unbeknownst to those of us whose only involvement in the barbecue was to attend and enjoy the evening, there was an unbelievable amount of work put in behind the scenes to make everything run like clockwork.

In addition to all the volunteers from the community, I would like to thank my own constituency worker and those of Premier Filmon and Minister Ernst for their tireless efforts to make this event a success.

I would also like to thank all the people from southwest Winnipeg who came to the barbecue and helped make it such an extraordinary success. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Committee Changes

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: Burrows (Mr. Martindale) for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar); St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin); Wellington (Ms. Barrett) for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen); Osborne (Ms. McGifford) for Transcona (Mr. Reid) for Monday, June 3, 1996, for 7 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) for the member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay); the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) for the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer).

I move, seconded by the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections be amended as follows: the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) for the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings); the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) for the member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst); the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) for the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer); the member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews) for the member for Riel (Mr. Newman); the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) for the member for Morris (Mr. Pitura).

Motions agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections scheduled to meet tomorrow morning in Room 255 in the Legislative Building is cancelled.

Madam Speaker, I would seek leave of the House to convene that committee tomorrow afternoon at 2:45 p.m. in Room 255, concurrent with the sitting of the House to consider bills.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave? [agreed]

Mr. Ernst: For the balance of this afternoon, I will be moving the motion to go into Committee of Supply. In Room 255, I would seek leave to have the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism continue.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism considered under the Committee of Supply, the section sitting in Room 255? Leave? [agreed]

* (1640)

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, I wonder if there may be leave to sit tomorrow morning, Tuesday, June 4, in two Committees of Supply to consider in Room 255 from 9 a.m. until 12 noon the Department of Urban Affairs and the Department of Housing, and in the Chamber from 10 a.m. until 12 noon the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to sit in Committee of Supply in Room 255 commencing at 9 a.m. the departments of Urban Affairs and Housing, and in the Chamber the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship commencing at 10 a.m.?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: No? No. Leave has been denied.

Just for clarification from the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), is it my understanding that leave has been denied for both sections tomorrow morning? Yes. So there will be no Committee of Supply tomorrow morning in either section.

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty, with the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) in the Chair for the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism; and the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Justice.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

INDUSTRY, TRADE AND TOURISM

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): 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 Industry, Trade and Tourism. When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 10.3. Strategic Initiatives (b) Health Industry Development Initiative (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$415,800 on page 94 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Mr. Chairperson, are the mikes on?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Yes, they are.

Mr. Sale: Okay. Mr. Chairperson, when we were last meeting, there were a number of questions asked of the minister, and he undertook to provide some material. I wonder, at the beginning of our discussion today, whether he would like to provide any material to the committee.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Yes, Mr. Chairman, I have all of the considerable number of Tourism documents which I said I would table, and there they are. He also asked questions as to the tendering of the Tourism advertising, and the answer is yes, that it is tendered, but it comes through Information Services. They are the ones that handle the process of hiring for the purposes of government.

I believe the other question was as to the involvement in the Gimli resort. The reason for government participation was that initially, to make the project start and proceed, there needed to be some commitment made. There was a commitment made, and all of the risk capital was raised following that initial commitment by the province. That was all risk that came in later. So it was a matter of the need for the province to proceed to start the project. That is what it was put forward for. The amount of money that was raised afterwards really was raised based on the ability of the investors to raise it, but that was the reason why the province participated. I am not sure of other questions that the member had that I am not—

Mr. Sale: I think my question was not whether it had been tendered. I assumed that proper purchasing processes had been followed. It was when was it last tendered.

Mr. Downey: I am told by the department that there are ongoing tenders that are let for work that is desired within the tourism activities that is not necessarily one block amount of money that is tendered to do a certain project, but it is different projects that are done on an ongoing basis.

* (1650)

Mr. Sale: I think I also asked what the name of the company was that handled the image ads or the

impression ads that ran on television and the name of the company that designed, for example, the most recent drop that was referred to in the newspaper in the past week in terms of a drop in the northern border states. If the minister could provide that information?

Mr. Downey: The most recent work that has been done is a company called Deschenes Regnier.

Mr. Sale: I thank the minister for that information. I would like to ask the minister if—and I should also thank him for tabling this information. I believe it is mostly things that we have seen, but I appreciate him doing so. I wonder if he would make available to the committee a list of the companies that are now doing tourist advertising work on behalf of the department either through Information Services or directly through the department during the previous fiscal year just ended, referenced in the Estimates book or currently.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, what I will do is—I think that if it is normal practice to be carrying that kind of activity out—I will provide him with as much information as is able. I have no reason not to provide with information.

Mr. Sale: Pass.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 10.3. Strategic Initiatives (b) Health Industry Development Initiative (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$415,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$168,600—pass; (3) Grants nil—pass.

Item 10.3.(c) Aerospace Industries Development Initiative (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$332,100.

Mr. Sale: Could the minister just very briefly indicate the new Manitoba light aircraft project initiative in brief terms? I would say this primarily out of personal interest, because I have a private pilot's licence and used to fly, and I am always disappointed that Canada has not maintained its position of manufacturing light aircraft as opposed to commercial bush aircraft in the single engine or multi-engine category. Would the minister tell us briefly about this initiative?

