



Third Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim	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.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Ind.
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, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
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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.
Vacant	Portage la Prairie	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 5, 1997

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mobile Screening Unit for Mammograms

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Lynda Parker, Wendy Parker, Lorne Bulycz and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to consider immediately establishing a mobile screening unit for mammograms to help women across the province detect breast cancer at the earliest possible opportunity.

Obstetrics Closure—Grace General Hospital

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): I beg to present the petition of Ronald Desjardins, Don Gregg, Mark Kernaghan and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Health to consider stopping the closure of the obstetrics program at Winnipeg's Grace Hospital.

Mobile Screening Unit for Mammograms

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): I beg to present the petition of Lisa Biblow, Wanda Beaudry and Muriel Parker praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Health to consider immediately establishing a mobile screening unit for mammograms to help women across the province detect breast cancer at the earliest possible opportunity.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): I beg to present the petition of Debbie Rowe, Gladys McKay, Glynn Donaldson and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Health to consider immediately establishing a mobile screening unit for mammograms to help women across the province detect breast cancer at the earliest possible opportunity.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mobile Screening Unit for Mammograms

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). 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: 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:

WHEREAS medical authorities have stated that breast cancer in Manitoba has reached almost epidemic proportions; and

WHEREAS yearly mammograms are recommended for women over 50, and perhaps younger if a woman feels she is at risk; and

WHEREAS while improved surgical procedures and better post-operative care do improve a woman's chances if she is diagnosed, early detection plays a vital role; and

WHEREAS Manitoba currently has only three centres where mammograms can be performed, those being Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson; and

WHEREAS a trip to and from these centres for a mammogram can cost a woman upwards of \$500 which is a prohibitive cost for some women; and

WHEREAS a number of other provinces have dealt with this problem by establishing mobile screening units; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has promised to take action on this serious issue.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may

be pleased to request the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to consider immediately establishing a mobile screening unit for mammograms to help women across the province detect breast cancer at the earliest possible opportunity.

Obstetrics Closure—Grace General Hospital

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), and 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 the obstetrics program has always been an important part of the Grace Hospital's mandate; and

THAT both people in the community and a number of government studies have recommended against the further closure of community hospitals' obstetrics programs; and

THAT as a result of federal and provincial cuts in the health budget, hospitals are being forced to eliminate programs in order to balance their own budgets; and

THAT the closure of the Grace Hospital obstetrics ward will mean laying off 54 health care professionals, many of whom have years of experience and dedicated service in obstetrics; and

THAT moving to a model where more and more births are centred in the tertiary care hospitals will be more costly and decreases the choices for women about where they can give birth.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) consider stopping the closure of the obstetrics program at Winnipeg's Grace Hospital.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson of the Committee of Supply): Madam Speaker, the

Committee of Supply has considered certain resolutions, directs me to report progress and asks leave to sit again. I move, seconded by the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Brazilian Trade Agreement

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, I have copies for the members of the House and anybody else that wants one.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House of two important developments in our trade and commercial relationship with Brazil and particularly with the state of Rio Grande do Sul. As a follow-up to the trade mission I led last August to Brazil, Argentina and Chili, Premier Filmon and Governor Antonio Britto of Rio Grande do Sul yesterday signed an agreement of co-operation on economic, technical and cultural development. Governor Britto, whom I met during last summer's mission, is in Winnipeg this week leading a mission by Brazilian officials and business people to this province. In addition, the state's Secretary of Development and International Affairs, Nelson Proenca, and I signed an appendix to the accord to seek opportunities for exchanges in government, education, agri-business, industrial technology and health and environment.

* (1335)

Although last year's trip to South America was our province's first major trade mission to that country, it has already yielded impressive results for commercial ties between our business communities. At a special breakfast meeting this morning, IBG Global Livestock, formerly International Beef Genetics, of Gunton, Manitoba, has signed a partnership agreement with a new Brazilian company to import beef genetics and live beef and dairy cattle into Rio Grande from this province. This agreement also provides for significant technology transfer as technicians that IBG has hired in Brazil will visit Manitoba to learn more about the

company's advanced livestock technology. IBG is a 50 percent owner of this Brazilian venture.

Madam Speaker, these three accords certainly augur well for Manitoba's future trade and other relations with Brazil, and I look forward to forging even stronger links with Rio Grande do Sul particularly in the months and years ahead.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, the peoples of Manitoba and countries such as Brazil that are served by an increasing web of fair and free trade that pays attention to concerns about labour and environment as well as economic development issues are developments that I think we all welcome. I am particularly pleased that we have the opportunity to support multilateral kinds of trades initiatives that are mutual and not one-sided, that have fairness and justice as a base for those agreements, and so we welcome a new partner from Brazil, from a major state in Brazil, as a trading partner under this initiative with the people of Manitoba.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 47—The Adoption and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe), that leave be given to introduce Bill 47, The Adoption and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur l'adoption et modifications corrélatives), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

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 Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Ms. Kaori Satake. Ms. Satake is an exchange student from Japan and has been living in the constituency of the honourable member for Morris (Mr. Pitura).

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

I would also like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Dr. Tan, director of research and technology assessment of the Department of Health of the Government of Singapore.

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

* (1340)

Additionally, we have in the public gallery sixty-six Grade 5 students from the Southwood School under the direction of Mr. Don Thiessen. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger).

Also, forty Grade 5 students from Souris School under the direction of Mrs. Theresa O'Brien and Mr. Glenn Wallmann. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed).

Also, seven adult literacy program visitors from Community Education Development Association of the William Whyte School under the direction of Mrs. Doreen Szor. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Canadian Corrosion Control Workplace Safety

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, in reviewing the tragic death of Andrew Kuryk at the Canadian Corrosion company, one looks through their safety record and is quite appalled. In August of '91, a stop-work warning was issued for air shortages and not complied with shortly thereafter. In July of '92, no permit was issued for a near miss of a worker in a bucket. In September of '93, an injured worker suffered shoulder injuries in a suspended stage operation. A

complaint was issued on spray painting in open areas in '93. In '94, there were no safety measures for sandblasting in an open area, and then tragically in June of 1994, the death of Andrew Kuryk at the same company.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon): Is he satisfied that his Workplace Safety and Health Branch took the necessary action that could have prevented injury at this workplace and possibly prevented a death?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, certainly any accident or injury in the workplace, particularly one causing death, is a tragedy. The department was involved with this particular company, and they did issue improvement orders, which were complied with. They did issue a stop-work warning which was complied with, and unfortunately, later on there was a tragic accident. The department did work with the company and improvements were made.

The thrust of Workplace Safety and Health is to work through an education process to make these workplaces safer, and this was done by the department.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the purpose of the Workplace Safety and Health department is also to prevent injury and death at the workplace here in Manitoba.

The family representative for the Kuryks has stated that, if the company had been prosecuted long before the death, perhaps the death of their son could have been prevented.

I would like to ask the Premier: Has he reviewed this investigation? Has he reviewed the situation of his Workplace Safety and Health Branch? Because we have been raising questions in this Chamber in the past. Why were prosecutions not initiated by the Workplace Safety and Health department? Why were the kinds of prosecutions to back up workers' safety not taken prior to the death and only took place after the death?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Certainly, the safety in the workplace is a shared responsibility: the employer, employees and the government. The process that the department uses is to work with individual companies,

particularly ones that have a record that needs to be addressed. The department has done this and through education programs has made workplaces safer. Certainly the trend lines, when you look at accidents and fatalities in the 1990s, have improved quite dramatically from the 1970s and 1980s, but again I say any tragedy like this is one too many. We will continue to work with employers and employees to make workplaces safer.

We received yesterday the results of the inquest. These recommendations are currently before the department, and they will certainly be reviewed and scrutinized very carefully.

Workplace Safety and Health Act Prosecutions

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Again, this is another company that has allegedly—or has gone bankrupt, Madam Speaker, and of course last year we were asking questions to the Minister of Justice about the Kordite company that also went bankrupt. Sometimes these companies are not prosecuted because they go bankrupt, and the government has not exercised their option of prosecuting the owners of companies rather than the individual companies. In fact, all the prosecutions presently before the court name the company as opposed to the owners. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) indicated before in his capacity as Minister of Labour that he would review this matter. How come the government is still continuing to allow owners of companies to go free of prosecutions by not charging the owners of these companies?

* (1345)

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Labour): That issue is being reviewed, along with the recommendations that were brought forward yesterday. The department will review this thoroughly and certainly be in discussions with the Department of Justice.

Canadian Corrosion Control Workplace Safety

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Canadian Corrosion has a long list of violations under The Workplace

Safety and Health Act. Madam Speaker, it is indeed unfortunate that this company had not been prosecuted for past violations and where they ignored stop-work warnings that were issued by the Workplace Safety and Health Branch.

I want to ask this Minister of Labour: Is it the policy of his government to allow companies to use the excuse of no money and being a small company as an excuse to ignore stop-work warnings where safety of workers is at risk? Is that the policy of this government?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Labour): Certainly not, Madam Speaker, and I think we do have a dispute over the facts. My staff have indicated that when they did issue an improvement order, it was complied with; when they did issue a stop-work warning, it was also complied with. If the member has information contrary to that, I would be more than happy to receive it.

Mr. Reid: Well, then, I take it, Madam Speaker, the minister has not read the report by Judge Minuk in this case, because those were the words of the judge in his report, that the money and being a small company were the excuses given by the company for ignoring the stop-work warnings.

Workplace Safety-Prosecution

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I want to ask the minister: Considering the long list of violations of this company, why was Canadian Corrosion Control not prosecuted for a violation of that stop-work warning several years ago, which would have led to a record for this company that would have allowed the Minister of Justice, under the directions that the prosecutors have been given by the Justice department that companies will only be prosecuted where they have a prior record—why was that company not charged and prosecuted under The Workplace Safety and Health Act when they ignored the stop-work warning earlier this decade?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Labour): My honourable friend is being vague with which incidents he is talking about. I can tell you the incident from September 1993. An improvement order was issued and complied with. In the 1991 case, a stop-

work warning was issued, and departmental staff informed me this morning that that was complied with.

Mr. Reid: Well, Madam Speaker, that is not what Judge Minuk says in his report.

Workplace Safety and Health Act Prosecutions

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member, to pose a final supplementary question.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I want to ask this Minister of Labour—who is a new Minister of Labour, and I have asked this question of his predecessor before—why is it a policy of this government to allow companies to avoid prosecution for serious violations under The Workplace Safety and Health Act, where workers have been seriously injured or killed, by allowing those companies to declare bankruptcy, and the Prosecutions department of the Department of Justice does not prosecute the owners. Why are you allowing companies and their owners to evade prosecution by allowing those companies to go bankrupt and not charging the owners? Why have you not taken action to correct that?

* (1350)

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, my honourable friend refers to the government as allowing companies to go bankrupt. Companies go bankrupt for a number of reasons; to avoid prosecution is not a common one.

We have sent the information from our department to the Department of Justice. Those decisions are made there on the facts that are presented to them.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act Privacy Commissioner

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, an important consideration in a time of computerization and technology is privacy protection, and this is, of course, extremely important in regard to medical records. So I would like to ask the Minister of Health

why he has rejected the recommendation that legislation include a privacy commissioner who can issue binding orders.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): First of all, Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. The bill, I believe, has been distributed today to members of the Legislature and will be introduced for second reading very, very shortly so that we can get into a debate on these matters.

With respect to the specific issue she raises, the role of the Ombudsman versus a privacy commissioner, I think the debate really rolls around the powers that go with the particular office. It was felt that, in the Manitoba experience for both health information and the general privacy legislation my colleague has introduced into this House, the experience with the Ombudsman has been a very successful one. We have also expanded the powers of the Ombudsman to go to court. It was felt, even through those consultations in discussions with the larger group, that this would be an acceptable way to proceed, although I recognize some of the stakeholders still preferred a privacy commissioner with somewhat different powers.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, given that the protection of health information and privacy is a complex matter requiring specialized resources that simply are not available in the Ombudsman's office, I would like to ask the minister how, in all conscience, he can leave the administration and overseeing the interpretation of this act to the Ombudsman.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, the practical reality of administering such a legislative scheme as this one is that those resources will have to be developed to be able to properly administer this act. We are committed as a government, both myself and the minister responsible for the other piece of the privacy legislative scheme, to ensure that the Ombudsman's office is able to have sufficient resources of the right kind to be able to do the job. One practical reality, which was discussed with the stakeholders, in a province the size of Manitoba—until we get some handle on the workload that will go with this legislation, setting up a completely different structure and office may not necessarily be a very economical or worthwhile way to go.

We obviously have included in the bill a right for review in five years. This allows us to place this function with the Ombudsman's office, and we will assess it in five years and see how it works.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, I think the minister misses the main issue, and so I would like to ask the minister: What is he afraid of? Why does he insist on having an Ombudsman who can comment and recommend, as opposed to a privacy commissioner or an officer by any other name who can issue binding orders? What is the reason for this?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, first of all, not this minister, my colleague nor this cabinet are afraid of any particular issue here. We look at the experience that we have had to date with the role and work of the Ombudsman. It has been a very successful way in which to deal with the current legislation. It also provides, I think, the right kind of role in trying to work through these matters in a way that all parties, including the party wanting access to information, is comfortable with. It is the right tenor. It has worked in the past.

In fact, Madam Speaker, when I met with the stakeholder groups in the health care side, we discussed all of these issues. Their final advice—the majority who were part of that discussion said going with the way we proposed it in the legislation seemed reasonable. They appreciated the five-year review. There were a couple of organizations, including the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties, which still preferred the other model, but the member should not leave the impression that that was viewed as an overwhelmingly bad thing about this legislation.

In fact, the current matter was viewed as a way to proceed, given the fact that we are going to have a review in five years. That will determine exactly how it works.

* (1355)

**The Freedom of Information
and Protection of Privacy Act
Privacy Commissioner**

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I do not think that Manitobans in general are aware of the

massive intrusion into their personal lives that the government is proposing with respect to their SmartHealth product and their SmartHealth operation that will put more personal information online in Manitoba than in any other jurisdiction in Canada and any other jurisdiction in North America.

To that end, Madam Speaker, we have a piece of legislation that is not adequate to meet the needs. My colleague's question makes eminent sense. I ask the minister again: Why have you not taken to heart the recommendation that a privacy commissioner with expertise can have the ability to not just look at individual complaints but can look at the kind of information that is online and coming online like people's personal health information and ensure that it is protected now and in the future for Manitobans?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, that is exactly what the legislation does. In fact, if I am not mistaken, even the power to conduct audits is included within that legislation. If there are complaints, if there are results of audits that the Ombudsman's office will conduct, we would expect on a regular basis throughout the system, if those complaints come forward, there will obviously be the authority to raise that to ensure that those things are pursued.

If the act is being breached, there is ultimately the power for fines, the power for the Ombudsman, if the Ombudsman is unhappy with the final result of the discussion, to go to court. All of those protections are in place. The member for one moment should also appreciate that this legislation does not just apply to the electronic information but also applies to our current paper information.

Today we have nowhere near the kind of protection that this act is proposing. This is a step forward.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, if what the minister says is true, then why has the government divided the powers in this legislation between two areas? Yes, the Ombudsman can investigate complaints, but the Ombudsman can only comment and can give nothing more than advice on intrusions by the government into people's personal privacy, putting information online like medical health information and the rest, and the

Ombudsman has no area and no way to stop the government from proceeding to things like tax information online like they did with Pharmacare, et cetera.

This is an intrusion. This requires a commissioner, an information commissioner that reports directly to this Chamber.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, if I hear the member for Kildonan correctly, what he is really talking about are major issues of public policy as to what information goes online and becomes part of the system. It is issues of public policy as to how a system such as this will operate.

Madam Speaker, it is not the role for a privacy commissioner or an Ombudsman, who in essence is the administrator of the laws and the rules that we set in this Legislature. That is the role of such an office, to ensure that the public policy decisions that are set by this Legislature, either through Executive Council or directly through legislation, are carried out.

It is not the role of a privacy commissioner or an Ombudsman to be making the matters of public policy. That is why we were elected, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, can the minister, who is invading the privacy of Manitobans like no other government in the history of this province, indicate whether or not the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Manitoba Medical Association are in agreement with the provisions of this particular act?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I am always a great believer that, when one raises issues in this House, one should try to have their facts straight and certainly have a sense of the context.

The member for Kildonan rose in this House and said that this administration is being intrusive in medical information more than any other government in the history of this province. Madam Speaker, I would like to table, just to put it in a historical perspective, the Journals of this Assembly, where in the early part of our history medical information was published in this House, including individuals, their dates of birth, when they were in hospital, the treatment, including for

syphilis. You can go back into the history of this province as late as the 1980s where the lists of who were in hospitals were published in community newspapers.

Today, this is one step forward. We are protecting people's health information in a way that has never been protected before. We are not opening up that information to abuse, Madam Speaker. We are protecting it, and the member should put it in the proper perspective.

Federal Transfer Payments First Ministers' Conference Agenda

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

In the last few days, I have asked questions of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) and the Premier with respect to the health care transfer payments. There is a great deal of concern from Manitobans in terms of what sort of a position this government is going to take on the whole idea of the devolution of powers from Ottawa towards provincial jurisdictions.

My question to the Premier is: At the Premiers' conference that is coming up this summer, can the Premier indicate to us whether or not these agenda items are going to be talked about?

* (1400)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I still do not have the agenda for this summer's conference, so I could not say that at this point.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, will the Premier be requesting or supporting those types of agenda items?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, all I can assure the member opposite is that I will continue to do what I have done in the past, which is to always defend the best interests of the people of Manitoba, no matter what the issue is. I will go there with an agenda that is the agenda of the people of Manitoba, unlike my honourable friend for Inkster, who is always attempting to come to this House with the agenda of the Liberal

Party of Canada. When that agenda is to reduce transfer payments that are harmful to us, in our efforts to try and protect vital health and social services and education, all he does is ignore the best interests of Manitobans and blindly defend his colleagues in the Liberal Party of Canada. I think that is a tragedy.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, will the Premier, as one of the most senior Premiers in Canada, put on the agenda the issue of ensuring that health care and the national government will have a leading role in ensuring that cash transfers will in fact be there so that he will be able to reassure Manitobans that health care and the medicare system will be relatively equal from one coast to the other?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the one thing I will continue to do is defend Manitobans against the unreasonable, unwarranted and unprecedented cuts that have come from Ottawa to our transfer payments that were designed to help us maintain the highest quality of health services that we could possibly afford in this province. We lost, over the space of the last two budgets, \$220 million in annual transfer payments from Ottawa, money that was vitally required for us to be able to protect and enhance health care. Not only does he attempt every day in this House to defend that, but when the federal budget came out with the second tranche of those cuts, the second tranche that resulted in some hundred-odd million dollars of annual cuts to us, his leader, the leader of the Liberal Party of Manitoba, stood up and gave that budget a four out of five.

I could not believe it, Madam Speaker. There she was out there defending it, saying this was a good budget, it deserved four out of five, and that is the kind of nonsense that Manitobans have to put up with, with the Liberal Party here in this Legislature that thinks that its only role is to defend Ottawa's interests in Manitoba no matter what they do, no matter how much their reductions in transfer payments, no matter how much they harm Manitobans.

Queen versus Bauder Plea Bargaining

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Acting Minister of Justice or the

Premier. The Justice minister has been certainly concerned about the Court of Appeal's decision and the federal government's amendments to the Criminal Code as it affects the Bauder case, but he has not been concerned about the conduct of his own department in this case. We do have concerns.

Can the House and Manitobans get an explanation as to this government's policy on plea bargaining? Is it undue pressure on the Prosecutions branch, or what, given our understanding that charges of sexual interference, uttering threats, in fact, threats to kill we understand that were made in writing and a charge of driving dangerously—our understanding is that Mr. Bauder was pursuing and threatening the victim. Why were these charges dropped? For what? No wonder the court did not think the accused was a threat.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, without accepting the accuracy of any of the preamble that the member for St. Johns has put forward, I will take that as notice on behalf of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews).

Victim Impact Statement

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): I wonder if the Premier can today answer the questions that were posed to the minister yesterday in light of the fact that this case took 18 months so far. There were 12 appearances, five prosecutors; it certainly was not a lack of time. Why is it that all information that we have points to the fact that the government never so much as challenged any version coming from the accused as to the victim's conduct? Why did they not put in her original statement? Why did they not put in a victim impact statement?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, without playing political games in this Legislature, he knows that I would not have the answer to the questions that were asked of the Minister of Justice, but I will take that as notice as well, because I know that he has to get himself on the agenda in Question Period.

Order of Protection

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, with a final supplementary question.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): I hesitate to ask the Premier, who thinks that something like this is a game—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. Johns, with a final supplementary question.

Mr. Mackintosh: If the Premier thinks that this is a game, would he explain, if this case is not bad enough, why did the government not so much as seek an order of protection for the victim, did not seek a no-contact, did not seek a no-communication order? Why? Whatever happened to the victim in all of this?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, the member knows full well that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), in concern for the victim, has announced that this will be appealed to the Supreme Court. What is a game is the member standing up, knowing that the minister is not here with the information, and repeating the questions just for his own publicity's sake.

Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Payment for Injury Claims

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister responsible for MPIC. MPIC has filed its rate increase request with the PUB, and certainly there will be some increases, I believe, to 80 percent of motorists, particularly to motorcycle owners.

What I really want to ask the Minister responsible for MPIC is what the projections are from Autopac in terms of payment for injury claims. This government has cut the amount of money going to Manitobans in terms of injury coverage from \$193 million to just over \$100 million in just over three years under the no-fault system. Could the minister indicate what the projections are in terms of what will be paid out next year to Manitobans who are injured in automobile accidents?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Act): I will make that kind of detailed information, projections from the corporation available to the honourable member. I remind him, however, of the

unfairness of the system of the past whereby, depending on one's ability to secure clever and effective legal representation, one might be able to convince a judge that a higher award might be appropriate than for someone who perhaps sustained even worse injuries and/or damages. So the luck of the draw has been taken out of the system through the no-fault system. I think the honourable member, in general, supports that. When you consider taking out the legal costs involved in that system, that does result in a more equal and fairer sharing of the dollars available.

In any event, the rates reflect the claims, and that is the purpose for coming forward to the Public Utilities Board with this application.

Mr. Ashton: Will the minister confirm that what essentially has happened is the net payment—take out all the legal costs—going to Manitobans is at least \$30 million to \$40 million less now under the new system than compared to the old system, and that he ignored 35 amendments brought in by the NDP that would have made the current system a fair system? Will he explain to Manitobans the fairness of having a dramatic drop in injury payouts to Manitobans, insurance that they are entitled to under any fair system?

Mr. McCrae: Well, now, Madam Speaker, the honourable member appears to be arguing for the American system where, depending on how much you can afford to pay your lawyer, you can get a ridiculously high award. People in Manitoba want reasonably appropriate awards for their injuries, for the damage to their vehicles, but certainly for their injuries. I cannot agree with the honourable member, and I do not think Manitobans want to support, through their rates, those ridiculously high awards when others may end up getting nothing, which is not fair. We disagree in principle on this, and yet I do not know how the honourable member can claim to be supportive of the no-fault system we put into place.

* (1410)

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, when will this minister stop playing these kinds of word games and accept the fact that Manitobans were prepared to support a no-fault system? In fact, the New Democratic Party was prepared to support a no-fault system but not like they

have done with Workers Compensation, a kind of system where they run surpluses at the expense of people who have been injured. They have done that with Workers Compensation. When will they stop doing that with Autopac, where they run a surplus and they shaft people who have injury claims?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, the honourable member virtually takes himself out of the debate altogether when he, on the one hand, very quietly says: I support in general what you are doing, but I really like the American, Perry Mason-style justice system where you can get awards based on the American system.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, Beauchesne does state that answers should relate to the matter raised. Perhaps I may have gone on a little bit longer in my preamble to my supplementary question, but I do not think I mentioned Perry Mason, who by the way was played by a Canadian, or the American legal system. I asked the minister whether he would explain why he has a \$46-million surplus and many Manitobans are not receiving the injury coverage they are entitled to. I would like to ask if you could ask him to be a little bit relevant in his response.

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

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, I have no doubt the honourable member would be a tough competitor in a game of Trivial Pursuit where he can come up with trivial facts and figures to back up almost any argument. Today, his point of order lacks any merit whatsoever.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, Beauchesne is very explicit. Answers to questions should be explicitly direct to the question posed.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister responsible for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, to quickly complete his response.

Mr. McCrae: Well, Madam Speaker, to be as responsive as your ruling suggests I should be, I would simply say to the honourable member I support the people of Manitoba who want to have the highest level of insurance coverage for the lowest level of premium. That is what people want, and we are trying year in and year out in a very transparent system which reports to the Public Utilities Board annually and brings its applications to that body annually, and we have a very public discussion of those matters. I am on the side of the people of Manitoba who want the most coverage for the least premium dollar, and I think that is the right place to be.

Multilateral Agreement on Investment Human Rights Issues

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, in the press conference release from the Western Premiers Conference, I note that the Premiers and this Premier, I guess, finally got on board with the concern about the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment and have asked that the committee of ministers of international trade should be reactivated in order to study the problems in this issue. I am glad to see that he is finally on board with other western Premiers who have expressed concerns about this.

I wonder, is the Premier aware of American legislation which prohibits trade with Burma on the basis of that country's appalling record of human rights.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I just wanted to let the member for Crescentwood know that, since I was the lead-off speaker on international trade, I raised the issue and that is why it is in the communique.

The member opposite, of course, was quite ill-informed when he kept raising the issue over previous weeks, when he was suggesting that this draft that he had access to was something very, very serious. The fact of the matter was, it was a draft, an early draft. The Manitoba government position has been consistent throughout the process that said we would accept no diminution of the policies and rights that we have in the NAFTA agreement, and obviously all of those issues that he kept raising would have violated NAFTA and would have been unacceptable to Manitoba.

I am not aware of the provision that he refers to with respect to Burma, and I am happy to have that information given to me.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, would the Premier also confirm then that, under the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment, such legislation would no longer be possible, that human rights issues in any country would not be able to be the subject of any trade-related legislation in any other country?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I repeat—and perhaps he had the question ready to go. The provisions in that draft that he has access to are not provisions that we support in large measure. We have indicated to our federal counterparts that our position is that we will accept nothing less than the protection that we enjoy under NAFTA, and that clearly is not the case in the draft that he has.

Tabling Request

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, since the Premier is so confident that the position that Manitoba has taken is appropriate, will he today release it so that Manitobans can see what the Premier and his colleagues have written in regard to this treaty that is under negotiation and was to have been completed this May and has been delayed for some time? So it is hardly an early draft. This is a working paper that has had serious discussion in many different international conferences and is well advanced. Will he table Manitoba's position in writing so that we may know how progressive the minister has been in defending our interests?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): This is, indeed, a very progressive minister, so he can take great confidence in the position that our very, very progressive Minister responsible for Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) has taken.

I wanted to summarize it, because all of these things are moving discussions and moving documents and moving negotiations. So the summary is that we will not accept any protection that is less than what we have under NAFTA. That will put it in simple terms for the member for Crescentwood.

**Crop Insurance
Unseeded Acreage**

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, the flooding that took place in the Red River Valley has certainly delayed seeding in many areas of the Red River Valley. It is somewhat ironic that at the same time we have a situation in parts of Manitoba where the drought situation is now delaying seeding in those areas where some farmers, I heard this morning on radio, are actually stopping seeding because they are waiting for rain. Similarly, there were a number of statements made during the election campaign, which was at the height of the flooding, that indicated that the federal government would be willing, No. 1—

Madam Speaker: Question.

Mr. Penner: —to waive the indemnities and also to top up crop insurance or—

Madam Speaker: Question.

Mr. Penner: —compensation.

I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture whether he could give us an update as to what the seeding progress is in the province, and what indication he has had from the federal government as to their willingness to put in place an emergency federal program to help these people with their unseeded acreages.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Unbelievable as it may seem for all of us who still very visually remember what the scene was like a month ago on Lake Morris, at that height some 610,000 acres of fertile Manitoba farmland were covered by water; 400,000 of that has since already been seeded as of today.

My departmental estimates believe that upwards of 10,000 to 20,000 acres only may have difficulty in being seeded. In other words, 95 or 96 percent of the cropland will in fact be seeded, weather continuing favourably. So I am very pleased, and it gives you some indication of the resilience and of the innovativeness of the Red River Valley farmers.

* (1420)

**Manitoba Telecom Services
911 Service**

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): My question is to the minister responsible for the Manitoba telecommunications act. I would like to ask the acting minister, I guess, if the acting minister could indicate whether the newly privatized MTS is going to be receiving a profit from the new system that is going to be in place in terms of 911 charges.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I will take that question on behalf of the minister.

My understanding is that the effect of the CRTC decision is to allow for the financing of the 911 service on an equal basis across the province to all of those who have access to the 911 system, and that Manitoba Telephone System, in its application last fall to the CRTC, gave an indication of an option as to the pricing that would maintain a higher rate for rural access versus the city of Winnipeg, as well as the option of equal rates across the province. CRTC, in its wisdom, made the decision to make the charge, in their view, fair and reasonable by making it equal to all those who have access to 911 across the province.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, I believe there is a profit being made by MTS, which I believe is absolutely unacceptable to make profit off providing a 911 service.

I would like to ask a further question to the First Minister, again responsible not only for the act but for MTS, where there are still four government employees, and that is: Is there any indication whether the privatized MTS will be expanding the 911 service into areas of the province in northern Manitoba and parts of rural Manitoba that do not currently have the 911 service?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, just to be sure that the member understands, this application was made to CRTC while the corporation was still publicly owned. So, if there is a profit in it, it would have been there in terms of a return on equity as a publicly owned entity. It is the same price today as it was when it was in public ownership. To indicate, as well, the rates in other provinces that have 911 service across Canada are

between 22 cents a month and 32 cents a month is the range. This is at 25 cents, which is clearly in the lower echelon of the charges. He may want to make some case for his own ideology's sake, but I do not think people will buy it.

Our intent would be that, where it is practical and reasonable to do so, we would encourage the availability of 911 service throughout the province. In fact, we were instrumental, as the member probably knows, in seeing the extension of 911. It had only been available previously in Winnipeg, Brandon and Shilo, and as a result of the initiatives of this government and some money we put in through Rural Development, it has become available now in quite a number of rural municipalities. I have the list, but it is probably longer than the member would want me to read.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

Order of the Eastern Star

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines have leave for a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines): Madam Speaker, this past week the Order of the Eastern Star held its 75th Annual Winnipeg Grand Session meetings at the International Inn. The Order of the Eastern Star is the largest fraternal organization in the world to which men and women may belong. It encircles the earth, with over 10,000 chapters in the United States, Canada and 18 other countries. Though its teachings are based upon the Bible, the Order of the Eastern Star espouses no religion and is neither secret nor political. Its members are comprised of men who are Master Masons and women with specific Masonic relationships. Millions of dollars are raised annually within its membership for numerous projects which benefit humankind. Many national and local charities are among the projects supported by its members, including in Manitoba the Manitoba Eastern Star Chalet and the Manitoba Lung Association. Through this fraternal service to humanity, its members strive to build a better and more fulfilling way of life for all.

It has been brought to my attention by Peggy and Norm Phillips, who reside in the Riel constituency, that present at this meeting in Winnipeg was a Florida resident, Iva Givens, who is the Grand representative of Manitoba in Florida. Iva Givens travels North America meeting thousands of people and is charged with the task of promoting the province of Manitoba as a great place to live, visit and enjoy. I understand that she does this with tireless enthusiasm and dedication. In the past three years, Iva has attended 37 Grand Chapter meetings across Canada and the United States.

On behalf of the citizens of Manitoba, I would like to thank Iva for promoting Manitoba and, on behalf of all members present also, to thank Iva Givens.

Flooding—Tribute to Farmers

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I wonder, Madam Speaker, whether I would have leave to make a nonpolitical statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Emerson have leave? [agreed]

Mr. Penner: I would like to, today, rise and pay tribute to the farmers in Manitoba, especially those who suffered through the flood of the century and especially those who have had much of their or all of their farmland inundated by waters for many weeks and all of those families who were not within the ring dike communities. I would encourage them to use the same kind of tenacity, perseverance and determination in rebuilding their farmsteads and ensuring that their crops be planted. I think the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) indicated to us today that there were probably very few acres left in the valley unseeded, and it is my view that this kind of determination that is being shown by our agriculture producers in the Red River Valley is the kind of mentality that has existed all along in rebuilding and building livelihoods and lives and an economy in this province that is second to none in all of Canada. These farmers are demonstrating that they can in all adversity make a livelihood for their communities, for their families and indeed contribute in a difficult year to the economy of this province.

Madam Speaker, I stand and I ask all members to congratulate these people in the valley and the rest of

the province for putting this economy of this province ahead of all economies in this country.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, this morning we were able to see eight bills passed to committees, and I would like to announce that on Tuesday next at ten o'clock in the forenoon the Standing Committee on Law Amendments will meet to consider bills referred, and at ten o'clock in the forenoon on Tuesday next the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet to consider bills referred to it.

Madam Speaker: I will repeat the announcement for the benefit of all members. Tuesday, June 10, at 10 a.m., the Law Amendments committee will meet to consider bills referred, and, additionally, on Tuesday, June 10, at 10 a.m., the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet to consider all bills referred.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), 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.

* (1430)

MATTERS OF GRIEVANCE

Change of Party Status

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Madam Speaker, I would like to exercise my right to bring forward a grievance before this Chamber today. How much speaking time do I have for a grievance?

An Honourable Member: Forty minutes.

Mr. Kowalski: Madam Speaker, in the spring of 1993, I was a school trustee and a police officer in the late spring—and I enjoyed those two positions—when I was approached by members of the Liberal Party who after

Paul Edwards' leadership win and with an upcoming by-election needed to win The Maples seat.

Being an active community member involved in many community volunteer activities, one of the things they told me is that as an MLA I would have the resources and the time to devote full time to those types of activities, to work in my constituency, to show leadership for projects, to bring forward projects and to help members of my constituency, so I decided to meet with Paul Edwards.

After meeting with Paul Edwards and having a long conversation with him, I was very impressed by the leader of the Liberal Party at that time. I found not only was I impressed with him, but I felt that I had his respect not only for me as a person but for many of my ideas, and I found that quite often not only on justice issues but on a large number of matters, Paul, along with the other members of the caucus that I was eventually part of, listened to me, and I felt I had a voice. That was in 1993.

One of the things they told me is that it is going to be difficult at first because we only have seven members, so you are going to have to carry a large number of critic roles, but after the next general election, things will improve. We will have more members. We will have more resources, and the workload will be shared amongst a lot more people. Well, that turned out not to be exactly true.

During that time from '93 to '95, yes, I carried a number of critic portfolios, but I had a supportive leader. I had a number of caucus colleagues all of whom were very supportive and helpful, and we had a staff of 14 people who helped me realize many of my personal expectations, many of the goals not only in my constituency, but I was able to bring forward issues. They helped me live up to some of the potential I thought I had and maybe even beyond any potential that I thought I had as a member of the Manitoba Legislature. Then came the '95 election where, in fact, we did not increase members. We went down to three members. As a result, we lost that support staff and many of the resources we had.

But during that time, both from '93 to '95, and even after the '95 election, I do not think anyone in the

Liberal Party could doubt my loyalty to the party. I attended a number of AGMs all over the provinces. I attended forums on behalf of the party. Many people saw me in the hallways here very late at night doing my duty as a critic. I worked very hard at it, and I was very loyal to Paul Edwards.

But then we had a new leader. I have learned from the police force that even if you do not respect the person, you respect the position, and I worked very hard at working with the new leader. Unfortunately, I do not feel I have the respect of the new leader, and I do not feel, my ideas. As a result, I felt muzzled over the past period of time, but I have still been a loyal Liberal. I made a decision some time ago to do something, but I waited until after the federal election. The federal election is now over, so, today, at 1:15, I faxed to Ginny Hasselfield my resignation as a member of the Liberal caucus and the Manitoba Legislature led by her.

I am still willing as a part of a caucus of independent members which, in fact, according to the rules is what we really are—the Chamber has been good about recognizing us as a Liberal caucus, but according to the rules, we are a caucus of independent members. As a caucus of independent members, in LAMC, the independent members' office have been given a budget, a very meagre budget. It works out to \$500 a month for three members of this Assembly, and I hope that will continue. The independent members deserve a greater budget than that from these Estimates, and it is up to us how we will continue. We have a staff member that is given, according to the budget line. He is considered independent member staff, and I will continue to claim part of his resources.

When it comes to votes, if my two former Liberal caucus colleagues wish to, I am willing to caucus with them as independent members who carry a Liberal membership card, as I do. Mine does not expire until December of this year unless the party revokes it, and I am still willing to caucus with them, but I will not vote as a block as directed by Ginny Hasselfield.