Mr. Downey: Yes, Mr. Chairman, we are embarked upon some work, a study to take a look at the whole question of Manitoba's capability, basically a study on

product liability, and basically we also survey Manitoba manufacturers to determine their capability to act as suppliers to light aircraft manufacturers. We are also determining the availability of facilities in Manitoba, particularly some of the rural capabilities, with airstrip access and obtaining information on financial and other supports offered in competing jurisdictions.

So there is a considerable amount of work. I know we have one company in particular which I am not able to disclose at this particular time because I do not have their permission, and it is not as advanced maybe as far as it should be, but we are seeing some considerable interest in the whole area of manufacture of light aircraft. We do believe we have the capabilities, whether it is at Southport or whether it is in some of the urban areas. We believe there is a capability of component parts and people that can equip themselves, and, of course, the survival of some of the companies will be to diversify into civilian aircraft activity rather than what has more traditionally been the military production.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I would love the opportunity to discuss this further with the minister at some point, as I say, mainly out of personal interest, but my understanding is that the Piper initiative, which briefly touched down here but went elsewhere, is in fact gone, and we are not referring to that initiative here.

Mr. Downey: That is correct, Mr. Chairman. I understand that there were changes in the U.S. that actually allowed the Piper Company to continue their operations there, so that was the product liability changes. But I would be most in agreement to discuss with the member the opportunities that Manitoba, we believe, can present to the world. I guess, as we look at the overall aerospace industry, we are the third-largest aerospace industry in Canada, and we want to continue to see that grow and develop and diversify.

Mr. Sale: I thank the minister for that. One of the great benefits of Manitoba is that we have no shortage of landing spaces, as a number of bush pilots have discovered over the years, both in the North and the south.

Mr. Downey: If you do not handle them properly, that ground will come up and smite you.

Mr. Sale: Maybe we could get together and swap lies about private planes and flying sometime. That would be fun. Pass that area, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 10.3. Strategic Initiatives (c) Aerospace Industries Development Initiative (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$332,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$136,900—pass; (3) Grants nil—pass.

10.3.(d) Information and Telecommunications Initiative (1) Information Technology (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$421,700.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I realized in turning the page that I had one other question on the previous initiative, if the minister would allow it.

Mr. Downey: Certainly.

Mr. Sale: The serious issue in regard to Southport is the continued uncertainty in regard to Canada's military training requirement for aviation and the potential sales to other countries that have used the contractor at Southport. I believe the contractor is a Bombardier subsidiary. Can the minister tell the committee anything about the status of that issue, of the longer-term viability in the light of potential further cutbacks, either at Moose Jaw or Winnipeg or both?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, all I can tell him is that we are continuing to lobby to make sure that Southport maintains the training activity that it currently has, and any expansions or activities as it relates to that, we believe, can quite efficiently and competitively be carried out there. So we will continue to work with Southport to make sure that the training activities are maintained and enhanced, but nothing further to report on specifics.

* (1700)

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for that, and I would urge him to communicate our party's concern in this regard as well. It is an important area in terms of maintaining a critical mass of aviation capability in Manitoba, that this resource continue to be located there and expand.

Does the minister have any sense of a time line on the decision that Canada is currently, I guess, reviewing for the umpteenth time at this point?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I can refer to the fact that the briefing note has indicated that the federal government is currently working, and I am aware of this as well from some previous discussions, to provide multi-engine training to German pilots. It will be the fall of 1996 before there will be a response, it is my understanding from a briefing note that I have. We have also written to the Minister of National Defence, again, communicating our desire to see more activity carried on there. So that is the most up-to-date one that I have available, and I will communicate anything further that the opposition party are supportive of this initiative.

Mr. Sale: I thank the minister for that. We could go to 3.(d) (1) and (2).

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 10.3. Strategic Initiatives (d) Information and Telecommunications Initiative (1) Information Technology (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$421,700—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$155,700—pass.

10.3.(d)(2) Canada-Manitoba Communications Technology Research and Industry Development Agreement (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits nil—pass; (b) Other Expenditures nil—pass.

10.(c) Grants \$482,400.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, could the minister indicate the status of this agreement and whether there is any replacement or new form of agreement in this critical area that Canada and Manitoba are discussing?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, the agreement ended March 31, 1996, and there is no new agreement. We do have some commitments, which basically is provincial money, which go past the end of 1996. One is TR Labs, and the other one is Manglobe.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I am very concerned about this area, as our party is, and I am sure the government is too. If I could refer the minister to page 52 of the Estimates additional information, the Expected Results almost read like a who's who list of the most important aspects of technology industry in Manitoba. I would like to ask the minister to respond to several areas of concern within this list. I ask these questions not in a negative sense at all but because we are very concerned about the

weakness of our R & D base, not just in Manitoba, but in Canada as a whole. Canada is well known for under-investing in research and development, and the areas listed here are very, very critical areas for Manitoba's economy.