This has been a very challenging thing to do because I know that when you become a member of a party you make many friends, and many of them are very loyal, and I know I am going to lose a great number of

friends, but I know also that it is going to give me great challenges, because now each vote, each bill, I will have to decide with my own conscience on how to vote. The next throne speech, the next budget, I will have to examine and with my conscience decide how I will vote. There are some other housekeeping matters, everything from the phone listing in the telephone books to the printing of Hansard, identifying the party affiliation, and everything to the front message board where it lists the different caucuses, but those are small matters.

The main reason I am doing this is that pretending to support a leader who I cannot take a lot of energy, and I find that although I do not always have the highest integrity, I try to be a boy scout. I always try to be, and with an upcoming by-election, my conscience would not allow me to go forward and advocate for a leader whom I do not support.

I will not air any dirty laundry in public. The relationship between the leader of the Liberal Party, Ginny Hasselfield, and myself, I am just saying it does not work. I am not going to give details. I am not going in any way do any harm to the Liberal Party or to Ginny Hasselfield. That is not what this is about. This is about my constituents, that the past little while I have not had the voice that I have had in the past under Paul Edwards, that I was able to bring forward a lot of issues, that I was able to put a lot of energy. I find pretending to support someone you do not take a lot of energy, and that energy could be put into serving my constituents, doing a number of projects.

* (1440)

Some people may find it very difficult to understand the situation. The average public do not know as much about politics as we like to think. I am surprised how many people in the last couple of days asked me if I was re-elected in the election on Monday. It shows how much they really take an interest in politics, and sometimes, maybe, we exaggerate how important we are in people's lives, really, but we do important work here.

So, as I say, I will continue to sit as an MLA. I guess, according to the rules, I will continue to be an

independent MLA. As I said, my Liberal membership card does not expire until December of this year. Unless it is revoked, I continue to carry it. I am willing to meet with the other independent members of this House, but I will not be caucusing with the Liberal caucus as led by Ginny Hasselfield.

Being a grievance, I still grieve that independent members of this Chamber at \$500 a month is something that I think is a shame. It is a shame that a member of this Legislature is given such meagre resources in comparison to the other caucuses.

So with those few words, I will end my grievance. Thank you.

Member's Contribution

Hon. James Downey (Deputy Premier): I am rising to speak on the opportunity using my grievance, Madam Speaker. I just want to place on the record that I appreciate the difficulty that the member has with himself and the difficulties that he feels that he had to correct. I just want to acknowledge that the contribution of the member who has just spoken, the decision that he has taken, I think truly demonstrates the quality of the individual, that he has struggled and has come to grips with it.

All I can say is that he has been a major contribution to this House, and however he decides to represent his constituents, he has done himself proud, and as a member of our party and the Deputy Premier, I just want to say that we feel very much with him as an individual. He has had a tough decision, but I know that he has contributed and will continue to contribute in the manner in which he has decided.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The motion before the House is 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.

Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

FAMILY SERVICES

Mr. Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply will be meeting in Room 254 and will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Family Services. When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 9.1.(a) Minister's Salary \$25,700, on page 51 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Chairman, I just have a couple of questions I would like to ask the minister, who I appreciate is under her salary, and I guess it is really more of a policy question which arises out of a constituency matter that has been drawn to my attention, of this young mother—while I would say I am not sure of her age, I would say probably late 30s, maybe early 40s, who has two children.

One of them has a learning disability, but, regardless, she desperately wants to upgrade herself to get off the social assistance system. Her ambition and her objective is to get her Grade 12 which she does not have. There is an adult learning centre in Brandon which is prepared to take her and assist her, but for whatever reason the staff are not accommodating of her request, and she cannot understand why when she wants to desperately get off the system. She presently is a very hard-working, determined young woman but does not seem to be getting a sympathetic ear from any of the staff.

I understand that one is expected to do a job search if you are capable of employment. I think it is 15 job searches a month. She was saying something about being penalized to the tune of \$100 a month unless she was regularly seeking a job. So I think she is in the position now of being prepared to even lose that \$100 a month. She can barely make—she only gets \$947 a month as it is keeping herself and her two kids. It is a real struggle. Now, if she does not seek a job, look for a new job or look for a job—because she is studying and attending classes—she is going to be penalized by another \$100 a month.

So it just seemed to me that there is something here that contradicts statements that you have made as a minister where you are anxious to help people upgrade themselves so that they can hopefully get employment. I appreciate Grade 12 is not employment specific. It is not a training for a specific occupation. But, nevertheless, there are a lot of employers today who just will not look at you unless you have Grade 12.

So it seems to me there must be some discretion here on the part of the staff, and I just wondered whether the minister had any comment on this. Are you not allowing people to upgrade themselves to Grade 12 under the system?

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave of the committee for the minister to respond to a question? Leave? [agreed]

Point of Order

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson. I guess the reason why I raise it as a point of order, yesterday when we were having some discussions, the Chair seemed to be more than eager to try to keep people relevant.

I think what is important here is that we have to realize that we are on the ministerial salary, and virtually anything can be asked of the minister on that particular issue. If she feels there is a requirement to have staff in order to facilitate a better answer, she can always take the question as notice. I say that because I, too, have some questions, and I thought maybe it would be better just to get it on the record now as opposed to possibly having to comment on it later.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Inkster does not have a point of order. The minister will answer the question of the honourable member for Brandon East.

* * *

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Chairperson, I thank my honourable friend from Brandon East for that question because—or the individual circumstances that he has shared with me. Certainly, it is not our government's policy not to

allow individuals to complete their education in order for them to become employed.

I guess I would like a little detail and some more information, and I certainly will check into that circumstance or situation. Our policy has changed, whereby we do say that once your children are over the age of six or in school full time—it has to be both of those two things—there will be work expectations placed on you. I think we have tried to be as accommodating as possible in every instance to ensure that people have the skills or there is a job, and there should be no penalty if there is no job available and if there is no child care in place.

All of the other pieces need to be there before—and then you would have to outright refuse a job. If everything else was in place, there might be sanctions which would be, first of all, \$50 per month and then \$100 per month. So there is not anyone who is sanctioned unless everything is there. Now, if people are interested in training—and I guess one of the problems, I suppose, and probably it is because we have the highest numbers of individuals in the city of Winnipeg who are single parents on social allowance, we have more programming in place.

Like, Taking Charge! is only in Winnipeg at this point in time. I know that I have talked to the board and the staff over at Taking Charge!, and I think they have had some requests from parts of rural Manitoba. I would imagine Brandon would be one of those areas, to see whether we could expand that kind of programming into Brandon.

I think that might be important, but all of that is very training-related and related to trying to get individuals the training required to help them enter the workforce at some level, but there is nothing in our policy that says that we do not allow people to upgrade their education. [interjection] There is nothing in our policy that says we will not, so we will, and I would certainly like to get some more detail around the individual.

Our main goal and objective through our whole Employment First strategy is indeed to get people into meaningful employment, out of the dependency of the welfare cycle, and whatever we can do to assist on an individual basis, we are wanting to do. So if there is

something that is wrong in the Brandon area, we will certainly try to correct that if I have some more detail.

* (1500)

Mr. Leonard Evans: I thank the minister for her comments, and I certainly will write her a letter and give her the specifics, which will enable her to look into it, but I just want to make this point, and that is that others have also indicated to me—in the community, people on welfare and people in the educational system—that there seems to be an attitude prevailing in your Brandon office which is thwarting a lot of people.

Now, I do not want to be unfair and judgmental, because I do not have all the data, but in this case, I just might add, the children are 10 and seven; one has a learning disability. The fact is the staff have said—I think they do not feel that her taking Grade 12 is necessarily going to prepare her for a job, so it is a judgment call. She is very convinced, though, that she needs that to get on, and she is very determined, but the point is she has mentioned about being penalized \$100 a month, and it seems to me this is incredible. I mean, we all say we would like people to get off of welfare, the ideal is zero welfare, zero social assistance, and we have to do everything we can possible. It seems to me that we have to be on the, if I can use the term, liberal side of interpreting the regulations, so give people the benefit of the doubt to take training.

If it was just the one person, I would have just written a letter, but there have been other people who have spoken to me about this too, so it seems to be a general situation. So I thought I would draw it to your attention, because I really believe that any administration should bend over backwards to allow people to get training, including academic upgrading, if that individual thinks that it will help him or her. They may not succeed, but at least give them a chance.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think our ultimate goal and objective is to try to ensure that everyone has an opportunity and some hope in their lives, and if, in fact, we can accommodate that and try to be sensitive through the process, we certainly will try to. So if there is an issue that needs to be looked at in any of our offices, I can make the commitment to undertake that.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, I do have a number of questions that I would like to ask the minister. We were talking about child poverty yesterday, and I wanted to continue along the line.

In doing a little bit of research, one of the more interesting documents that I came up with was a document that was actually produced by Winnipeg Harvest. A while back, I actually had a tour of Winnipeg Harvest, as I am sure the minister and the critic have also had that tour by Mr. Northcott. You see a lot of community—hard-working, committed individuals doing what they can in terms of trying to provide the basics for people that are unfortunately put into a situation which is quite often, more than not, beyond their control. So they do have to rely on Winnipeg Harvest in order to provide food.

It is interesting, you know, over the years what we have seen develop is more and more food banks. In fact, I can recall a couple of years ago when we had the—I am not too sure which critic it actually was, but the critic was talking about the competition between the number of food banks and the number of McDonald's restaurants. I believe the comment was to the extent that the number of food banks now exceeds the number of McDonald's, and that actually took place in the last number of years.

When I was down there and I had the tour, I was provided all sorts of wonderful information. One of the pieces of information was kind of like 10 years ago compared to today, and I asked if I could get a copy of it. Mr. Northcott was very gracious in the sense that he faxed me over a copy of it. I wanted just to go over that particular document, because I do think it says a lot. Now, if I can read from the fax here—take out the staple—this would have been, I guess, faxed to me the 10th month, eighth day, '96, so it is fairly recent. The headline is, Winnipeg Harvest, a 10-year snapshot: 10 years ago compared to today.

So that would have been, I would assume, roughly between 1986 to 1996, which is not too far off in terms of when this government was, in fact, elected, Mr. Chairperson, because we all know that it was in '88 when this government took office. A lot has happened, and when we talk about poverty, if you take a look at this particular snapshot, I believe it says a lot.

What I wanted to do was just to go over this and ask the minister to comment on it, and then possibly to even then go into some of the issues that have really had a dramatic impact from my perspective, or from our party's perspective, that have had a very negative impact with respect to, for example, gambling in the province and the Lotteries policy of this government and what impact that has had on the whole poverty issue in the province of Manitoba.

Anyway, I wanted to make reference specific to this document where it talks about 10 years ago that there were 835,451 pounds of food shared with Manitoba families. Now, that, I would anticipate, would be through different food banks or, I should say, Winnipeg Harvest. Today, over five million pounds of food is shared with more Manitoba families and clearly demonstrates just the size, or the amount, I should say, of food that is being circulated. It is just phenomenal in terms of the increase, from 835,000 to over five million pounds. That is in 10 years. So we have seen really a huge reliance on trying to put food on the table through the donations of sorts, Mr. Chairperson.

One could talk extensively about the types of foods that are actually being donated. It was interesting. When I was going through the tour, one of the things that Mr. Northcott had mentioned was the biggest problem area in terms of donations of food was that of baby products—canned, if you like, baby Pablum, food requirements that can feed the youngest of our population. So, quite often, what will happen is they will get cash donations in order to be able to purchase some of those food requirements.

I guess one could even ask the government with respect to what are they doing in order to address an issue that is as basic as providing baby food to the population. The minister, I am sure, knows full well of the negative side, if, in fact, you do not provide good nutrition to infants. I am sure she is well aware of the benefits of ensuring that our young children today are, in fact, properly fed. Here is an area in which—as we all know, it was clearly demonstrated through the flood how generous Manitobans are—there is just not enough in order to feed our children. I think that is very unfortunate, and one of the areas which, in particular, this minister does need to look at. Mr. Chairperson, I do not say it lightly. I do believe that the Minister of

Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) has been negligent in addressing that particular issue.

Another thing coming from the 10 years ago to today—again, I qualify the today being, that would have been back in early '96, because that is when I was provided the document, but 10 years ago, it says 3,624 people needed food assistance. Today, over 34,000 people need food assistance. I guess when I think of that particular point, there are a number of things that come to mind. It is a very, very humiliating experience to have to go to a place and ask for food.

So, ultimately, many, including me, would argue that, look, if I were put into that sort of situation in which I did not have the ability to be able to provide food on the table, I would have to then approach these nonprofit groups such as Winnipeg Harvest, and that is quite the leap for a lot of Manitobans.

I do not believe that all Manitobans have, in fact, made that leap. I think there are a lot of Manitobans, Mr. Chairperson, for a number of different reasons just do not feel that they can go to Winnipeg Harvest. I have personally, over the years, talked to people. When I talk to these individuals, I try to explain in the best way that I can that sometimes it is necessary, in order to provide that food on the table, that you have to put your hand out, and you should not feel shamed or inadequate to have to do that.

* (1510)

My colleague for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) always made reference to the phrase, there by the grace of God walk I. That could happen to any one of us. Even the MLAs, you lose an election, you find yourself in an unemployed situation, you have the monthly bills that continue to come, and sometimes the amount of bills and the total of those bills exceeds how much money you are bringing into the house. At times it means you do not have the proper financial means in order to get the food which is a basic. That puts people in a very awkward spot where they go to families, where they go to places like Winnipeg Harvest, so it could happen to any one of us is what I would argue.

Those individuals should feel no shame in the sense that, at times, they should go to Winnipeg Harvest and

agencies such as that in order to ensure that they are getting their food requirements. I bring it up in that context, Mr. Chairperson, for what I believe is a very good reason. Because if we look at those numbers, 10 years ago 3,624; today over 34,000. Well, I would argue that that 34,000 is likely underestimating the size of the real problem, and that is the reason why I put it forward in the fashion that I did in terms of context.

Another very interesting point that came out was 6,500—this is again 10 years ago—6,509 hours for volunteers. Well, where does that compare today? I am sure most would not be surprised that are now in the committee room because I have talked about the amount of food and I have talked about the amount of people requiring the food—well, no surprise that there has been a tremendous need to get more people involved in the distribution of the food. Would you believe—now, this would have been back in 1996—that that amount increased to almost 100,000 hours are volunteered?

My hat goes off to the type of people that feel in their hearts that what they want to be able to do is contribute to people that do not have the means in order to provide that basic service. It once again reinforces how generous Manitobans really are, not in terms of just donating food, but in terms of donating their own personal time in order to make it work.

I believe, you know, Mr. Northcott would be the first to admit that it would not be possible if, in fact, we did not have the food, No. 1, donated, but if we did not have the volunteers to ensure that these sorts of things could be done. The types of volunteers, and again I would go back to the tour that I had, were varied. You had individuals that were not so young as opposed to seniors, let us say. We had young people there. We had individuals of different ethnic backgrounds, all recognizing the importance of ensuring that there were enough people there that were processing the food.

I know in the area that I represent in Inkster there is Gilbert Park which is a large nonprofit housing complex. They actually have things such as food bingos. They actually have had food banks, and what is encouraging is that, again, we might tour Winnipeg Harvest, but Winnipeg Harvest feeds into a lot of other

groups, and those groups actually distribute out the food in different ways.

Again, what we are talking about is more volunteers that participate in the process. Do you know what I believe we have seen over the years? Well, we talk about 10 years ago and we say 6,500 hours of volunteer time, and we see almost a hundred thousand hours today, today being back in 1996. What has been lacking, I believe, is some sort of government action that would complement those volunteers, that you do not have to rely strictly on the good will of Manitobans in order to address this issue. The government should be more proactive in working, Mr. Chairperson, to ensure that everything—the volunteers are appreciated to blocks of money given to provide things such as baby formula or infant formula. There is a role for the government, and the government needs to get out of the mindset that, geez, if we kind of step back, the private sector or the generous hearts of Manitobans will fill the gap.

I think that is important for the government to look at. I should say this, Mr. Chairperson, that it goes beyond giving a social assistance payment, because some of those social assistance payments that go out, in some cases—maybe it is misappropriately spent, those monies, which deprive children of groceries. In some cases it is not enough. So it goes beyond more than, well, you know, I am the Minister of Family Services and I am going to put a grant or I am going to provide this particular social service and then just leaving it at that.

The minister does need to look at those nonprofit groups, and I just happen to be talking about Winnipeg Harvest. There are other groups that are out there that also the minister should be looking at in how government can interact in a better way.

Another point that it brings up is, again, 10 years ago a single parent with one child employed at minimum wage needed to work 41 hours a week to bring the family to the poverty line. Well, 10 years ago, there was a 40-hour workweek for most Manitobans, and I think that the expectation was virtually that. It is not necessarily to endorse the New Democrats were doing a good job. It is just the fact that, look, back in and around 1986, if you buy into that the information that is being provided here is factual and correct, that they

are not too far off in terms of the 41 hours versus 40 hours.

* (1520)

But today, what is it today? Again, I qualify today by saying that this would have been 1996. The same single parent would need to work 75 hours per week to make the equivalent income. Well, you know, Mr. Chairperson, I would like to think that I, like the minister responsible, try to keep up to date on information of this nature and I would really be interested, and she does not have to give me the answer to date per se with respect to this particular question, but I would really be interested in her explaining that particular issue because, again, that says so very much in terms of what is expected of people and lifestyles that would appear to be deteriorating as a result of maybe the government not doing some of things that it could be doing.

One of the things that I would suggest when I think of this line if, in fact, it is accurate, and the minister needs to confirm its accuracy, is that why did it take so long for this government to recognize the importance of minimum wage. For years this government did nothing with respect to minimum wage, and now we see that we are in a situation, according to this, that it now takes 75 hours per week in order to do the same requirements of 10 years ago. You do not think that contributes to child poverty? Do you really think that people are working the extra 25 or 35 hours a week? What sort of proactive actions is the minister taking to address an issue of that nature?

Other points in this, and there are three other points—maybe before I go on to those other three points, because I know there is somewhat of a limitation on how long—could I ask how much more time I have, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: 10 minutes.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, I might be able to cover the points. It states, again, 10 years ago approximately 25,000 people were unemployed and, again, approximately today 34,000 people are unemployed. Now, the government, on this particular point, relatively speaking in comparison to other provinces,

strictly speaking with employment, is doing a fairly decent job. So, I guess if I can give government credit, this is probably one of the areas in which you could get credit in terms of actual numbers of jobs relatively speaking compared to other provinces where it seems to be doing a decent job.

But where it could receive criticism is the types of jobs that are out there and how is this government trying to fill in some of these jobs. For years, for example, within the garment industry there have been hundreds and some would argue well into somewhere in the neighbourhood of 2,000 jobs and they are better than minimum wage jobs. It has only be the last couple of years, because I know if I stop talking right now and I left that particular point the minister might say, well, geez, you know, we do now have some training for the garment industry that is taking place, some monies that have been provided.

Again, you have to look at it in terms of how long were you in government prior to taking some action on that particular issue, and what does the government do to try to promote or to assist individuals who are on social assistance to get off unemployment.

For the longest time, what was happening and still happens today is that if you get a job in which you hit a certain threshold, dollar for dollar you lose in terms of welfare once you hit a certain threshold. What incentive is, in fact, there in some cases? Now, again, there have been some changes. There have been some very negative things that the government has done with respect to working and getting people off social assistance.

I am sure the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) will recall, for example, the big billboards—the snitch line. Do you know someone that is frauding welfare? Well, call this number and the heavy hand of the law or the government will come down on them. I personally do not think that was a wise way of dealing with people that are living, in most cases, in poverty; that government can, in fact, take a more positive approach.

Another interesting point was the one of the city of Winnipeg welfare cases and, again, 10 years ago, 6,958, the city of Winnipeg; back in '96, there was currently 14,593. Now, I do know that there are some changes,

there are some differences. For example, single parents going through provincial assistance, I do not have those numbers at hand so I really cannot comment in terms of the number of single parents on provincial welfare today, compared to 10 years ago, but it would be interesting to know, and it is quite possible, because I do know that the Estimates have been going on for a while, so has the health care Estimates, and I have been spending time in the health care Estimates because I cannot be in two places at one time. I trust and assume that there would have been a great deal of dialogue with respect to the numbers of individuals that are on social provincial assistance and what the government is doing in order to concentrate its efforts on assisting these people in getting off of provincial social assistance.

Having said that, Mr. Chairperson—and I do not want to say that the Liberal Party coined the phrase because, quite frankly, it could have been coined many, many years ago—the fact remains that the best social assistance program is a job. If you provide the proper atmosphere, you will allow for more people to get involved in the workforce. The more people you get involved in the workforce, the less the requirement for social assistance. The less requirement for social assistance, obviously, that means you get to spend that much more money on other more proactive issues such as literacy and so forth which will enhance one's skills. I think that that would be a very positive thing. I am sure the Minister of Family Services would like to have additional funds.

The other issue that I thought was interesting was that they pointed out 10 years ago—again that would have been just prior to this government coming into office—no rural food banks existed in Manitoba. Today 43 rural food banks are operating in Manitoba. I would have thought that that would raise a great deal of concern from within the Conservative caucus, especially given the make-up of the caucus. There is fairly decent strong representation, one would think, coming from rural Manitoba, and yet we have seen just a huge number of food banks being created in rural Manitoba, and that has got to say a lot in terms of what it is that is happening.

Earlier, I commented on the issue of food banks to try to demonstrate that I do not believe that the government is being successful at ensuring that people, both in

Winnipeg, urban centres, Brandon and Portage, and not only those, our smaller communities in rural Manitoba, do not in many cases have the ability to be able to provide food on their table, that they have to rely on food that is being donated. The minister, I am sure, is aware of that. I guess at this time, because I do want to pick up on the Lotteries issue, because I think that, Mr. Chairperson, the Lotteries is an excellent example of, here is a policy that the government brought in and has had a dramatic impact on the size of poverty in the province of Manitoba.

Prior to getting into that, I do not know if the minister wanted to respond to those points that I have; otherwise, she can take them as notice, and I can continue on a bit different line.

* (1530)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Without getting into a long dialogue with my honourable friend around the issues that he has raised, I think—and it is unfortunate, I think we talked a lot yesterday about the whole issue of child poverty and where we are headed, not only as a province but as a country. Maybe I will just try to briefly indicate to my honourable friend that there has been an awful lot of work done at both the federal and the provincial level.

It goes back to a couple of years ago when the federal government initially decided to unilaterally cut, I think it was about \$7.5 billion from the provinces for Health, for Education and for Social Services. As a result of that, many, many provinces were facing unprecedented decisions that had to be made around how they were going to spend very precious resources.

So it was the Premiers at one of their annual Premiers' Conferences that unanimously agreed, all 10 provinces and two territories, that with the absence of some federal leadership in this area, they would bring together representatives from all of our respective governments—and I want my honourable friend to know that this was unanimous. Premiers of all political stripes right across the country—I think Newfoundland was the lead at the time, so Premier Tobin from Newfoundland would have been the lead Premier—decided that we should get together and put a ministerial representative from each province and territory together in a ministerial council to take a look

at making recommendations to Premiers that might deal with a lot of the social issues, health issues and education issues.

So that committee was struck, and there was a report that was developed over the process of a year or so that had several recommendations to Premiers which they endorsed and which they sent to the Prime Minister as a result of that endorsement, calling on us to look at integrated supports for children and for the disabled across the country. Those were two of the main key areas of discussion, at least those that affect my department.

As a result of the report going to the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister agreed absolutely that it was good work, the provinces had done good work, and he wanted to put together a federal minister to work with the ministerial council to try to move ahead or move forward on some of the issues. One of the issues was child poverty. As a result of that process, there were committees of officials struck, working committees, to see whether we could find a process to reduce child poverty right across the country. My honourable friend tends to be very critical of our government, and I do not think there is any government across the country, regardless of political stripe, that is not trying to deal with this issue. If we can work together to deal with it, I think it is important, because I do not think any of us agree that any level of child poverty is acceptable.

So as a result we have, I think, on the table, a really positive approach to the direction we need to take right across the country and that is the new national child benefit that was announced. The federal government did put some money in their budget next year for the national—[interjection] It is around \$600 million. That really, you know—the honourable Pierre Pettigrew was the lead minister federally for the ministerial council process. I know he indicated that this would just be a down payment on a national child benefit, but that, in fact, there would be incremental funding year by year by the federal government.

There were three objectives of the program. One was to reduce the depth of child poverty. The second objective was to try to ensure that those that were working were better off than those on welfare so that there would be some support to children in low-income

families regardless of whether they were working or on welfare, and that we would try to reduce overlap and duplication between the two levels of government and so reduce administrative costs and have more money available to go to families that need it. Those are the three objectives. I think we probably have done better on the first two than we have on the reduction of overlap and duplication at this point but, hopefully, that will come.

The whole objective would be to take every child out of the welfare system. So there would be X number of dollars provided by the federal government, direct payment to children in families, and the commitment on behalf of the provinces was that any money that was saved as a result of those payments not being part of the welfare system to children would be reinvested in programming for children, Earlystart, Headstart, nutrition programs, child care, training for moms so that they could get back into the workforce or enter the workforce. In fact, the federal government was making a greater financial commitment, but the dollars that we were presently spending as provinces would have to be reinvested into programming.

I think it is the right direction to go. The ultimate end result would be that no child would be supported through the welfare system. Every child would receive X number of dollars based on what provinces and the federal government believed was the right amount for children, but that the dollars that we presently spend on welfare payments for children would be reinvested into other programming that would give children a good start to life.

So that really is where we are at. All provinces have endorsed it. The federal government has endorsed it, and we have a small down payment. I argue sometimes with the federal minister saying, well, it is not really a down payment; it is a partial repayment for what you have taken away. When you have taken \$220 million away from our province and you are prepared to reinvest \$20 million back, it is still not back to where we were, but it is a good start and it is—the process is right. It is the right thing to do for the right reasons. As I said, every province has endorsed the process, and the federal government has endorsed it too. I think it is very significant to note that it is one of the first issues that we have all been able to agree on is the right

direction and the right way to go. So I think the federal government recognizes there is a need to do something.

The provincial governments recognize there is a need to do something, and my honourable friend has made a lot of comments about what the community is already doing. These are issues that we all have to work on together. I think we are moving in the right direction and we are not there yet, but it is at least a start. There is a consistent approach. It is an approach that governments of different philosophical backgrounds have come together and said this is the way we need to go for children. So I would rather talk about the positive than some of the negatives, and there are lots of negatives out there, but I think we are on the right track and we are moving in the right direction.

I just want to put those comments on the record, and I would be prepared to share documentation or whatever around the issues that we have come to agreement on and we will continue to agree on. Now that we have sort of got a process for children, we are looking at people with disabilities to see whether there is not a standard approach that can be taken and some agreement we can come to, as two different levels of government, around how we support people with disabilities right across the country, because everyone is struggling with that issue too.

So those are the two priority areas. We seem to be on track with the children's agenda, and we will be working pretty aggressively on the disability agenda over the next year or so. So I just wanted to put those comments on the record and indicate that there is a fair, significant amount of co-operation and recognition by politicians that we need to get our act together.

* (1540)

Mr. Lamoureux: When the minister started off, she made reference to the \$7.5 billion, I believe, that was cut from transfer payments and the impact being \$220 million in the province of Manitoba. It seems to me that you do get ministers that exaggerate the actual cut within their particular department. To be very specific on that, for example, today I asked a question of the Premier (Mr. Filmon), and the Premier tried to give the impression it was \$220 million that was cut out of health care. You ask the Minister of Education (Mrs.

McIntosh), and it is \$220 million that was cut out of education. This minister, you know, just gave the impression that it is \$220 million that is taken out of this particular area.

That is why when she made reference, she says, well, look, they took out \$220 million from us and they gave us a meagre \$20 million, which I assume is a portion of the \$700 million. Where it is, in fact, taken out of context, but that is not—and I acknowledge that that is what the government has been doing, and by my raising the issue, government jumps to its feet saying that I am just trying to protect my federal counterparts in Ottawa. It is not necessarily to protect them, it is just trying to get the government to be a little bit more honest with the numbers as they talk to different groups.

I have heard these different ministers talk to outside groups, all attributing these millions of dollars coming out of their particular department, which I do not believe is accurate. Yes, there was an overall cut. Yes, I personally did not support the cut; I would have liked to have seen it come out of other areas, but I was glad that there was a threshold that was put in. I guess that is the area in which I want to bring it to the Minister of Family Services, that if you put aside the cut for now—and what I have been asking the ministers of Finance, Health and the Premier was to get their opinions on the social transfer which she just finished making reference to, because part of that social transfer, that block fund, goes towards the financing of the Department of Family Services for social assistance.

I am interested in knowing if this minister would support the transferring of cash transfers in favour of tax point transfers. Which one would she rather see? It is important to ask in the sense that if you favour the tax point transfer, then you are—ultimately the national government is not going to be able to, I believe, have as much influence on giving a national direction. The minister herself talked about how important it was to have a sense of co-operation with the national government and other provinces, and I agree wholeheartedly with her on that particular point.

If we are going to come to grips with fighting child poverty, not only in the province of Manitoba but in Canada, what we do need to see is a high sense of co-operation between the provincial government and the

national government. It is not just one provincial government.

You know many, including myself, find it absolutely amazing that in B.C. they attempted to exclude people from claiming social assistance if they were not living in the province of B.C. for a number of months. That was under a New Democratic regime. I found that that was absolutely amazing, and you know what? If it was not for the transfer payments, that block funding of cash, the federal government would not have been able or would not have been anywhere near as effective at forcing the New Democratic government in Ottawa to pay social payments to all Manitobans. In fact, as one of my friends expressed to me, if you carried that on to many, many years ago and you had that sort of a policy, Manitoba would not have very many people living in it.

That is the reason why it is important that we do have a strong national influence with respect to combatting child poverty, much like when the minister says, look, other parties in other jurisdictions, we all agreed this is an area, and we are all going to work together, but, Mr. Chairman, as someone that is in an opposition position, part of my responsibility is not only just to provide creative ideas and resolve all problems but is to point out where I can where the government does have some deficiencies. I do believe that there are some areas within the province of Manitoba that this government needs to do more work towards.

That is somewhat a digression from the question that I was actually asking the minister, and that is the importance of those cash transfers. The minister indicated that she has met with fellow ministers, her counterparts in other provinces. I would be interested in knowing if, in fact, they even had discussions along the line of the cash transfers because I think that is critical.

The member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) says from the table, did he ask this question in Question Period? The whole issue of devolution of powers is something which I am greatly concerned about, and one would think that the official opposition should also be greatly concerned about, especially New Democratic opposition, because I had thought that the New Democratic Party believed in the benefits of having a national, strong central government with strong,

national standards, as he nods his head in the affirmative. He knows, as I do, if it were not for those national standards, that NDP government in B.C., Mr. Chairperson, would have disallowed people in need to receive social assistance only because they were not living in B.C. long enough.

I am glad that the member for Burrows is with me in opposition to what the NDP in B.C. were supporting. That is the reason why it is absolutely critical that the government, the national government, the one which both I and the member for Burrows are in support of having good national standards and those standards to be enforced. The way in which you enforce those is you better have some levers. The best lever you are going to have is cash, cash in hand, because if you allow it, and under Brian Mulroney—if the Chretien government did not make that change and set the base, what would have happened is the whole block fund would have gone towards tax transfer points. This government today does not acknowledge the tax point cash cow that it has received over the years. Today it does not acknowledge that, so why should we believe that they are going to acknowledge it in the future?

That is what Mr. Charest was talking about, which really put a lot of confusion into the issue. That is the reason why, over the last few days, it has been a very important issue for me personally, because I believe there needs to be a strong national government. There has to be that presence and that presence of co-operation between the different jurisdictions, all of the provinces and the national government, to ensure that child poverty, not only in the province of Manitoba but across Canada, is maintained. The reason why you have to emphasize that time and time again is because I do not believe the government in Manitoba is advocating for a strong national government that has the ability to enforce national standards in three critical areas, post-secondary education, health care, and family services. If I were to put them in an order of priority for me personally, health care is No. 1, followed by family services, then followed by post-secondary education.

Every time I ask the question, we keep on getting stonewalled. If you cannot have a province like Manitoba who has a vested interest in protecting those cash transfers, if we as a province are not going to be

advocating that, then who is, outside of the federal government? If you look at the factions within Ottawa currently where you have only three national parties but two of those national parties are not that great in terms of numbers, and I can sympathize with them with respect to numbers in Chambers, Mr. Chairperson.

I know the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) and I would like to see us do the same sort of thing that the Conservative Party did in Ottawa and go from two to 20. We remember the good old days of 20. I tell you, when we did have 20, this government was a little bit more accountable. Hopefully, some day soon we will be refurbished with a large number of Liberal MLAs. Anyway, I digress somewhat.

* (1550)

The issue that I am looking for a comment from the minister on is the tax points versus the cash transfer. The reason why I ask that is because in her response she talked about the need for the co-operation of all parties and their working together and how Ottawa does have a responsibility for funding programs. That is what the minister said in her response. Well, Mr. Chairperson, I am asking her to carry it a little bit further and ask does she believe that the block funding, which is absolutely critical, is equally important in terms of ensuring that it remains as a cash transfer.

Before I go on to the next component, I will leave it with the minister, see if she wants to respond to that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: After all of that dialogue, I suppose—I am not sure exactly what I would call it—I want our fair share of dollars to come to Manitoba for Manitobans for programs that they deserve. That is as far as I am going to go. My honourable friend can ask me again, but I want to indicate to him that I want to see Manitoba get its fair share of dollars from Ottawa.

I will tell you, cash transfers were provided to Manitoba with 50-cent dollars for welfare programs and everything else, and as a result of block funding under the CHST, Manitoba is getting considerably less and the programs that we fund are no longer 50-cent dollars cost-shared.

I do not know where my honourable friend is coming from. All I want to do is indicate that I want to see

Manitoba get its fair share of dollars to support Manitobans in need.

Mr. Lamoureux: One of the things for a politician is to try to build their self-confidence, and I am beginning to question whether or not I am explaining it properly, because, you know, what I get from this minister is the same thing I get from the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), and that is, they are saying we just want to ensure that we have our fair share.

Well, the question that I have been trying to get across is, yeah, we all want to have our fair share. There is no doubt about that, but not only do I want our fair share for today, I want to ensure that we are going to be able to protect our programs for tomorrow, and the ways in which we can do that is by looking at issues like block funding and trying to get anyone within the minister's—and there are five key people within this government that I would be so happy and so pleased if I could actually get a straight answer on that.

And those people are hers truly, the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) and the Premier (Mr. Filmon). Now, I would even settle for the second-in-command of the grand Pooh-Bah.

An Honourable Member: Jules Benson.

Mr. Lamoureux: Jules Benson. Well, if Jules Benson could speak on Hansard, I might comment on that.

An Honourable Member: He has had a lot of power, Big Jules has.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, he likely has more power than most of us, but anyway that kind of takes us a little bit off. I would dearly love to get at least one of those. It would do me wonders in terms of my own self-confidence in knowing that they understand what it is that Manitobans actually want.

What they want is to have a government that recognizes the importance of issues such as child poverty not only today but also in future years, and the

best way we as provinces in Manitoba, the Atlantic provinces, Saskatchewan can ensure that is to watch the way in which our national government distributes their programs and their cash.

I do not like it at all when I get a government or when I see the provincial government completely sidestepping a major issue when we are going into a summer when the minister meets with her counterparts, and I have absolutely no assurances from anyone from within this government speaking positively for cash transfers over the tax points. It just does not make any sense, and I do not understand why it is or why the great reluctance.

I could see it, you know, and maybe the mistake I made was I asked the question prior to the federal election and I put in Mr. Charest's name, and that would have meant that there would have had to have been a conflict in policy. Maybe I should not have asked that particular question then.

An Honourable Member: Mr. who?

Mr. Lamoureux: Charest. Maybe I should not have asked the question then, but I do believe that Manitobans have a right to know what position this government is going to be taking on a critical issue when we are looking over the next year, year and a half, of the types of discussions that are going to be occurring with this minister and her counterparts and in the Premier of our province.

If a constituent of mine asked me, I would not know what to tell him other than fair share. Well, that is nothing new. We would expect you to fight for the fair share. You would not accept for anything less than that, I sure hope. But what we are asking for is some indication on policy, on what sort of a vision does this government have and maybe giving a national perspective.

One does not have to be a member of Parliament in order to give a national perspective. One can be an MLA and be a proud Canadian at the same time and talk about the benefits of living in a federation which is second to none throughout the world. That is all I am asking the Minister of Family Services, and she could do a better job than the Minister of Health (Mr.

Praznik), because he has waffled on the question—the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), the Premier (Mr. Filmon). I am not sure, I cannot recall right offhand if I have asked the Deputy Premier. If I have not, I will have to look at the research and no doubt I will get the opportunity at some point to have the same sort of a discussion.