So I want to ask first, the joint venture incorporating MANCET, chambers of commerce and others, what is the actual status of that initiative and what are the expected results coming from it?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, again, there has been some positive developments over the past short while with the chambers of commerce. They believe very strongly this was a program or project that would assist in the accessing of market opportunities for a lot of municipalities and chambers, particularly, chambers throughout the province. What we have currently done is to come to an agreement where we will have two staff out of our Telecommunications branch work with them to further develop a business plan. The ongoing operational costs could be very, very high for both of the chambers and for the province and, without the federal government being involved, would fall extremely heavily upon us. So what we have done is we are developing a business plan. If it works out to the way in which we believe it will, there could be a longer term secondment to the MANCET operation with the departmental staff being involved.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, are there grants from the minister's department or any other department of government in addition to the staff secondments?

Mr. Downey: Yes, there is not a tremendous amount of money, but I think it is in the neighbourhood of—this will be subject to correction—but I believe it is in the \$20,000-range as seed money to start. If that is not correct, I will correct it with the member. I am just going from memory, but I believe that staff have indicated that is correct.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, this area is one that I am sure the minister, and probably the minister of telephones, may share some concern in. The cost of developing and using information can be very, very high particularly for younger companies or smaller companies or companies that are not located close to a node on the Internet where they are paying significant toll charges to access. That is an area of concern for companies. We are

very concerned about an increasing move—at least we sense an increasing move—to develop the Internet in such a way that it primarily serves those who can afford some of the significant costs and is much, much less accessible to users who cannot, for whatever reason, afford those access charges.

I am wondering if the minister is able to give us any assurance that the goal here is to develop a broadly distributed open network and not a fee-for-service or quasi-private network controlled by chambers of commerce. Not that I think chambers are unimportant, but I think access for all potential users is very important and sometimes chambers may not represent all of those groups.

Mr. Downey: I do not disagree as it relates to the overall need for the general consuming public to have access to the service. I think that is extremely critical, because it is like any other infrastructure that is available. Those who have it, continue to grow and develop; and those who do not, either sit still and/or go backwards. We have done some work with the Blue Sky FreeNet people to try and—in fact, we have given them some financial support—expand and provide the service at minimal cost to the users. I know that the federal government have a program that they have supported some communities as well with some smaller grants.

To me, at this particular point, you could refer to it as pilot projects or somewhat ad hocery, I guess, would be my best way to express it at this particular time. I think what has to be clearly put in place—and I do not have any trouble with reasonable amounts of money being spent to get the service. There are not free services out there. There has to be a requirement for payback. It is matter of making sure that there is a balance and that communities that do not have access to it can in fact enter on a basis of getting started on it.

* (1710)

Again, I think the other question that has to be raised of those users is to make sure that when services are provided, one way to make sure that it is legitimate services that are being used and the demand is there for legitimate needs, that, in fact, there is a charge. Otherwise, I would think you would see a tremendous amount of, how should I put it, not for business purposes.

That is maybe not the only reason. There are certainly social needs, but, again, if it is seen as no charge all the way through, then it, in fact, could be seen as abused, I would think.

I think it is a matter of both the federal and provincial governments having to work very closely together, because a lot of it now—as I have said, there is some support coming from the federal government, and there are some programs from the province. The need is certainly out there and has been demonstrated to me from my own communities, how much they would like to be part of it. Some of them are now currently being hooked in. I think it is some ad hockery, and I do believe that we have to try to make sure that it is provided, but, again, there will be some cost to it.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I would give the example of geomatics which is also one of the issues here. We have had some debate in the House, and members of the geomatics industry have met recently with the minister responsible for Linnet, who I presume is Mr. Driedger—at least his signature is on the agreements—but it also has obviously a concern and a linkage for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism because of the industrial linkages, so this is one of those that crosses a number of lines.

The geomatics experience seems to be that where governments open up the provision of data and treat the data as a public utility, that the economic development that follows provides a very large payback; in other words, the notion that the geomatics base maps and the cadastral map are, in effect, like a road system and that the road system is not something that you build only when you decide that you need the road. You build roads and maintain the roads on the basis of basic fundamental public infrastructure, and you recover your investment through the economic development that goes along because those roads are there.

So to further that analogy, we twin the highway from Winnipeg to the Emerson border, and we believe that that twinning will bring us benefits in terms of long-distance trucking and tourism and other payback, but we do not link the cost of the twinning to the first however many thousand trucks that drive over the road. In other words, we do not take a toll road approach. That seems to be the

international—international meaning North American—experience in the geomatics sector.

In the debate about the quality of information in Manitoba, I referenced the high quality base maps of Alberta and Saskatchewan. The minister responsible replied and replied correctly that while they had very high quality base maps, they were not being used as much as perhaps you would wish, and the reason, I am told by the geomatics industry, is because Alberta and Saskatchewan both tried to apply quick recovery approaches to their investment in the base map, and so the information is so expensive, that people cannot afford to use it.

I am really concerned that in our rush to make everything pay for itself and to move to a user-pay system in every area that we can, that we will choke off the kind of creative use of new capacities in geomatics or in the Internet or in any number of new areas, because those who are perhaps the most creative do not have capital that allows them to use these initiatives.