The relevancy for this particular minister, before I leave it with her, because I am hoping that she will say a little bit more than just, we are fighting for our fair share. The relevancy of this whole issue is because even though we are in provincial Estimates talking about child poverty, the national government, I believe, has a role, and its role is not going to go away in the future.

* (1600)

I would argue that that role needs to be maintained into the future. What we have to do is ensure that there is going to be a national government that is going to have the ability to ensure that there are going to be some standards, especially when you compare Treasury Boards of Manitoba versus Ontario or Alberta and other provinces.

You know, the biggest problem that I had with the Meech Lake was the opting-out clause, because under that particular clause, Mr. Chairperson [interjection] The Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) says ditto. It is something which we recognize, that the federal government has a role, and in fighting child poverty, the federal government and the provincial government have to work together, or we will not get rid of child poverty.

There are some changes that one has to be very much aware of. The Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) has a lot more in terms of resources. That is why when we say, look, you have a responsibility not only to think about child poverty today but also for tomorrow, when you sit down with your ministers, if the Government of Canada, no matter what its political stripe might be, chooses to say, look, as a province you can opt out of this sort of a program, well, the minister I would think should be saying, just hold on a minute, as a province, and you should be building alliances with other provinces that do have a vested interest in saying

that, look, by allowing for the opting out, the feds say here is a program that we are going to institute and, by the way, you can opt out of this and it is fighting child poverty.

Well, Mr. Chairperson, the provinces that have the resources, plenty of resources, why would they not opt out, take the money, maybe add a little bit more, take the credit for the program? We might not necessarily be able to compete with those sorts of treasury boards. That is the reason why, when you meet with your other provincial counterparts, this should be an issue.

We sit for 240 hours of the Estimates, and we have lots of line-by-line discussions of, well, how is this dollar here being spent; how is that dollar here being spent. That occurs for 240 hours every year on the different lines, and those are important questions. But equally, and I would ultimately argue more important, are some of the principles that guarantee that we are going to be able to provide some of these social programs.

That is where it takes leadership, Mr. Chairperson. That is why the challenge to the minister—and I ask the minister to do something that her other provincial ministers have not done, and actually reinforce that, yes, there is a need with respect to the transfer payments, that cash, that block, to ensure that it remains cash transfers.

Ideally, it would be nice to see that cash transfer increased and, hopefully, it will increase. The government will always have my support in terms of lobbying for more. I would like to see some sort of objectives coming from the provinces saying that, look, we would like to see the cash transfer hit this percentage of a budget, Mr. Chairperson; get some goals so that we can strive to achieve those goals. That is the way in which we can reassure Canadians that we are going to have a government that is going to be able to ensure that there are standards. In the long term, that is in the best interests of Manitobans. That is the reason why I believe this is an absolutely critical question.

The Minister of Family Services should be bold. I know she has been bold in the past on certain issues. This is one of those issues which I would say that she

could say a few words, and if she does say it in a very positive way, I promise not to ask the question on Monday trying to put the minister or the Premier (Mr. Filmon) on the spot, but I reserve it for Tuesday.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I have already answered that question.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, Mr. Chairperson, I do not want to beat a dead horse, or I think it was the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed)—

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, on a point of order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I take some offence to my honourable friend talking about beating a dead horse. I wonder if he was referring to me.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, in defence of the minister, I would not want anyone to misconstrue the Chairperson's remarks. I would never even want to remotely imply that the minister would be anywhere close to being a dead horse. I have a deep amount of respect for many of the things that the minister has, in fact, done. If she did take any offence to that comment, I would be more than happy to retract it.

Mr. Chairperson, I will leave it, but in the back of my mind I hope at some point in time to raise the issue once again in hopes that she will have some time, maybe over the summer, to rethink, and would strongly recommend to her that when she does meet with her federal counterparts that she does have to think in terms of the long term, not just strictly within the province, because the long term, in fact, protects the interest of the province also.

I know there was a will to try to pass this minister's line so we can go on to a different committee. I did have one other thing that I would like to comment on, and I will be somewhat brief on it. That is the issue of

the lotteries. At one time I used to be the Lotteries critic—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Is there will of the committee for a five-minute recess?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, what I will do maybe is just put it on the record, just to express—unless the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) will have some questions? [interjection] No? Then we can pass the line. There has been a great deal of concern in terms of the negative social costs of the gaming policy from this government and, again, the direct impact on poverty and the impact on children, in particular. It has just been grossly underestimated.

I am sure I will get other opportunities to address this particular issue. I appreciate the patience of all the committee members. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: 1. Administration and Finance (a) Minister's Salary \$25,700—pass.

Resolution 9.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,441,300 for Family Services, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1998.

This completes the Estimates for the Department of Family Services. This section of the Committee of Supply shall now rise.

HEALTH

Mr. 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 Health. When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 21.1.(b)(1) on page 68 of the Estimates book.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Mr. Chair, if my colleague would indulge me for a moment on this day of high drama with respect to our colleague the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), I would

like to introduce Mr. John Borody who is here today, who I have just met for the first time. He is the successful candidate to head our Home Care program within the city of Winnipeg. So I imagine—I am not sure if this is his first day on the job—or it is not officially his first day on the job, but I would like to introduce him to members of the committee. I can assure you and assure him that I will not be asking him to come up and provide any technical detail to questions from my critics in this committee today. We will give him a week or two to be up to date. I say that facetiously, and I welcome him.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for the introduction. I am trying to allocate and determine time considerations and how we can best proceed. My guesstimate of what might happen today and given the way things change in this place—I could not have guessed this morning developments that took place this afternoon in the Chamber. My sense of things are, roughly, that I think that we will move fairly quickly through the line items, and I appreciate the minister has brought people. I do not anticipate—the problem with going down the information and SmartHealth issues, that it tends to—I tend to get off on tangents, and I will not be able to cover information that I think we have to cover. So the long and the short of it is, I am proposing, if it is acceptable to the minister and the department, to start to really move down the line items and get in today into the Continuing Care area, if that is appropriate, and spend a considerable amount of time in the Continuing Care area, particularly as it relates to personal care homes.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chairman, I am at the member's service and the members of the committee. If this is the way they wish to proceed, it is perfectly acceptable to me. I think what we are trying to do is accommodate the members of the committee as best one can to get their questions and issues. So if the member wishes to proceed on a line-by-line basis, I defer to his requirements.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the only other point that I make is, I recognize that in terms of going through line by line, that takes us to home care, and

home care precedes personal care homes. I recognize that might— is the minister amenable to getting into the continuing care and personal care home issues today?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, no problem at all. I think we have our appropriate staff here today, and we are pleased to deal with that. Home care? Home care first, if we could.

Mr. Chomiak: Okay, thank you. Again, just for clarification. I see that the home care people—does that mean we will also be able to deal extensively with the personal care home issues today?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I have Tammy Mattern, who heads our Home Care program, with us, and Mr. Jim McFarlane who I introduced yesterday, who I had asked to do a review of that area for us. He will be joining us a little bit later—and no stranger to the member for Kildonan. So if he could accommodate our staff movement, we would be delighted to accommodate his questions.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for the flexibility in this regard. Can the minister indicate what the legislative agenda might be in the next near future in terms of legislation coming forward? Yesterday we discussed The Mental Health Act coming forward for the next session. Can the minister perhaps give us an outline in terms of legislation that might be on the Order Paper, as it were, on the pre-Order Paper as it were, coming forward from the Department of Health?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, my staff advise me only the mental health is clearly on the agenda today. I am not aware of any legislative requirement, but that is not to say that one does not pop up from time to time as we move into reform and discover there is something we need to do by way of legislation, but that is our real area for next year that we have identified at this point in time.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, is there any possibility that we would see changes to any of the professional acts, particularly The MALPN Act? As a starting point, is there anything on the books for that?

Mr. Praznik: With respect to The Manitoba Association of Licenced Practical Nurses Act, the only

legislative change that I envision today, that I am aware of today, would be if we managed to accomplish some of the reorganization of the nursing profession that we talked about earlier about some of the voids that need to be filled in the various nursing professional associations. We were able with them to reach some agreement as to who would be playing what role in the future that might require a legislative change, but again we would have to do that work first. That would be after we had achieved some consensus between all of the players.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, has the minister received any representation, and can he give us any comment with possible changes to The Denturists Act?

* (1500)

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, from my understanding of the issue, there is a bit of a debate going on within the dental community about the role of various providers so it is not my intention at the current time to proceed with any amendments to anyone's act in this particular area.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if the minister would undertake to keep us, the various critics, informed in the Legislature as to the developments and the issues in this regard with respect to this issue.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair. I will. I gather one of the key parts to this is where we approach any professional legislation and some basic principles behind it. I know we, as MLAs, have from time to time in a variety of areas been lobbied for professional legislations or amendments thereto, and we often get caught in debates as to who should have what and what role, or should they be legislated, so I think my experience is it always makes me weary to get into that but I will keep him and other critics informed should we have any progress in this particular area.

Mr. Chairperson: 21.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$592,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$163,600—pass.

21.1.(c) Finance and Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,246,900.

Mr. Chomiak: Within the appropriation, under Finance and Administration Objectives, it indicates that one of the roles of Finance and Administration is to assist regional health authorities in assuming financial and administrative functions. Is the minister confident we have discussed that particular role and function during the course of some of the general discussion we have had earlier?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, I think the new management structure within the executive of the department, the responsibilities for Ms. Hicks as associate deputy minister for external operations, and some of the changes we have discussed in structure have pretty much outlined how we envision our support role being the team approach, being able to be responsive quickly and the emerging role of the Council of Chairs and CEOs as a body with which we conveniently deal in operations with the regional health authorities.

I think we have discussed this fairly extensively, but if the member has some specific area I may have missed, I would be delighted to answer.

Mr. Chomiak: I am always curious when we look under Expected Results, it indicates that the function of the department is to timely and accurately process 41,000 payments from the Consolidated Fund and that is down from 45,000 payments from the Consolidated Fund. I wonder if the minister might explain, just in general, why it is down. It is actually down, I believe, from the year previous as well—what the pattern is.

Mr. Praznik: I am advised that the answer is very much due to the way, in fact, we administer programs now. As we move to regional health authorities, we will have less people to be paid. The amounts will be larger, of course, but there will be less cheques to be issued. As well, I think, there have been some internal changes with the use of credit cards for purchases that have to be made by staff and other things that have reduced the number of actual pieces of paper that have to be processed and payouts that have to be processed.

Mr. Chomiak: As the department evolves, will these 52 staff years remain at the central level?

Mr. Praznik: Obviously as we move to 13 regional health authorities as the recipients of our payments as

opposed to 180 facilities, plus many other services, our needs for staff in this area will decline. We are not sure how much, but it will decline I suspect somewhat significantly. We are also planning, though, to make sure that the RHAs have transferred to them their share of those resources where they would be picking up the functions, because they obviously now will be dealing with facilities and their own budgeting processes and need more resources there, whereas we need less. Obviously there is some concern about staff in this area, and we want to be able to manage that in an effective way over the next while. It is not going to happen overnight; there is a lot going on; but certainly we want to manage that to ensure that it is done in a fair way.

As well, across government I am reminded of the fact that our Better Methods program will also impact somewhat on this to again give us more efficiency. I would just remind the member, the more we can save in the way we administer and deliver the system means we have more resources to pay for things that people need in the system, health care, health devices, Pharmacare, et cetera. The member is well aware of that.

Mr. Chomiak: Is there a plan to some sort of earmarking or connection between reduced staff at the central level and commensurate staff at the regional level, if even on a more efficient system-wide basis?

Mr. Praznik: We do not have a specific plan, I think, today; that will come in time. Part of the reason is that there is a consolidation of functions going on within regional health authorities as they eliminate payroll departments, consolidate them and combine them, so we have to get a better sense of what their needs are. Part of our plan of going in on a sort of status quo for the first six months was to give RHA CEOs and boards an opportunity to take over the system as is, roll up their sleeves, get into it and find the places that they could make these savings because they were running a whole system.

So once they have settled that we will work with them. We are trying to be very responsive, because we know that they need enough resources to do the job, so we will want to gear and tie that to that. I hope we are able to do it successfully.

Mr. Chomiak: Would the minister have some of the information that was requested yesterday with respect to a tabling of information dealing with specifically the foreign doctor information, foreign-trained doctors, I might add?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, I would like to table this document. I believe it comes from the College of Physicians and Surgeons. It is a rather complex document.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. Pass.

Mr. Chairperson: 21.1.(c) Finance and Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,246,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,798,500—pass.

21.1.(d) Human Resources (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$976,000.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I assume that the director or person responsible for this area is the new associate deputy minister. Is that correct, in terms of an organizational structure?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, this person remains Judy Morris, who answers directly to the deputy minister. The new associate deputy minister responsible for Human Resources management is dealing with broader issues in the health system, not our own stats. If I was not clear before, I think that, yes.

Mr. Chairperson: 21.1.(d) Human Resources (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$976,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$156,600—pass.

21.1.(e) French Language Services Secretariat (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$175,200.

* (1510)

Mr. Chomiak: Through some of the changes and some of the developments that have occurred in health care in the last little while, there has been some concerns expressed regarding the provision of French language services. I wonder if the minister might update us as to the status of the various regions of the province or, if the minister has anything in writing, he could table it. I would appreciate it.

Mr. Praznik: We continue to progress on the implementation of the Gauthier report and our health facilities across the province. One issue that rose this winter in the implementation of regional health authorities was a concern by the Francophone community that, given their role on existing boards, as those boards evolved into regional health boards, the concern or representation of Francophone communities would obviously be smaller on regional boards than in their own direct communities. They expressed to me that they wanted to ensure that the elements of the Gauthier report continue to be administered and enforced in the facilities where they were required to be the case. really administered and ensure that progress continues. They were looking to see some protection of their rights and of the Gauthier report within the RHA framework.

So, in examining our overall scheme, we thought it was best to provide in the act. the amending act which I gave to introduce for second reading today. I believe there is a provision in the amendments that allow for the minister to make regulation, or the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulation with respect to the provision of French language services in our facilities.

Once that is completed, I will be proposing the necessary regulatory framework to ensure that area. In fact, we have involved that community in the drafting of this section and the various regulations, and I think that accomplishes its goal.

Mr. Chairperson: 21.1. Administration and Finance (e) French Language Services Secretariat (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$175,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$21,800—pass.

21.2 Management and Program Support Services (a) Insured Benefits Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$5,342,900.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate who the two managers are in this particular branch?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, the two managers are Bob Harvey and Brenda Nylund, both of whom, yesterday, I introduced to the committee.

Mr. Chomiak: Is it the position of the government that, as health services devolve—whether or not these positions will be maintained in this particular area, that is all of the positions with respect to the 155 or so positions?

Mr. Praznik: No, the areas in this, by and large, are those that will continue to be run centrally within the ministry. So we do not envision any really unusual changes at this time in this particular area. So it shall continue. Many of these areas will not be evolved to regional health authorities.

Mr. Chomiak: In terms of health policy, when a reduction of \$400,000 is required in a particular area of the Department of Health, how is it that the \$400,000—where does the recommendation come from with respect to the reduction of \$400,000 that was made with respect to orthotics? Does it come out of this branch? Does it come across directly from Treasury Board? How is it determined that it is this area that will bear the brunt of a particular cut?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, one of the changes that we made some time ago in government in budgeting in each year was to move to the sector approach. I imagine the member is fairly familiar with how we do our planning. Beginning in the early part of the fall, in September, we are usually issued our target areas from Treasury Board by sector.

We, of course, are in the human services sector of government. Our deputies begin that process at that level to look at how we divide up our target among the sector, taking the target for the department back within the department to determine with the executive branch of the department how in fact we intend to divvy up our target among our various components. Then each program manager is asked to look in their own budget to meet their prescribed target within a range of particular areas.

They come forward with a list of options that move up through our executive ultimately to the sectoral deputies who hash them around somewhat at this larger table. One good point of that table is that we have found, particularly in the early years, that many departments were duplicating services. These started to be worked out between them. That was a very good

part of the exercise and, also, make sure that people delivering common services like human services area have co-ordination among their programs.

Once they have in fact worked through those as sectoral deputies, they will make a presentation to sectoral ministers. We, in essence, will look at their proposals and give a sense of what are viewed often as not acceptable, are acceptable, et cetera, in many areas. We go back through that process and try to work through and eventually end up at Treasury Board.

Because of the size of this department and the sheer mass of programs that we fund—and often, and I have said this before. The member may agree or disagree, but many of the things we do in health care have developed in a very ad hoc fashion over the years. There have been incremental additions here and there, very inconsistent policy that, given the concern of keeping within budget, the federal reductions, staff in the department are often asked to look at a variety of areas and find savings in areas that are very tough, just by the nature of that process.

In this particular case, I believe this is one, certainly in the transition of ministers, that perhaps did not get the attention that it should have, and I admit to him very candidly, it was a particular item of which I was not well aware in the process. I inherited the department sort of at the point where we were moving through these items at the ministerial level in a transition between ministers. So I had one part of the Estimates, Mr. McCrae had the other and there were some things in between.

So this is one area that came forward as a proposal, I think survived in a universal way. The transition into ministers meant it did not get, quite frankly, the thorough policy review that it should have. It was brought to my attention, and I admit, somewhat ashamedly on my own part, rather late in the process, like, very recently. Looking at it and trying to get some sense of principle across our system, some rational principle across our system—and in fairness to the department as well in looking at their own budget areas, they are asked always to make comparisons to what happens across Canada, what is an acceptable level of service based on what other Canadians are able to receive within the system. In some areas, Manitoba has

been—very, very rich programming which is great if one has the money, becomes more difficult if you are very tight for dollars. As a whole, we still spend a greater proportion of our budget on health care than most other provinces. So, in that context, these things happen.

When this was brought to my attention, I was somewhat surprised by it. What I started to get into—and the member has asked me and his colleagues have asked me about breast prostheses. We have had the issues of wigs come forward from those who suffer from a variety of illnesses, certainly chemotherapy, and in all of these areas it started to strike me that we were very inconsistent. There is also an issue with eyeglasses, a deductible or a support program with a deductible that when it was brought in was very meaningful, but time has really led to the point where sometimes we are providing \$5 cheques back to people on this, which is almost insulting at this point in time to the person who is the recipient. They wonder why they are getting a cheque for \$5 or \$10 on eyeglasses.