I hear the minister's concern about abuse, but my limited experience with the Internet is that after you have played around on it for a little while and, you know, have seen what the bells and whistles are there, it gets just as boring as any other dictionary does. After you have looked at pretty pictures for a while, you kind of realize that there might be better things to do with your life, so you go looking for stuff that is really helpful. I think we are on a learning curve on this, and I suspect that there is really not much abuse in a real sense, but that there may well be exploration going on, and some of that is not very productive, but the people do not enjoy sitting in front of a TV screen that is not helpful to them for too long. It is kind of interesting at first, but it loses its interest very quickly.

I would urge the minister to pursue policies that do not allow these vital sectors to become subjects for quick payback policies, because I think those will choke off, as they have in fact in the area of geomatics, choked off the industrial development that could have happened here and should have happened to a great extent in Saskatchewan and Alberta but did not, because they pursued quick payback policies.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 10.3.(d) Information and Telecommunications Initiative (2) Canada-Manitoba

Communications Technology Research (c) Grants \$482,400—pass.

10.3.(d)(3) Telecommunications Marketing (a) Salaries and Other Benefits \$287,500.

Mr. Sale: Could I, Mr. Chairperson, ask the minister, through you, where the third last Expected Result on 3.(d), the Introduction, might most appropriately come up? Is the development of a cable/telco alliance that come up most appropriately under this subappropriation, or is there another one that would be more appropriate?

Mr. Downey: It is fair to proceed right now with it, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, this is an area of some considerable concern for us for a number of reasons, and I want to make a bit of an opening comment in this area.

Manitoba has been reasonably successful in attracting call centres to our province. There are difficulties that we see in this industry. The first is that we have reason to believe that some significant incentives have been provided to some companies, not just the one that is best known, Faneuil, but a number of other companies in terms of rates, some other incentives that have helped to attract the industry. I suppose incentives are a fact of life in interprovincial competition, which was supposed to be done away with through the interprovincial trade agreement. We are all going to be playing on a level field, but I suspect that field has still got a lot of bumps in it.

First of all, we are concerned about the level of incentives that have been extended to attract companies to Manitoba; secondly, we would ask the minister to provide us with some very clear indications of how the jobs and the job creation rate is counted.

As the minister knows, in government we talk about staff years, SYs, and I think that it is unlikely that is the mechanism that is used in counting call centre jobs, because as the minister knows I am sure, most of the employees of call centres are permanent part-time employees. Few have any benefits because of their employment patterns, and their employment patterns are quite irregular depending on whether the call centre has

a contract or not; if there are no calls to be made then nobody is in calling.

I would just give the example of polling firms who, if you ask a polling firm how many people they have, they will give you the number of people they can call in to do a contract, but if you ask them how many people are in today working, they will tell you how many people are in today working. Some days it might be none, and some days it might be 150. So the actual employment created is not the number of people who have actually worked for them in any given year, it is how many hours they have actually put in towards anything like full-time work.

Our second concern is that the way in which we count the jobs needs to be standardized, and we need to understand when we are told that there have been 200 jobs at, let us say, AT & T, or Faneuil or Systemhouse or wherever, we need to understand the basis on which those jobs are created.

The third concern is we were told that there are a number of call centres in Manitoba that are having difficulty meeting their cash flow requirements. I think that it is highly likely given the huge expansion in this industrial sector in Canada and the United States that there will be a shakeout in this area. We are very concerned that some of Manitoba's firms may be at the beginning stages of being part of that shakeout.

So if I could address those broad questions to the minister, and in particular, we are asking, Mr. Chairperson, for very specific indications of how jobs are counted, and we would like to know some significant detail about the numbers of jobs in each of the call centres that we have assisted in one way or another.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, this gives me the opportunity to make one quick response that I should have made during the discussion on tourism. The StatsCan information that he was working from the other day, it is my understanding from the department, we have been informed by Stats Canada that they have changed the calculation of numbers of tourists coming across the border and into Manitoba three times since about 1981, which the member made reference, that in fact the bases from which he was using are basically meaningless because you cannot compare apples and apples with a change in calculating the numbers three different ways

over that period of time. In fact, they have provided the department with a letter saying pretty much to that effect. I wanted that on the record.

* (1720)

Mr. Chairman, as it relates to the call centre activity, I think what we consider the jobs—we call them full-time equivalents—I can give him a global figure that we have established in the province with the development, and contrary to what public impression may be, we have been extremely successful in the establishment of call centre jobs in Manitoba of very high quality. I think the working conditions, any interviews that have been done, any discussions that have taken place, I would say the majority of them are extremely satisfied with the work activity. The numbers that we have are just under 4,000, just about 3,800 full-time equivalent jobs is what we refer to them as. We are not unhappy with that number. We are currently in discussion with many other people in the call centre activity and hopefully we can accomplish some more.

As it relates to those ones that we have assisted and full-time equivalent jobs, I will get that information for the member. It is providable. I do not think there is any reason why we cannot provide it, and I will get that on the ones that we have supported.