So what it is time for obviously and what this whole matter—and the member's criticism, some of it I would argue, is very justified criticism—said to me was it is time to look at this in a very consistent and principled way. So in speaking with Mr. Stefanson, who is responsible for the Treasury Board, he agreed this was one of those areas in a huge department that did not get that attention it deserved in the budget process. So, very candidly, I accept the criticisms that are there. I want to give some rational thought. I do not know exactly where we are going to be on it yet, but before we go imposing these on people—and it will present hardship particularly under the current proposal to some—I want a chance to review the whole thing and give it some greater attention that it deserves.

It is a human system with a lot of human individuals and thousands of decisions being made, and I would not want for one moment want to say that people in my department or we as politicians or as ministers are perfect. Sometimes we do make mistakes. Sometimes they are made simply because of the sheer mass of decisions that have to be made, and this is probably one of them.

* (1520)

Mr. Chomiak: Two observations for the minister: Firstly, it strikes me as inappropriate to put a civil servant, Ms. Nylund in this case, in the position of negotiating and talking with individuals, because she has no power one way or the other to deal with this issue, and it puts her and the department in a difficult position, given that the decision was made at a policy level; secondly, how it is that most of the groups involved almost exclusively in this decision, the groups representing organizations that have to utilize these devices, were not contacted. Those are just two observations I make in terms of the difficulties that occurred as a result of this decision.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, well, I appreciate very much the observations of the member for Kildonan. They trouble me as well somewhat because it is certainly unfair to any member of the public service to be put into a position of having to deliver policy statements or deliver new policies that may not in fact have had the attention that they deserve, and, no, I appreciate his concern. I should tell him that one of the observations I make as Minister of Health and the joy of this Estimates process is sometimes we can get into some fairly, I think, honest and fair exchanges about how ministries work, and I appreciate having a critic who has been in his portfolio in opposition for some time and has a very deep understanding of these issues and works very hard at it because you can have a more meaningful discussion.

When I became minister, and certainly in the transfer from Minister McCrae, on a lot of the thoughts and observations he shared with me, one was that the nature of this department—and it is somewhat foreign, by the way, to me from the other departments I have had the responsibility to lead as minister. But given the size and nature of this portfolio, particularly when they were dealing with 180 facilities directly with a very—you know almost 3,000 employees administering our programs, delivering our programs, just the sheer weight and mass and dollar value of expenditure in this department often led, and perhaps the management style of some past deputies, to a scenario where very often ideas and proposals were developed within the department and often—I do not know if it was sort of by policy direction or practice or inadvertence—went out for consultation in the community before they had even come up to the ministerial level as to whether or not

this was an acceptable direction in which to go. I am not saying that to put blame on anyone. It was part of the culture and operation of the department.

I find that is somewhat troublesome because, as a politician, once staff from a department go out to consult, run an idea past a group and the group gets concerned about it, they contact the opposition, questions are asked, it comes to the media, and from time to time one finds oneself as a minister, and my colleague expressed this to me, dealing with matters that have never been raised with them as minister. Well, that is not the way to, in my view, in my humble view, run a department. So part of what we are attempting to do with our new management structure is take away the cause of, I think, that problem which means when staff come up with an idea or suggestion, whether it is to meet budget improved service, they have to have a speedy and direct means to have that advanced in a preliminary way up to the executive level for at least direction—is this worthy of considering? Should we be talking to people about this, et cetera, to get some direction and sense of mandate?

The structure within the department, and given all of the issues it has had to deal with, has not often lent itself to that. So if I can as minister and Frank DeCock as deputy minister—we have taken upon ourselves to change that structure and I think look to our staff through many of the things that we are doing to be able to have a flattened, as the member has rightly pointed out, we have a much flattened management system in this department now, and I think one that will lend itself better to being able to deal with proposals from within staff in the department faster—to get direction and I think avoid some of these things slipping through as they have in the past. I am going to try. What more can I do? But I appreciate the member's observations and comments. I certainly share the concern that he has expressed.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 21.2. Management and Program Support Services (a) Insured Benefits Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$5,342,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$2,734,700—pass.

21.2.(b) Funded Accountability (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,127,100.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if we could have a listing of the expenditure of funds in the Healthy Communities Development Fund.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, is the member asking for what we spent last year or plans for this year?

Mr. Chomiak: To no one's surprise, both, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am going to endeavour to have my staff provide a list of what we have done already for the member. Obviously, some of them that we are considering are matters that have to be announced and I am not in a position to make public at this time. Anything we have announced and is public, we will put in the list that we compile.

Mr. Chairperson: 21.2.(b) Funded Accountability (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,127,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$384,200—pass; (3) External Agencies \$57,300—pass.

21.2.(c) Health Information Systems (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,413,900.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am just putting on the record, we have dealt with this somewhat last session. Despite the fact that I have numerous questions, in the interests of time, we are going to proceed to get into some other areas.

Mr. Chairperson: 21.2.(c)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,413,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$2,983,600—pass.

21.2.(d) Facilities Development (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$630,900.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am assuming that when we deal with the capital items that we are planning to deal with Monday, we can deal with Facilities Development and some of those policy issues. So on that basis, I am proceeding to pass this item as well.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, certainly, I would accommodate the member's request under that item.

Mr. Chairperson: 21.2.(d) Facilities Development (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$630,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$307,900—pass.

Resolution 21.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$18,982,500 for Health, Management and Program Support Services, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1998.

21.3. Community and Mental Health Services (a) Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$980,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$650,700—pass.

21.3.(b) Program Development (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I traditionally ask for updates from the minister on each of the expected results in each of those areas that are listed on page 48—some very significant initiatives contained in here. If, in the interests of time, the minister wishes to provide it in written form at a later date or read into the record, whatever is the most convenient.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the member's comment. I understand in the past sometimes long reports have been read into the record and I can tell the member, having sat on both sides of the table and listened to Estimates, it makes an afternoon even longer. So we will provide that in writing to the member.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, also, traditionally, we have tried to keep up to date with the issues concerning eating disorders and program treatment for that. I wonder if the minister either has that information or can provide it at a later date.

Mr. Praznik: I must admit I am quite concerned if the member, because I am eating a brownie today and I am somewhat of size, but, no, I jest. I imagine we can provide that as well to the member by way of letter.

* (1530)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I admit that was total coincidence in which that occurred.

Last year the minister indicated there was a framework document with respect to Women's Health. I could be wrong, but I do not believe that I have seen that document. Is it possible to have that document tabled?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, my staff will look into see what that document is. If it is a public document, I have no problem tabling it.

Mr. Chomiak: There has also been a good deal of concern—I know the minister has received information requests with respect to mobile breast screening. I wonder if the minister might update us as to the departmental policy with respect to mobile breast screening.

Mr. Praznik: My associate deputy minister who has been working on this program was required in a meeting, is in the building. When Sue Hicks returns—if the member—we can just note to come back to that issue. I will be pleased to give him an update.

Mr. Chairperson: 21.3.(b) Program Development (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$673,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$583,900—pass; (3) External Agencies \$408,900—pass.

21.3.(c) Home Care (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$486,500.

Mr. Chomiak: I guess for a start, I wonder if the minister might structurally outline for us specifically what the structural developments are with respect to home care, that is, we have now hired a manager for a central home care co-ordination function, if we could have an outline as to how that is co-ordinated. I know that the case co-ordinators have been seconded from various regional offices to serve at a central location. I know there is provision for a regional breakdown with respect to the provision of services in Winnipeg. I wonder if we can get into some of that detail with respect to the actual functioning and structure of home care in the city of Winnipeg presently.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, if the committee will indulge us again. I am going to ask Tammy Mattern if it is possible to tell the committee what she has just briefed

me on. I think that would be a much more useful area since she is responsible for this. I just might add that, a couple of our goals, just to put it into context, in reorganizing and as a new Minister of Health, I do listen to what my critics say.

One of the comments that has been made to us over and over again by the member for Kildonan, others in his party and others in the community is that, if there are problems with our home care system, and many are acknowledged, let us fix them. That is an attitude that I take to this. As I examine this with my staff and with Ms. Mattern in many of the briefings, I have picked up the observation that many of our difficulties stem from the way in which we let people know what services are required, regular assessments, reassessments of those things.

One thing we learned in the home care strike, I think, we had, not many—and I am not trying to make it out to be a big issue—but we had a half dozen or so people who were still receiving home care who had no need for it whatsoever. Actually, we were surprised they were still getting it. I do not want to make it sound like it is a widespread problem, but it did happen and it happened because the mechanisms were not in place to be on a regular basis evaluating people's needs and making sure they needed the service or did not need the service. That is pretty applicable for people who are recovering from illness. So if we are going to make the system work efficiently and effectively, we have to be able to manage it in a consistent, fair, and I would argue transparent—I know the member's Leader does not like the word transparent—basis.

That is what we are trying to do. So the reorganization is done in that context. I think we learned a number of things from the contracting out proposal and the results of the contract. There are some savings that can be had. We hope we can find out what those are for our system, but it is certainly not as huge as one initially expected.

The way I envision this new Ministry of Health is to be able to ensure our system is run fairly consistently across the province, that people, no matter where they are, know what services they are entitled to; have them delivered to them on a consistent basis.

Some of my colleagues as MLAs whom I have worked with on this pointed out to me that, even when as a ministry we were saying people were entitled to a service and our administrators said they were entitled to a service, at the level out in the field that service was delivered differently in two different communities. You know, it is a human system, and sometimes you have individuals strong willed in their beliefs or their instructions are not clear, or what have you.

That is not, by the way, to say that people were getting more than they were entitled to. In the case that was brought to my attention, someone was not getting something that we believed that they were entitled to, should have gotten, were told they would be getting, but in that particular area the manager did not allow for that to be provided. So consistency, continual ways of ensuring that we are relevant, that we are evaluating needs becomes very important.

So with the committee's indulgence in that introduction, I would ask Tammy to provide the detail to the member.

Mr. Chairperson: I understand that it is the will of the committee that a staff member, she is general manager of Home Care, Ms. Tammy Mattern, would be allowed to enter into discussions in the area of Home Care under 3.(c). Agreed? [agreed]

Ms. Tammy Mattern (General Manager, Home Care): The structural changes that we are making within the Winnipeg Region are specifically intended to devote a dedicated management structure for home care specifically and to prepare it and ready it for, essentially, entry into the new authority structure. Earlier you had met John Borody who has been here since the 5th of May. He is the CEO for the new Winnipeg home care structure.

Some of the improvements that we are looking at in terms of structural changes are to have a dedicated quality management structure within the regional structure, have some dedicated financial support, and to take a look at our overall service delivery management structure as well. So John will be taking a look specifically at how he organizes those particular pieces within Winnipeg Region.

Some of the questions that you raised related to some of the staff coming from the regional offices, particularly a case co-ordinator and a regional supervisor, where, essentially, to promote some of the activity that was going on at the central office level, particularly programs such as palliative care, the development of the IV therapy program, we have endeavoured to backfill those positions within the regional structure.

Mr. Chomiak: Is it possible to get an organization chart for the home care? Now I am not even sure, I mean what are we talking about. A home care corporate entity or a home care branch—I am not even sure how to term it at this point, but could we get an organization chart as well as perhaps a job description chart so that we can understand the various components?

* (1540)

Mr. Praznik: Although I think we have sort of a sketch in the business plan, in fairness to Mr. Borody who takes over—part of his responsibility is to put that organizational chart together, because it answers to him ultimately, and he is responsible for it and will be judged accordingly.

I just say, though, that the way this has been developed is to set this up, whether you call it a branch or a special operating agency or corporate entity, to have it as a standing operation with its structure that, once we establish the Winnipeg regional Long Term Care Authority, this will become part of that authority and answer and be a unit of it. How it structures it, how it takes over and what form is between it and the authority, but the plan is it will become an operating piece of the Winnipeg authority.

There was a sense that home care has outgrown some of the traditional departmental structures. It has a very large budget. It has a host of issues that require, I think, a greater autonomy in administrative decision making. We, as government, want to set policies as to what units of service we want to provide, what units of service we are paying for, and we want those who we charge to manage it to go in and be able to manage it, delivering that policy in an efficient manner.

It was just becoming, I think, too cumbersome within the department. That is part of the reason why we looked at the privatization model as a way of putting it out to others to organize and moving that. What we found was there was not a—very limited savings, most providers costing us more, so I have taken up the member on his advice. I think it is important—is let us fix what we have internally and make it work more efficiently. It is a wonderful program that started decades ago within the department and outgrew the structure of the department, and now we want to put a structure in place that can manage it on a more timely, efficient basis.

To be blunt—I say this not to evade responsibility—but every time there is an issue on home care management within the department, it comes up to us and, as Minister of Health, I want to make sure that the system is working. I know myself, I do not know if it can necessarily work within the department, so this is a way of dealing with it out of the department eventually under the health authority but I think keeping it largely in the realm of the public sector which is of concern to many.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, just so that I understand, presently the structure is a branch of the government. It is proposed to be either a separate corporate entity or a special operating entity when the long-term authority comes into being, and presumably it will take the 486-some-odd—well, it will take the staff with it and be hived off as a separate entity on a corporate basis. Is that what is planned to happen?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair. first of all, maybe we were not entirely clear. What we are talking about is Winnipeg, because the home care services, rural, in the rest of the province have already been devolved to the regional health authorities. They are becoming part of those entities, being integrated into their operations. In Winnipeg, because of just the sheer size again, administering it through the department has really become very cumbersome, given the size of the program. So we are, in essence, preparing in this transition year a structure that will evolve into on April 1 of next year the Winnipeg regional Long Term Care Authority. So Mr. Borody's responsibility will be to put in place the management structure to manage the Home Care program, put in place a financial officer, get in

place with the standards, the consistency, all of those kinds of things, co-ordinated with Ms. Mattern in the department to make sure we are consistent across the province in service delivery and deliverables, et cetera, hopefully as efficient in unit costs for service. As the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority, which I intend to appoint very shortly, begins to gear up their operations, Mr. Borody's piece will evolve in answer to that authority.

So there is not really going to be a time when there is a need for a corporate entity or another unit that will evolve next year. This is all being developed with a kind of target date for full effectiveness I guess being April 1, 1998. We have jumped the gun ahead in essence of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority in setting this unit up. Mr. Borody's responsibility will be to get this going, working with us and moving, because there is so much for that board to do. This one is already going. When they take over they will inherit this work, and it will just move along together and be part of their operations.

Mr. Chomiak: Now, certainly, home care per se employs more than the 12 people that are allocated in this 3.(c) subappropriation. Can the minister give some indication as to the number of staff this year versus last year, and what the plans are with respect to those staff and their ultimate future?

Mr. Praznik: While I am giving the first part of the answer, Ms. Mattern is obtaining the other numbers for us.

The regular delivery staff of course will be moving by April 1 of next year, will be employed by the Winnipeg Hospital Authority through Mr. Borody's piece of it. We would hope we can obtain the same kind of agreement with the MGEU for a transition period.

Obviously, under our labour laws, as the member is very well aware, there is survivorship rights of collective agreements, et cetera. So this is a change in ownership or management, in essence, but should not change any of the benefits, salary rates, et cetera. They move with the same collective agreement. I just wanted to make that point.

With respect to the 12 staff in the branch, many of whom are in the clerical position, there will be within the department, a branch ultimately probably housed in Mr. Potter's section, I imagine, at the end of the day, who will be responsible—or perhaps it will be in Ms. Hicks' section—but that branch will be the group that develops our home care policies for a province which the regional health authorities will be administering through their home care delivery services.

We will also have to have a service-quality audit to function, which I think is very important, which will be in Mr. Potter's shop, because we would like to keep that separate from service delivery so that on a regular basis the Ministry of Health, through Mr. Potter's shop, will be doing spot checks, dealing with complaints, those things, to ensure that the regional health authorities are in fact administering our policies in a consistent and fair manner across the province. Also, I think important, we discussed appeal boards. There also must be and will continue to be some appeal function system in place for home care. So that gives them a sense.

With respect to specific staff—I am going to let Ms. Mattern give these exact numbers in terms of our delivery staff, with the consent of the Chair.

Ms. Mattern: There are a total of 4,200 direct service staff provincially, compared to last year's, just around 4,100 staff. They are broken down—this is the direct service staff. These are the home care attendants, home support workers, the registered nurses and the LPNs that are employed directly by the province.

In addition to that, of course, there is staff employed by the VON and other service providers.

If you would like, we can give you the breakdown. There are 3,089 home care attendants, 754 home support workers, 260 R.N.s, 99 licensed practical nurses for a total of 4,202.

An Honourable Member: And last year?

* (1550)

Ms. Mattern: Okay. That was effective March of '97. The same period last year, we had a total of 4,114 staff provincially. The breakdown was as follows: There

were 3,027 home care attendants, 699 home support workers, 283 registered nurses, 105 licensed practical nurses.

Mr. Chomiak: Did not the branch employ directly a number of nurses who were given notice, and then the notices were subsequently withdrawn with respect to delivery in terms of the long-term program?

Mr. Praznik: I believe the member is correct. I am advised that there was an initial proposal to tender out some of the nursing services. That was reversed in fact, and the decision was to just deal with the long-term care sort of services. So I think that explains the issue that the member is referencing.

Mr. Chomiak: So all of the staff are going to be retained by Home Care?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am going to ask Ms. Mattern to respond specifically with that detail.

Ms. Mattern: Mr. Chair, the nursing staff that we have retained are the ones that are dealing with the respiratory care caseload, the palliative care caseload and the children's special services caseload.

Mr. Chomiak: So that I understand this completely, and this is probably directed towards the minister in terms of policy, these 4,200-or-so staff are going to be employed by?

Mr. Praznik: These staff, these 4,202 delivery staff will be employed by the Winnipeg Long Term and Continuing Care Authority, as well as the other regional health authorities across the province. They will be in the public sector, employed by those regional health authorities, so one removed by government. Our plan is to take the delivery of service and integrate facilities with government services in terms of community care and have them delivered by these authorities, so the department in essence is really not going to be much of a delivery agent anymore in health care. We will be delivering it through the 13 regional—in this case, in terms of home care, 12 regional authorities.

Mr. Chomiak: And then the central agency, home care inc. or whatever, the central agency's role and function will be to do what?

Mr. Praznik: I think I understand where the member is coming from. The home care inc., really what we are talking about is the Winnipeg Health Authority share of those staff. We can call it whatever we want today, but what we are doing is setting up the structure of the home care branch of the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority, and that is what we are doing today. So Mr. Borody will be setting it up, putting the people in place and on April 1 of next year will be answering no longer to the ministry but formally and legally to the Winnipeg Long Term Care and Continuing Care Authority, and they will be transferred to them.

What will remain in the department, in essence, is really two functions, or more than two, actually I think three, the administrative and policy function of home care, so the piece of the package that sets our policies, what our deliverables are, et cetera, tells us and advises us on what policies we should have, which will be a very, very small unit left in the department in the external operation side, working with the regional health authorities to make sure they are consistent in their policies and any problems that come up.

Also within the department, in Mr. Potter's shop, will be the enforcement of standards side, so that there is a regular check on the standards to make sure that people are delivering them and also the appeal functions that will be there, so there will not be direct home care delivery staff within the ministry. That will all be within the regional health authorities. I hope that makes it a little clearer. There is not a Home Care Inc. for Winnipeg. It is really the home care division of the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority.

Mr. Chomiak: This is where I have a little bit of a problem and I foresee some difficulty. Supposing we move into the situation and it is up and running and functioning, and we find that there is a terrific need for a type of service across the board. Presumably the regional health authority will have a set budget each year and will have certain guidelines and limits on those budgets and will then say we cannot allocate resources and move resources from the one area of care, say the acute care sector. We just simply cannot do it into the increased need for home care or for the—what system will be in place to ensure that in fact the evolution, the devolution of care from the acute care sector to the community will ensure that in fact

money is earmarked, or not even so much earmarked, but it is savings of a direct—I mean that has been the major failing in my view of the health care system. What is in place to ensure that that transfer and that care can take place to ensure that the actual needs are being met?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, well, a number of things, and I appreciate his concern. Part of every health care system's nightmare today is how do you budget and allocate and have flexibility across the system and know when you need new resources other than in an ad hoc fashion? One role of the policy unit that will remain in our operations is to be continually working with the 12 RHA boards who will be responsible for a home care component to making sure the system is relevant in delivery, so if some new service is required, we are going to hear about it very quickly through that branch to make a policy recommendation and, ultimately, how do we fund the RHAs to do that? We may find that there is a saving somewhere else that we would expect them to use or we may find it requires new money. That is something that time will tell in individual circumstances. The other piece is if our home care unit, the safety check, in essence, is if our home care policy branch is not letting us know or not able to deal with this matter, the fact is we will only have 12 chairs and CEOs to deal with and it will make it onto the agenda of their meeting, probably their monthly meeting with the minister or the appropriate associate deputy minister, and it will be raised at that level.

Today, because we run part of the system, and we are so tied up in budgeting and the relationships are not there, I would suggest it is much easier to fall through the cracks. I know from my own experience this winter in dealing with the RHA boards and chairs, anytime something has come up that they viewed as needing to be met it got raised very, very quickly with us. We obviously are going to have to develop some policy considerations on how we deal with new requests, making sure that it does have a health outcome, that it is something that is needed. That will be the regular back and forth between the health authorities and the ministry. But what we are talking about in practical terms is a relatively small number of people that have to deal with the matter, whereas today decision making

is much more broadly spread, many more layers just within the department to give the sense to the member.

If there is something at the lower staff level that people see something that we could be doing better, to get it up even to Tammy Mattern's level takes a great deal, and if you have got any sense from a supervisor that this idea should not go anywhere, it is likely going to fall on deaf ears; there is no other champion for it within the system. If it makes it to Tammy Mattern's level she has to traditionally move it through up a host of things, including Finance. By the time it gets to the minister's desk, the member's critic probably knows more about it than the minister ever could hope to, because someone in the system has felt frustrated and gone to see the critic. And rightly so; that is the way the system works. I do not criticize that.

* (1600)

What I am trying to do in flattening the system is I have two ways of learning about it; my own staff who are out working with the RHAs and now only 13 of them that they have to talk about across the province who now can answer. Ms. Mattern will answer directly to an associate deputy who delivers those operations, talking to that person daily. It is a matter that can get on my executive agenda within a week for discussion, at least to get direction; yes, we are going to look at it; Mr. Potter, find the money, or whatever we have to do. If that fails, with our monthly meetings with the RHA chairs and CEOs, if they feel strongly about it, it is going to make it on that agenda, and I am going to hear about it directly.

This is the way we envision it working. This is the way I think we envision it working because our practical experience over the winter is starting to show that this is how it is evolving to work and I hope at the end of the day will give that kind of quick response time that the member rightly requests. Obviously, we cannot predict everything that will happen, but I think it is worth giving it a try. I have seen its success already over the winter. So I expect next year in Estimates we will be discussing the same thing, and I hope the member will notice an improvement.

Mr. Chomiak: Shall we take a five-minute break?

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to take a five-minute break? [agreed]

The committee recessed at 4:01 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:10 p.m.

* (1610)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The Estimates of Health will resume. I believe that the minister had the floor.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I have some information the member wanted me to table in previous days. First of all, I would like to table right out of the federal contributions and payments of the Canada Health Act annual report for '95-96 the summary of deductions under the Canada Health Act in dollars. I think it flags Manitoba as losing \$269,000, which I believe we are still negotiating with—

This one—pardon me—is firm; we are negotiating for next year. I table this for the member. I am also going to just table one of my little briefing notes here. In response to a question about VSIP, this comes from Ms. Ellis, and I think gives him a sense, as much as we are able to, of how that program is working.

Mr. Chair, as well, consulting agreements for '96-97, I have a list of those for the member. I think there are only 13 on the list. I table that for the member's information as well.

This is an update of the inventory on child health activities funded by Manitoba Health.

The member requested information on the funding regarding the program parameters to the Assiniboine Clinic alternative funding document. What I can table for him, which is not confidential information, are the program deliverables that form the basis of that agreement. I think he would appreciate that information. I think this ensures me questions over the next few days.

Also, the member requested the guidelines for the home care appeal process, and I would like to file a copy of those.

Mr. Chair, while I have the floor, the 1997-98 Manitoba Health Grants and Transfer Payments, I have a copy of those as well for the members of the committee.

The member requested a list of the members of the Urban Shared Services Corporation. I would just remind him that this is a creation of the facilities in Winnipeg, their own governance boards. It is not one of the Minister of Health, so it is their work and their board, but with that caveat I table it to the member, to the committee.

We also have the provincial set-up bed numbers as of April 1, 1997. I just say to the member, as he well knows, these numbers can move up and down and change throughout the year, so they are only a snapshot in time.

Mr. Chair, I have a copy of the Manitoba Provincial AIDS Strategy. I say to him, I know there is some work that has to go on in this area with respect to the clinic and some of their needs. I have spoken about a hospice for AIDS, which is something on my agenda but I hope to be able to get around to later in the year, as we get through some of these major issues now and reorganization and have some time to apply our mind to the issue, so I put that caveat on this information as well.

The last one, Mr. Chair, I have a report from the College of Physicians and Surgeons on the migration of doctors to the United States. I table this with the committee as well.

Mr. Chair, while I have the floor, there are two more responses to inquiries. Firstly, the member asked the costs of implementing rural health authorities. The interim cost of the regional health administration structure for the 15-month period February 1, 1996, to March 31, 1997, was \$2.6 million. This is \$400,000 less than was originally estimated to be the cost. I think the original estimate was for a \$3-million cost.

The second area is in guidelines for personal care home residential charges. I believe the member

requested a copy of the guidelines for appeals for personal care home residential charges. A revised up-to-date manual which includes forms, rates, policies and guidelines is currently being printed. Once that is done, we will, obviously, want to provide that to all members of the Legislature for their constituency offices. So we will have it for him at that time.

That concludes my tablings and updates. I hope it is to the satisfaction of the member for Kildonan and other members of the committee who may have an interest in these areas.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for that information and the timely disbursement of same.

I am not clear. Did the minister indicate that he would be tabling a structure chart with respect to the home care operation or not? Are we just basically covering it as we did in oral presentation?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, Mr. Borody is going to be putting that in place for the Winnipeg operation. I imagine once that is done and operating, it is probably going to be a public document anyway. Once that is done, we certainly—if the member would like—could provide him with one. I suggest he just contact Ms. Tammy Mattern directly and she will be able to provide one once it is completed. We want to give Mr. Borody an opportunity to put his personal touch on an operation for which he will be responsible.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I had the occasion to attend the Estimates of the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura) with respect to home care equipment and, at that time, the minister made it clear that policy decisions with respect to pricing and detailed information could be garnered from the Minister of Health. I wonder if it is possible for the minister to provide us with listings of any changes in equipment and costing provisions, as well as an explanation as to how—because home care equipment has now been spun off to be a special separate operating agency—the needs of Manitobans can be met and who will be responsible for the department and how their needs can be met with respect to changes and developments in this area.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am going to ask the indulgence of the committee to have Ms. Tammy Mattern answer this, because as part of her responsibilities in administering these programs, we have given her responsibility to be setting these up. I think I would like to see her have the opportunity to explain her work and efforts which, of course, I support as her minister.

Mr. Chairperson: This was still in the area of home care.

Mr. Praznik: Yes.

Ms. Mattern: Mr. Chair, the branch, through the Department of Health, will continue monitoring policies as it relates to the home care equipment and supplies. All we really have done is ask the Department of Government Services to warehouse and distribute, deliver our services and to do it under the policies that we actually direct them to do so. We are establishing a number of individual groups that will be taking a look at the range of equipment and supplies that we are carrying. In the past, we used to have one individual take a look at the supply list and the equipment that is being carried. What we are trying to do is broaden the number of people who take a look at the range of equipment, supplies, that we do carry and that will be done on a regular basis, at least annually, so that the products that we will be carrying will be kept up to date and current. Currently, we are working, for example, with the nurses around ostomy supplies and the wound management supplies.

* (1620)

Mr. Chomiak: Is it possible for us to get a catalogue of the current items that are supplied?

Mr. Praznik: I believe you can, and Ms. Mattern will endeavour to provide that to you.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate whether there has been any policy change this budgetary year with respect to any charges or fees related to equipment?

Mr. Praznik: I am advised there has been no change.

Mr. Chomiak: With respect to Schedule 5 of the subappropriation, the minister traditionally gives a breakdown by units of service for each of these particular areas, and I am wondering if that is possible for us to have that. Schedule 5 of the subappropriation on page 53 of the subappropriation book.

Mr. Praznik: In the interests of time and not being boring, I guess, to members of the committee, rather than reading this stuff into the record, I would like to table the material. The Clerk's staff will be able to make copies, I am sure.

Mr. Chomiak: I can indicate that after years of discussion in this area, I certainly appreciate the tabled nature of it. We generally spend a lot of time writing down these numbers and my going back and forth and getting corrections, so I very much appreciate that manner of providing the information.

There is some movement and some change with respect to supportive housing and some initiatives. I wonder if the minister might outline what the programs are with respect to supportive and assisted housing in this area that are funded by the department, what the present programs are in the province and whether there are any plans to expand that kind of housing both inside and outside of Winnipeg.

Mr. Praznik: With respect to the policy aspect of this, I can tell you it is our policy to look for more supportive housing with respect to the current projects. I am going to let Ms. Mattern answer that in detail, and if the member has some more detailed questions, she would be pleased to answer them.

Ms. Mattern: Mr. Chair, the very first project that has been approved in the supportive housing initiative is Rimmer House. It is a 12-unit, housing-with-care project. There will be an evaluation undertaken of this project by the Centre on Aging within the next year to year and a half. We are looking at some further supportive housing initiatives, and essentially we are looking at proposals currently that have come before the department.

Mr. Chomiak: There was a plan and proposals and recommendations with respect to young-disabled

projects. I wonder if we could have an update with regard to those projects?

Ms. Mattern: There was an initiative that was being put forward by Ten Ten Sinclair. It was for a 12-person housing project within their complex. That particular proposal has been reviewed by the department, and we have been examining the costs of that particular proposal. I understand that the organization has indicated that they are not going to be able to proceed with that particular proposal at this point in time.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, just for clarification, that Ten Ten has indicated they are not going to be able to proceed or organizations involved.

Ms. Mattern: It was Ten Ten Sinclair, and the name of the project was called HAL, Home for Assisted Living.

Mr. Chomiak: Can we have some idea of the areas where block home care is provided, who provides it and what the plans are with respect to the provision of block care?

Ms. Mattern: The block care initiative essentially is delivered in apartment sites or neighbourhoods where a number of individual houses within a street can be put together for the purposes of organizing the delivery of care. It essentially is a structure that results in actually more consistency of staffing in a particular area or community or in a particular block, because specific individuals then are assigned to those individuals within the block for the provision of care. It results in, for example, one home care attendant being able to support maybe say 10 or 12 or 14 individuals, dependent on the care plan, within a particular apartment block setting, for example, or within a neighbourhood or a street like Goulet where you may use three or four apartment blocks in a row and some housing in between, and dedicated staff are assigned to that. It is an initiative that we are working on not only with our own provincial staff but also with the Victorian Order of Nurses, in terms of taking a look at block nursing as well with them.

Mr. Chomiak: So would the plan be, with respect to the VON, that certain blocks would be designated by home care to be sufficient or efficient for the utilization of block nursing and related services and then, as part

of the negotiations of the contract with the VON, they would be assigned that responsibility? Is that how it works?

Ms. Mattern: What they are doing is taking a look at the way that we have organized block care within our delivery structure, in other words, within the provincial delivery structure, and they are taking a look at how that process has resulted in certain cost-efficiency as well as improved quality care. They are taking a look at some of their own sites, in other words, where they are providing nursing services specifically, and trying to also organize on a similar basis. So it is really a method or a structure in which delivery occurs, in other words, the assignment of an individual, rather than to a number of persons specifically but to a block of individuals within a geographic area.

Mr. Chomiak: This is probably directly for the minister: Have we reached a contractual agreement with the VON for this '97-98 year?

Mr. Praznik: No, we are still, I am advised, in the process of negotiating. We have not yet penned a deal here or signed off on a deal.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I guess, structurally, I am still not entirely clear how home care is presently being organized in the city of Winnipeg. That is, are we broken down into a regionalized four-sector function in Winnipeg or are we not?

* (1630)

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am just going to have Tammy Mattern explain this, because this is really an administrative detail as to how we organize around the regions within Winnipeg.

Ms. Mattern: Mr. Chair, we have regional offices located throughout the region. Those regional offices continue to deliver services to existing clients within Winnipeg. Within the rural regions, those regional offices continue to exist, but they report through the regional health authority.

For the contracting initiative, i.e., the contracts for new clients within the city of Winnipeg, for those two sectors of the city that were dedicated for contracting,

we have established an interim contracting office that is working directly with Olsten for the delivery of services.

Mr. Chomiak: Do we have any data with respect to the volume of service? We do not have the contract. I would not mind having a look at the contract; but secondly, do we have any data with respect to volume of service and related details with respect to the Olsten arrangement?

Ms. Mattern: The contract only commenced operation on the 5th of May. We are just beginning to collect our data.

Mr. Chomiak: When I refer to the home orderly services, there was some concern expressed about the fact that the home orderly services delivered centrally may be divided up and delivered sectorially. Is that on or what is the development in that regard?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, Ms Mattern advised me she would like to speak to her regional staff to get the detail that the member requires. Perhaps we could have that for you by Monday or Tuesday.

Mr. Chomiak: There was also a 25-bed initiative, related to us last year by the minister, put forward by MLPH with respect to a housing initiative. What is the status of that?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, there is great detail around this. I am going to ask Ms. Mattern to respond.

Ms. Mattern: Mr. Chair, the Manitoba association league for the physically handicapped has put forward a proposal to us on a matching of individual clients for the purposes of identifying specific clients that their proposal would be able to support who would like to live not in a congregated setting necessarily but in an individualized service plan. That particular initiative is still under discussion with the league.

Mr. Chomiak: Last year and at one time there was a discussion about a kind of supported housing project that would deal with people that are perhaps recovering from surgery or scheduled to attend at acute care facilities, a form of assisted housing. Am I correct in that assumption or is that not the case?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am advised that there was not an effort to look at step-down or convalescent housing, so I am not quite sure the area the member is attempting to address.

If I may just for a moment, I know the member may have some more questions in this area, but I know we are on a relatively tight schedule with Monday, probably concluding some time on Tuesday. Mr. McFarlane is here who did the long-term care. If the member has questions in that area, we might want to move into it. I know time is of the essence and Ms. Mattern will probably have that other question. So if there are a few other questions and we have time in the latter part, I do not mind having her available if we want to go back to that area.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that advice. Probably given time considerations, we probably will not get back to this area and I had intended and hoped to actually start that area. So, perhaps, we should move on and see how it proceeds.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 21.3.(c) Home Care (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$486,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$4,727,600—pass; (3) Home Care Assistance \$91,720,000—pass.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, in the interests of time and I think the efficient operation of this committee, and given that we are sitting private members' hour today, I believe—so we have about 23 minutes remaining in our time—if I could ask the committee's indulgence. I know the member for Kildonan would like to deal with some long-term care issues. I have Mr. McFarlane here who is handling this in my department for me and perhaps we could deal with those issues now and then on Monday pick up again with the line by line.

Mr. Chairperson: Agreed? [agreed]

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for the flexibility. This area is for me as the Health critic, the single most difficult area for me to deal with and I have to indicate at the onset that I do not have a lot of confidence, based on experience, with respect to the handling of matters in the personal care home area. I have been extremely disappointed—and that is an understatement—with respect to the follow-up in some

of the dealings by the department. I am not faulting individuals per se. I am not faulting even in respect of ministers, but I feel that all of us legislators have let down a considerable segment of the population when it comes to dealing with individuals in personal care homes. I have also avoided long speeches and fairly controversial speeches. At this point, I want to very clearly indicate where we are coming from in regard to this issue.

I routinely when I speak use the Holiday Haven example to audiences as an example of things not working and government not being accountable. I contrast it—and we have all kinds of difficulties in all kinds of health care sectors—with the acute care sector where at least at the acute care sector there has been public recognition of difficulties and there are advocates for people, generally, in the acute care sector. That is not necessarily the case in the personal care home sector.

*(1640)

I also feel that we, as an opposition in the Legislature, could on a daily basis—and it has happened in some jurisdictions—raise cases on a daily basis in the Legislature of people mistreated in all sectors of health care. We generally have not. There has been very few individual cases that have been brought forward to the Legislature by the opposition on an individual basis to try to deal with difficulties, and I think all three ministers that I have dealt with in health care will attest to the fact that most of the issues raised on an individual basis are done via letter from our caucuses—and there are many of them—to the ministers. Generally, there is follow-up, and that is appreciated. Generally, the understanding that I had when I came into this critic portfolio was that there was follow-up in the ministry's office for individual issues. Generally, there has been and, generally, things have worked, not always to our satisfaction and not always to the extent that we would like.