Mr. Sale: Would the minister define what a full-time equivalent is? What is the full-time equivalent?

Mr. Downey: It is usually based on the standard hour of workweek that each company—some have a 37 hour workweek, some have a 40 as a company—and we base it basically on the number of hours that would equate to that 40 hour workweek and consider that as a full-time equivalent.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, so it is the workweek equivalent of whatever company is the employer. That is very helpful.

Would the minister be prepared to table a list of the call centres that total up to the 3,800 jobs, with the approximate number in each call centre at the present time or as of the 3,800 number?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, as I indicated, I am prepared to table what we have provided assistance to.

I am not able to provide what other people who are maybe in—that would be information that is not in the public interest as it relates to competition from other areas. So I will provide it for those that we have in some way reached an agreement, where they have to reach certain numbers of jobs as it relates to the support that they get from the province.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 10.3. Strategic Initiatives (d) Information and Telecommunications Initiative (3) Telecommunications Marketing (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I am not finished in this area yet. I want to ask the minister, he provided information about tourism. I am aware that StatsCan changes definitions from time to time. Would the minister table a letter from StatsCan so that we have an indication of the periods of time at which changes took place and what were the nature of those changes so that we might understand where our numbers are in error. I would appreciate it if he could do that. The fact remains that even more recent years, and I do not know which year there were changes, Manitoba's record does not appear to be as favourable if we go from even 1988, which is fairly recent. If we look at last year, which is even more recent, Manitoba does not stack up well, and so I would be interested in seeing StatsCan's new definitions or changes that render the information, the historic time series, inaccurate. I presume that the point-to-point comparisons are still accurate, though, for any given point in time. So given that, we still do not have a sterling record even on point-to-point basis.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I will make an attempt to provide the information for the member, particularly if it is helpful to my side of the argument.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I expected no less from the minister.

Okay, I want to ask some questions about the current situation with a couple of the organizations that grants have been provided to. I want to start with GWE in Brandon, Mr. Chairperson. GWE provides fundraising activities for a number of Manitoba charities. It is our information that the cost of the fundraising frequently exceeds 50 or 60 percent of the dollars raised and sometimes goes as high as 80 percent of the dollars

raised. My question to the minister is whether he is aware of Revenue Canada's rulings about acceptable levels of expense in fundraising and in expensing charitable dollars. It would seem to any sort of reasonable reading of the situation with GWE in Brandon that Canadian taxpayers who think they are providing support to charities are really in effect paying the freight with a charitable receipt for a private company that is making a profit. The expense ratios of most charities does not exceed 10 percent of the monies raised, and, in the case of some charities, it is lower. Does the minister share the concern about the expense ratio, and is he aware of Revenue Canada's concerns in this regard?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I would take this as a concern between the three parties, of which we are not one of them, that being the federal tax department, the other being the GWE company, and the other being the client. What our job is, is to make sure that in any support that we give, they live up to the agreement that has been established between the province and GWE before they get the support which is committed. So I am not aware of—there may be some within the telemarketing branch that are, but the staff who are with me at this particular time are not aware of any discrepancies in this particular case. For the information of the member, I could check into it, but I do not think it is relevant as it relates to what we have to do with GWE.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I think it is extremely relevant in that provincial funding support has gone to a company that I think arguably is transgressing at least the intent if not the letter of Revenue Canada's rulings on acceptable ratios of fundraising for the provinces by providing support to this company. In some sense, at least, it is party to a fundraising practice which I do not think meets the tests of fairness or of stewardship on the part of Revenue Canada.

I realize that that may be technically Revenue Canada's concern, but I believe that the province has a moral obligation to not be taking part in an organization that is bending all normal understandings of charitable fundraising activities quite badly out of shape, so I would ask the minister if he would not share my concern that the government by supporting GWE at least appears to be supporting a situation where fundraising is an extremely expensive proposition.

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I do not know specifically what the member is referring to. I am not aware of the federal government, the taxation branch, giving us notice that in some way we should be paying money that we would have normally paid to GWE for meeting a contractual arrangement, and in some way they would want to garnishee it.

I am not aware of that. I do not see it as being a lot different than what would be the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation lending money to a farmer, as it relates to an income tax problem that they may have, and we should force our way into it to get involved.

If we were asked or requested to, then we would be cooperative in the efforts at which the other levels of government were trying to carry out their work, but I am not quite clear as to what the member is saying; should we be pushing ourselves or forcing ourselves into a situation which, quite frankly, the case that he puts forward has not been made that we should.

I will check with the department to see if there has been a request by the federal government, the taxation branch, to in some way lay claim against the funds that may have gone to GWE because of improprieties in the way in which they have been paying their taxes.

I am not aware of that, and I do not feel compelled that I should be pushing my way into that situation. The initial program was to get GWE established, to hire people in the Brandon area which is where they decided to locate, and if they meet their conditions, they get the support from the province. If they do not, they do not get the support from the province.

Any communication from the federal government I am not aware of, but I will certainly look into it.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for being willing to look into that, and I would appreciate a report back as to whether Revenue Canada's guidelines are being exceeded in the work of this company.

I would be prepared to pass this area at this point and go on with telemarketing. [interjection] I am sorry, it is 5:30.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The time being 5:30 p.m., committee rise.

JUSTICE

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Would the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon we will be dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Justice. By leave, the committee has temporarily set aside Resolutions 4.2 and 4.3, and is considering Resolution 4.4? Is there any new staff present that the minister may want to introduce at this time?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): No, Mr. Chair, the staff are all the same staff who were present when the Estimates of Justice were last considered.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): The other day, the minister was asked a series of questions about meetings and what information she had regarding the release of inmates following the Headingley riot.

Just to follow up and detail some of those answers, would the minister tell this House the dates on which she had met with senior Corrections officials following the outbreak of the riot at Headingley and before it became known about the tragedy at Inwood? Would she tell the committee when meetings were held with her senior officials on the pattern of releases from Headingley and from the other correctional facilities in order to deal with the pressure of space on the correctional system in Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: This seems to be another way of asking a question which has been asked before in Estimates. The question was, at another time, did I have any discussion regarding temporary absences before the issue of the individual who is currently charged with murder.

I believe I said at that time that the issue of temporary absences was not brought forward to me as minister in discussion of dealing with inmate population pressures. I also have said previously that the deputy minister has said that the issue of the use of temporary absences following the riot was raised once to him and only again within a very general context of saying that there was a requirement to deal with inmates across the province.

So the answer today remains the same as the answer previously. The question, I believe, is to list the dates on which I met with senior Corrections officials to discuss the issue of temporary absences before—[interjection]

* (1650)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable members wanting to carry on their conversation to do so in the loge, out in the halls or back in their offices, so that we can carry on. It is a little hard to hear when there is chatter going around and around the House.

Mrs. Vodrey: As I said, the answer remains the same as the answer that I gave at another time. The discussions with myself as minister, to my knowledge and recollection, were not held around temporary absences, very specifically, until there had been the charge of murder.

Mr. Mackintosh: Had the minister, after the charge of murder, met with senior Corrections, Adult Corrections staff, to then review the numbers of those released not only on TA but were deemed to have completed the end of their sentence?

Mrs. Vodrey: As I have said and brought information forward in the Legislature, the first issue dealt with was criterion. We were also endeavouring to get statistics and numbers and details as they were being requested. As I have said in the House, it really took a great deal of effort to make sure that the statistics given were in fact matched exactly with what had been requested. The information brought forward was always brought forward to the best of my knowledge and to the best efforts of the individuals who work in Corrections, who by that point, were dealing with a third, very major issue within the department.

As the member can well appreciate, the issue of the riot alone was very significant for Corrections division in terms of an issue to deal with. Then following that, we had within a week a job action which required senior Corrections officials to take a very active role in dealing with our institutions and also dealing with our backup plan to make sure that everything ran as it was required. Then we had the third issue which was again a person charged with murder and again very significant details that were asked about that. That was provided, to the

best of my knowledge, to the best efforts of Corrections division at each time statistics were brought forward.

I know the other side has wanted to make a great deal about the numbers that they have received, and the explanations that they have received and how responses were given. I can only say to them again that the best information was delivered, the best efforts were given, the best explanations available were also given. As we have had more time, as we have been able to provide more and more detail, that detail has been provided to the members opposite.

So that has been the strategy, that has been the way that we are dealing with these three very, very difficult issues, and we will continue to deal with them. We see some progress being made in the area of the restoration of the institution. That was, in fact, one of our major goals was to have the institution operating, and that did take significant time based on the work and the efforts of senior Corrections officials and staff. I should make a point of acknowledging not only our senior officials, whom the member knows and has had the opportunity to meet during the course of Estimates, but those staff members whom he perhaps has had the opportunity to speak with, or perhaps not, and to acknowledge the efforts of those individuals as well as we move towards the reopening of the institution.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, in the days following the Headingley riot, at any time had the minister been advised of the number of inmates released, either on TA or deemed to be at end of sentence?

Mrs. Vodrey: We dealt with again issues, following the riot, of relocation, as I have said, and as numbers were requested, numbers to the best of our ability were provided. I am just wondering what the member may want to know. I believe that I have answered a number of these questions in the past, and if he has an allegation to make, then I think it would be in the best interests of everyone who is sitting here, having done their best to provide him with what he wants to make it.

If he does not, then let us get on with it, because it is very difficult, you know, I just have to say what an incredibly difficult few days this was for Justice. I should not say a few days because it has been a very, very long and difficult five weeks, and in that five-week period we

have met, we have endeavoured as information became available, it was provided to the best of people's ability.

* (1700)

The member sits here now requesting us to look back on exact dates, what occurred on each of those dates, and I would like to have some idea as to what he thinks that this is going to prove, because we have provided him with the best information that we can. To provide him with some of those exact dates, it would really takes us spending a lot of our time trying to reconstruct those dates for him when a lot of our focus is now getting the institution up and running, continuing to have it up and running even to greater capacity.

So the member seems to want to have the senior Corrections officials devote themselves to something in which I am not sure exactly how that is beneficial to the House, to the people of Manitoba. So if he has an allegation to make, I would encourage him to make it, and if he does not, then let us get on with it.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister just tell the committee, in the days following the Headingley riot and before the murder charge was laid, whether at a meeting of senior Corrections officials she was told of the number, approximate or exact, of those released, and whether there was a discussion about whether to advise the public of the decisions made about releases?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, having conferred with everyone at the table, to the best of our knowledge, the answer is an unqualified no, to the best of our understanding of his question asked. I would wonder why he might ask such a question.

Mr. Mackintosh: Am I given then to clearly understand that at no time before the murder charge was laid the minister was advised of the number, approximate or otherwise, of those released as a result of the Headingley riot with the pressures on the spaces in the correctional system?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, again I say, having conferred with the senior staff at the table, to the best of all of our recollection, such a number was not presented to me between the time of the riot and the time of the murder charge, in that time frame.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister tell the committee why she did not ask about that number of officials in her department during that time?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, as I have said before during the course of these Estimates, our immediate concern was to place inmates in institutions and to make sure that there was space available to deal co-operatively with the federal corrections, to deal with provincial corrections in Saskatchewan, to deal with some of the space pressures that were occurring. Those were the issues that were dealt with with senior officials and myself as minister at that time. Those were presented to me and, I could say now, considered to be the public safety issues.

The member, I think, would like to go back. Now we have had five weeks, going on six weeks, since the time of the riot. Everyone has had a lot of thinking time, a lot of time to dwell on and deal with certain issues, and it makes it very easy now to say, why did you not do that, or you should have done this. Mr. Chair, I can tell you that the information brought forward, the information discussed, was done at that time in what really was a crisis situation, because what the member keeps forgetting to talk about is that there was also a job action in the middle of that. He thinks it went from the riot to the charge of murder, but also in the middle of that there was also a major issue to deal with on the labour side and which required the same people to deal with that issue, the same people to deal with all of the plans to make sure that things were working appropriately.

So, as I have said before, the issues presented to me and the issues dealt with were placement of inmates considered a risk, inmates who, where there was a requirement for any agreement to be made between Stony—as I have said, the deputy minister signed that—and also direction as to whether or not to pursue work with other provinces. And, yes, I immediately gave the direction when the option was presented to proceed with negotiations with Saskatchewan to have some of our inmates placed there. So nothing has changed since we talked about this quite some time ago. The member asks why not, and I have explained to him what major priorities were presented to me at that time.

Mr. Mackintosh: When was the first time that it came to the minister's attention that there were releases in the adult Corrections due to the space problem caused by the

riot? Was it at the time, for example, of the charge of the individual at Inwood?

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, having sought everyone's recollection or recollection around the table, the answer was, shortly after the charge of murder, and I am not sure that anyone here can be significantly more specific than that. Maybe, through the member's further questioning, we will have some idea about what it is he would like to know.

Mr. Mackintosh: It is my understanding that before that day the deputy minister had been advised of the temporary absences granted. Is that understanding accurate?

Mrs. Vodrey: As I answered earlier in the Estimates this afternoon, but the deputy reconfirms again for the second time this afternoon, he had been advised in a conversation with senior Corrections officials, in reference to inmate placement, that some inmates were being provided with temporary absences. He tells me that his notes indicate that that was in relation to, and again, this is my understanding, a quote from his notes, the term temporary absences in relation to inmates brutalized. So that was the context in which the deputy minister was informed.

Of course, as the member knows, we have former Justice Hughes, we have Ted Hughes, now doing a review, an independent review, of what occurred at Headingley, both before the riot and during the riot. We have also very specifically referred to him the matter of temporary absences so that there is an independent person who does not have a political agenda or another kind of agenda to try and make commentary or comment and that certainly information has been provided to the public as required.

* (1710)

As a matter of fact, it has really been very difficult to try and get that information out because the waters seemed to be muddied frequently by members from the other side and who seem to be trying to make something about the very difficult situation and the effort that was made by seniors Corrections officials to provide the information.

So what we have done, what our position is, what my position is as minister, is that I have asked Mr. Hughes,

very specifically, to look at this matter and to make a judgment, to make some comment about how this was done and whether or not anything unlawful or unreasonable was done in the granting of the temporary absences. Nothing has changed from my earlier comments and earlier discussion on that point. One can only imagine or suppose where the member for St. Johns is trying to go with this. So I again tell him that nothing has changed, and we certainly will be looking to Mr. Hughes for his comments.

Mr. Mackintosh: When did the deputy become aware that TAs, for one, had been granted, not only to those brutalized, but to other individuals, due to the space issue?

Mrs. Vodrey: The deputy informs me that he was informed about inmates released for reasons other than, as his notes indicate, being brutalized, that the timing of that was after the murder at Inwood.

Mr. Mackintosh: Does the minister today have information as to the total number of individuals released due to the space constraints, whether on TA or because those individuals were deemed to be at end of sentence?

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, I refer the member to the fact of the complexity of the answer that he is seeking through what appears to be a very simple question, and it is genuinely complex. I am told again by consulting with the senior officials who are here, that the number in the four-week period which I gave him last Tuesday, April 26 to May 21, is 172, but that number 172 is not broken down into which inmates were released as a result of space pressures, which inmates were released on TA for other reasons. The number that we have endeavoured to provide is the number of inmates who were released on temporary absence.

We have broken down for the member, and I believe I gave him an update last week, the number in types of temporary absences. We also noted at that time the numbers whose sentences had expired as a result of having been released on temporary absence sentences now expired. So we are not able to provide for him the specific number that he seeks. We did attempt to provide the very best information possible, that people in Manitoba had been seeking and wanted to make sure that we had provided the most complete answer possible.

That is what we did provide last weekend, and that number, 172, for that four-week period remains the same.

Mr. Chair, I am also reminded that that number is for all correctional institutions across the province.

Mr. Mackintosh: Again, my question is not directed to TAs but to those who are deemed to be entitled to early release. I wonder if the minister has that number now, because last week she said she did not yet have that number.

Mrs. Vodrey: Again, I am informed that our focus was on temporary absences—I know the members knows this—that early release is a statutory obligation. The law refers to early release, but, in fact, the sentence expires as has been explained to me by senior Corrections officers and that they did not focus on, then, individual numbers which were released according to law, so I do not have further information for him on that number.

Mr. Mackintosh: Could the minister tell the committee how many correctional officers are currently on stress leave?

Mrs. Vodrey: I am told that that is a very difficult number to provide because it appears to change. Some individuals are not reporting according to concerns about stress, and then they return. Then they do go back to work. Then other people who were at work do not report for work.

So it is very difficult to give a single number because it is not as if there is a certain fixed number of people who are on an extended stress leave, but, instead, that number fluctuates frequently of people who, as I said, were working who may not be working, and people who were not working who have now come back to work. So I am not able to provide the member with that number.

Mr. Mackintosh: I am wondering if it is the same answer then for those who are on stress leave from Headingley.

* (1720)

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am told that there is no static answer for any of the institutions, that the answer is the same as I previously gave the member.

Mr. Mackintosh: Could the minister tell the committee the numbers of those individuals, the last date for which those numbers are available? How many are not showing up for work because they have a medical certificate or medical opinion that they are not fit to return to work at this time?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am told that we do not have that information. We can attempt to provide that snapshot for one period in time when we are next together, if that would be helpful to the member. But I would like to stress that, as he knows, we are dealing with a back-to-work committee at Headingley, and there would not be names provided, and that, again, people are returning to work or did return to work, according to the agreement that was struck. So I would not be able to provide him with details about any specific person or anything that might cast an individual in a certain light. You know, one wonders what it is he is trying to get at, what person he might want to point out to the public. I do not know, but, anyway, I will not be providing information that will identify a person. He thinks it is funny, and we do not think it is funny. So we will just have to carry on with the questioning and see where it goes.

Mr. Mackintosh: Of course, I was asking for numbers and not names. Is it the understanding generally of the minister that there is a high absentee rate, for whatever reason, of correctional officers, particularly those who were assigned to Headingley before the riot?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I am informed by the senior correctional officers that there was one shift in particular in which there were some correctional officers injured, and there were some correctional officers considered to have been traumatized by the event. But, as I have said, we have now coming back, or returned to work, some officers who were off; and, we have some who were not off who are now off. So it is very difficult to give him numbers. I guess I am trying to figure out what it is he is really asking here, what it is that he would like from us.

I have spoken in the past about some of the supports that have been offered to correctional officers. I think the most important factor, though—or what I consider one of the most important factors—is the return-to-work committee at Headingley. I understand it now is referred

to as Workplace Health and Safety Committee, which is dealing with the concerns and getting our institution back up and running. That, of course, is one of the most important things when we are dealing with any population issues or actually correctional officers returning to work.

So that is the status right now. We look for continued development and improvement in that area, and, to my knowledge, that is happening. We will provide an update where possible.

Chairperson's Ruling

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. At this time I would just like to bring in a ruling from May 24. I took under advisement a point of order raised by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) respecting words spoken by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) which were alleged to impute motives to the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh).

I have reviewed the words complained of, of which claimed that the honourable member for St. Johns appeared before and on the media in relations to the Headingley riot to politically grandstand and that he wanted to inflame the situation.

Beauchesne's Citation 481 states that a member, while speaking, "must not: (e) impute bad motives or motives different from those acknowledged by a Member." In my opinion, the honourable member for Kildonan does have a point of order, and the honourable minister has contravened Citation 481(e). Therefore, I am asking her to withdraw the words complained of.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I will withdraw those.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable minister for that.

* * *

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister tell the House what the plan is regarding the protective custody inmates and where they will likely or where they have already been returned to?

Mrs. Vodrey: It does not appear to be wise to identify where those protective custody inmates are at the moment, and I think we have a line of questioning again that appears to endanger people. I can tell the member that there is a security fence being constructed around Annex B at Headingley, and when that is constructed and is outside of the main part of the institution, when the area is secure in Annex B, then protective custody inmates will be returned there.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5:30 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): The hour being 5:30 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 3, 1996

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