When it comes to the issue of Holiday Haven and the issue of personal care homes, I reiterate the fact that we have been sorely, sorely disappointed. I have been, and I will be extremely critical of the way that the Holiday Haven issue was dealt with. I want to also indicate—and again I apologize for the length of this, but I wanted to

lay out a context—that it is our view that problems are not isolated to Holiday Haven. While Holiday Haven has become a symbol in some respects for some of the difficulties in personal care homes, it is certainly not isolated to Holiday Haven. I will make that clear through some of the comments and some of the issues that I will be raising.

I am going to commence by reading into the record a letter from a constituent. Again, there are literally dozens of letters that we have on file, and almost all cases, we forward them on to the ministry. I am going to read this letter into the record, and I will provide a copy to the minister. My question to the minister today is: How will this complaint be followed up on, and how can we have assurances that this issue will be dealt with?

I am going to read this letter into the record; it is to myself: My mother has lived in the Maples Personal Care Home for seven years, and today I left another letter to the Administrator/Director Nancy Coeey, a letter to regard to the state of my mother's room. Again, today I had to wash her toilet seat as it was unfit for anyone to sit on. Also, the floor was covered in , quote, crap, for lack of a better word. My mother has periodic diarrhea, and this is the state of her room. Also, Sunday April 27, her bed was unmade, clothes and slippers lying around in the room. I have spoken to Jim Shepherd who passes me on to Helen Loewen, manager of care. Nothing is ever done. I have also tried to talk to Bob Beaudin, the person who runs the Maples, and he refused to give me his name but I was told he was ahead of time. I do not want to get into the care of my mother or the food, because that would take forever. I just try to be there every day. I do not know what else to do. Is there anyone you could help me contact? So I think it is time to check on the way the Maples Personal Care Home looks after their residents. Sincerely, Phyllis Hallis [phonetic].

I read that into the record, because I think it is not an extreme case but it is illustrative of the complaints that we get with respect to personal care homes. Now in light of all of the developments and all of the concerns, which I am going to be getting into, that have occurred in personal care homes, how can I, as a legislator and the person who represents this woman in the Legislature, or any of us, give assurance to this woman

that her mother, who could be any one of our mothers, will be adequately looked after and that her complaints will be responded to?

I will forward this letter to the minister. I chose this letter directly, and I chose not to raise it in Question Period. I held off doing a letter to the minister because I wanted to do it in Estimates, because I wanted this to be illustrative of the types of problems, and I know the minister has heard them as well. I wanted to know what kind of assurances we can give to this woman about the care of her mother.

Mr. Praznik: First of all, I would like to thank the member for Kildonan because I know he approaches this issue, both in his private discussions with me and his discussions here at Estimates today, in a manner that is one that I have nothing but respect.

This is a concern of how people are treated in our personal care homes that is well above partisan politics. It is one that should concern us all as MLAs. I know from the correspondence that flows through my office, from both government and opposition members from time to time, it is a concern that is shared by many.

The particular case that the member references gives us all great concern and I respect it as an illustration of a problem and similar to letters that I receive from time to time. It explains, as well, I think some of his comments in the Legislature containing proprietary homes in the province and the question about whether or not they are meeting a standard of care that is acceptable.

Let me respond with some of the context in answering the member's question, which is a very direct one, a very appropriate one, and one I would ask if I were sitting as critic and I ask of my department as minister. How do we ensure on an ongoing and regular basis within our system that we have mechanisms to protect and reach equality and standard of care that is acceptable for any person living in a personal care home on an ongoing basis? It is a process and administrative question, because we know that the average severity of illness or care required by people going into our personal care homes increases.

The good side of that news is it means that people are staying out of personal care homes longer in their own

homes with home care. The downside, of course, is it means that the severity of need is far greater today. That puts a great deal of stress on staff in meeting those needs, more than in past years. That in itself is not an excuse nor do I offer it as an excuse for the problems that arise from time to time throughout the system. The question is: How do we address them?

When I took over this portfolio as minister, as the member is very well aware, in the first few weeks in going through correspondence, I myself noticed a preponderance of complaints concerning one particular personal care home that he has referenced. Then we had a particular incident there that is now before a coroner's inquest, and I took action at that time to have the voluntary change of management. That, by the way, and experiences with the Dauphin Hospital this year have suggested to me that the minister requires stronger powers to be able to intervene in the management of any facility if patient care is at risk and it cannot be resolved. That is why in the legislation that was introduced, distributed today and introduced for second reading in the amendments to The Regional Health Authorities Act provides for that particular provision and power. I hope the member recognizes that and will give it consideration for his support.

With respect to process or the other part in looking at the department, when I came to this and we had this problem and then Mr. DeCock joined me as my deputy minister and we put Sue Hicks into the responsibility for external delivery, the three of us talked about this and recognized that we had some problems and difficulties in our long-term care branch. That branch perhaps was not getting the attention that it needed within the ministry given all that was going on and it required that. That is in no way a criticism of the people who were there.

It required some attention and I think at a senior level to ensure that as the trustee, the licensor, the protector of the public interest, the protector of the client interest, that we were able to ensure we were doing our job and our responsibilities. As a minister and as a critic, I know the member takes his role responsibly and I do as well.

I recognized that I needed to have some management expertise brought in to look at the situation and in a

quick short-term way put in a mechanism that would give the public a confidence that these matters could be addressed quickly. There are some longer-term issues that we have to address there as well that I am advised. One of them has to do with how we put together our standards information. There are some concerns that have been expressed to me by the review that I am having conducted about what we put in a standards document. In my mind, a standards document should be a guide book as to how to run a proper personal care home and we may have not been that clear in the past, and that goes back over a number of years in developing this. So we have some work to do there. That is going to take a little bit longer, but I want the member to know that I have recognized that and I will put resources in to do that.

The complaint process mechanism is another one and we are going to speak about that in a few moments. What I did do to get into this branch very quickly is—I guess we all rely on people we know whom we trust and have a sense of, I mean trust in the sense of their abilities to do the job, and drawing on my experience as being Minister of Labour, I seconded Mr. Jim McFarlane who is one of the senior managers within that department. I have worked with Mr. McFarlane, as Minister of Labour, for a number of years and his great expertise has been to be able to go into an area where you think you may have some difficulties and need a review and be able to put it together—assess a situation and implement a plan of action very quickly. I seconded him from the Department of Labour because this was a very important matter to me and to the government. Mr. Gilleshammer was most supportive of this action.

* (1650)

We gave Mr. McFarlane a mandate to review what we are doing and develop some short-term relief so that we could get a system in to be able to check these things quickly, with a structure in place that would respond to these complaints and people would have, hopefully, some confidence in, not because it sounded like a great plan but because it worked and, secondly, to give us some advice as to some of the long-term things we have to do with respect to standards and how we enforce them.

One direct result of this whole process, a decision that the deputy and I made in our organizational structure, was the recognition that the review enforcement of standards in any delivery of health care should not be housed with the people who administer the program. Not that we do not have faith and confidence in them, but having an independent—even within the department having a group who normally look and check and judge standards to report and say, listen, you have a problem there and here it is, was an important kind of voice in this system, because often all of us are very much involved in what we are doing and you need sometimes to step back whether it be in home care, and I look to Tammy Mattern in home care standards, having another independent check within the department is a useful management tool. So we decided it was important to separate that kind of function and we, in our long-term chart, will be developing that within Mr. Potter's branch, not only financial audit and standards but service delivery. So that is there and is a long-term goal that we should have in place later on this year. On the short-term side, we recognized we needed a mechanism that was fair to everyone and yet was responsive and produced results.

The member, as I know, sometimes complaints we get are complaints that arrive out of personality differences, out of disputes, and a member gets those too, and we investigate them and there are two sides to a story. Sometimes they are much more clear-cut. Service is just bad, but you need a mechanism that can sort those out and deal with them appropriately, and I am sure he agrees. There is no magic to any of that. There are lots of systems around. The labour movement offers us the grievance procedure in their varied forms and others with different levels to settle issues. That is a model that we certainly looked at.

What I would like to do at this time, with the committee's indulgence, is ask Mr. McFarlane to report to this committee the work and the process that we have put in place on this basis and share that material with the member. Is that fine, Mr. Chair? [interjection] Good.

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, pardon me. I assume that there is leave by the committee to allow Mr. McFarlane to make some comments on the record. [agreed]

Mr. Jim McFarlane (Executive Director, Employment Standards Division): What we move to do, and I do not know if the members have had an opportunity to see the poster that was developed and has now been sort of put into place in all the personal care homes in Manitoba that is intended to lay out the procedures for filing complaints, that allows for a more consistent approach to filing complaints and also to capture the ministry in the resolution of those complaints automatically, if they are not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant. There also is a provision to establish a 1-800 number, which we have done, as well, that would allow people to phone in the complaints to the Seniors Directorate which, again, is third party to the Ministry of Health. They would then facilitate the resolution of the complaint, whether it be through dealings with the ministry or the regional health authority. The system was built on the premise that, again, it is a partnership between personal care homes, the health authorities, Manitoba Health and the Seniors Directorate in terms of capturing this information and being able to effectively resolve the issues. It was also recognized that probably 95 percent of the issues would be and are presently effectively resolved at the facility level.

In terms of the process, my understanding is that there has been to date five or six calls already through the 800 number since it was implemented, I think, May 1. It is with the Seniors Directorate that the calls come in, and they would then go back to—whether it be the long-term care unit or the regional health authority to make contact or the personal care home. The system also allows for the development of an information base, which is something that I felt was lacking within the system, that there can be systemic complaints. It might be one per facility. It might not be a major issue per facility but if it results in 120 complaints a year, one to each of the facilities, it is something that should probably capture the ministry in working with the facilities in trying to address.

So what is going to be required, as well, is that each of the facilities will be keeping a record of all of their complaints, as well as the regional health authority in each of the areas, and they will be reporting on the nature and range of complaints annually to allow for a risk assessment of the types of issues that may be endemic in the system and should be addressed as well.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, just to do it formally, I would like to table this copy of the poster and steps. These have been now sent, I understand, to every personal care facility in the province of Manitoba to be posted. In fact, if I require regulation to make sure it is a requirement they post it and have it as part of their system, we will be making those necessary regulatory changes, Jim, to make sure it is imposed in law, it is not a request, but required. Also, we have a copy—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Mr. Minister, if you are going to table this, we have to have another copy.

Mr. Praznik: Okay, we will provide that to your Clerk.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, good.

Mr. Praznik: Wait a minute. We have two. So I have two, Mr. Chair, for you, and I also want to provide a copy of the letter that was sent on the 9th of May. Of course, during the flood, these things do not attract a great deal of attention. We want to make sure that it does receive attention of the users. I have a copy of the letter that went with it, and I also have a copy of the sample complaint form or the complaint form that we have put together that is filed, and it does have, as Mr. McFarlane indicated, a dual side so that you keep one and one is with the facility who is required to provide it up the ladder if the complaint is not resolved. So there is a way of keeping track of complaints in dealing with the systemic issues as well as the individual ones.

We would also like to provide a copy of the long-term care complaints management system that Mr. McFarlane has put in place. This is a program information page that describes the system.

I know the member may have more questions. The time is now five o'clock. We will be available on Monday, but it gives him some information to digest in the interim. I hope this goes, at least on an interim basis, a way towards putting a process to solve problems that we know may always be there but at least can be dealt with speedily.

* (1700)

Mr. Chairperson: The time being five o'clock, committee rise.

* (1440)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Would the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time.

We are on Resolution 16.2 School Programs (a) Division Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$253,800, on page 34 of the Estimates book.

Does the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) have leave to take a seat in the front benches? Leave? Leave has been granted.

* (1450)

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): We had been talking about the variances and the actuals and, just for information, the department undertakes innovative actions under New Directions, for example. We prepare Estimates for those 12 months in advance of the planned activity, so we will be planning a year ahead. We will be estimating what it is going to cost us for activities that will take place within a 12-month period. Some of these, of course, are new activities for which there is no known track record of costs.

Then we have the actual activities in that period of time that were projected, and we will, in the department, adjust then as we meet the actual needs in the field. We have been incredibly accurate in the predictions in that we have only been off by 1 percent to 2 percent, and statistically speaking that is an extremely good record of projecting and meeting deadlines.

We have not had to expand the amount that was budgeted in a couple of areas. Again, the variance has been around 1 percent. This year I think it was 1 percent. It may have gone as high in earlier years as perhaps 2 percent, but again statistically it is remarkably good. We have had variances in the amount that we have had to expend in the employment

development centres, student financial assistance and education reform. Much of that is on take up. Again, if you have a certain number of people requesting a service then, of course, you will spend more; fewer people requesting it, you will spend less.

Educational reform, I identified two items yesterday that were the areas that we saw variance this year. We had projected we would need a certain amount to spend on new educational initiatives, and then because we agreed to requests made by the education stakeholders, teachers, trustees, superintendents, parents and others on our implementation committee, we agreed to slow the pace down somewhat because the field was struggling to catch up to the new initiatives.

In agreeing to do that, of course, it meant that we did not have to expend as much money as we had anticipated because we were not doing as much as we had anticipated. That was a conscious response to a request from people to delay, by one year, certain activities. The second component of that was in the acquisition of personnel. We required certain personnel for new initiatives.

Two of the reasons we did not have to expend as much as we had thought we might have to, bearing in mind of course we always budget for the most costly expectations so that we do not run short. I mean, I do not say the most costly available, but we try to be extremely cost-conscious.

In our range then, we look at the maximum we think we are going to have to spend so that we do not run short as opposed to saying, well, we think we can get away with only spending this much and finding out that then we have fallen short, and we do not have enough money for important educational work.

We will acquire staff through a couple of ways. One is through secondment, and sometimes those take longer to arrange than we might hope; the other is through a competitive process, and sometimes that competitive process takes a little longer than might have been expected originally for one reason or another. Those are the main reasons for variances between what we expect to spend and what we actually do spend.

I think it is a credit to the department that they have not overspent. They have been very careful in their projections that they allow enough money to meet our needs, but that they do not then spend just to cover the allotment, which of course is an extremely irresponsible thing to do. It is one of the reasons governments across this nation have gotten themselves in trouble over the last 20 years. They feel that because they are allowed to spend a certain amount of money that, therefore, they must rush out and spend it, which of course is, as I say and most taxpayers would recognize, an irresponsible thing to do, to spend money if it turns out you do not need it. So when I hear you have underspent and it comes across like an accusation, that perhaps reveals more about the questioner than it does about the answerer. But I also indicate the variation and the variance has been very small.

Department-wide kindergarten to Senior 4 and post-secondary, the range of variance over the last eight to nine years has been .0 percent to minus 1 percent. You cannot get closer than that without being bang on, and if there is a government that has been bang on every year, I would really like to meet that government and give them my congratulations. This is extremely accurate, and I really commend the staff. To have that degree of accuracy in projecting over a course of eight to nine years speaks very highly of their ability to project over a long period of time on new initiatives and be so close. I really commend them.

With educational reform, budgeting takes place about every 12 months before the actual activities begin, so budgets are prepared in September and the initiatives get underway the following September. The result is that hiring of new staff, generally experienced teachers, does not happen until the end of the school year, around June 30. That has seen some lapsing because in September '95, we did our budget preparation and were not in a position to be hiring staff, for example, till June 30. As I have indicated, we also modified the time lines for some of the new curricula which, slowed down, means less money spent. So as I indicate, those are some of the reasons.

* (1500)

I had indicated to the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) in our last session that we had given some

probable or possible causes for variances in answer to her question on this topic. Initially, I had indicated that we did not have the appropriate staff here, but some probable or possible causes might be the mobility of students moving in and out and a few examples such as that that could also cause variances but that we would get back to her with the actual reasons, which I did last night.

I want it made clear, as I did attempt to make clear when we left last night, that the accusations from the member for Wolseley at that point that we had not been able to give full correct answers in the first question were, I think, rather unfair under the circumstances when we had been very clear that we did not have the proper staff. We were giving a possible or probable "would return with the actual," and then to have those comments made by her about not having had the actual in the beginning when she was asking off line, out of sequence and the staff was not here really was not very fair. I hope that she will consider that when she next asks us to speculate that we not then be criticized for having acceded to her request.

That is basically the answer, Mr. Chairman, and I will await the next question. The probable causes just before I conclude were, we had indicated, variances in enrollment and mobility of students, and those are in fact actual variance probabilities, but they made no statistical difference whatsoever and they affect the budget of the PSFB more than they would the department itself.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): I am pleased to have an opportunity to spend some time in Education Estimates. I have a number of areas that I would like to direct some questions to. I hope I will have an opportunity to stay for a while and delve into some of these issues. They are fairly broad, and I understand we are in the section of School Programs and we are in the Division Administration. This is where the ideas are generated and policies are created and brought to the minister, so I hope that a certain amount of allowance will be given so that I could ask some fairly broad questions.

My first one is just a follow-up to the budget question that my colleague from Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) asked. My question is: Has consideration been given where

anticipated funds will not be expended to put them towards a one-time allocation for capital enhancements, such as further technological supports, perhaps computer enhancement or building investments as we see a decaying infrastructure? Perhaps that type of money could be redirected. Has the department considered or is it possible to reallocate funds in that manner?

Mrs. McIntosh: I think that probably would be a question that is better able to be answered by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) because we will present and receive permission for our budgetary requirements, but the Minister of Finance then has to manage all that money on behalf of the government and questions of departments at the end of the fiscal year being a little over or a little under are questions of management that the Minister of Finance has to ultimately be accountable for handling.

So that kind of question could probably be better decided by him, but having said that, we have, from time to time, been granted permission to spend some small surpluses we have had in Education to reallocate them to other directions. But in terms of an overall general, you can always do this under these circumstances type of thing; no, we do not have it. For example, our library computer upgrade was done with some excess money that we got permission to spend in that new setting. So we really do not have a general rule that lets us do that.

May I just make a comment. I am assuming the member is making reference to the possibility of infrastructure decaying, because I think the Public School Finance Board has done a pretty good job of identifying those areas and priorities for renovation and construction, and when buildings begin to need renovation, the PSFB will move them up the list for work. So I do not think we have any buildings that are actually decaying. I am presuming that the member is referring to the fact that if that would maybe prevent that from occurring, if we needed money in that area and felt we could not spend it there, we had some extra, that might be one place we could put it. If the member wishes to, 16.7 has the Public School Finance Board record in terms of capital, you know, buildings, et cetera. I am not sure if the member is wanting to talk in that area right now or if she is wanting it out of the

stream, but I just identify the reference for her. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

* (1510)

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Chairman, can the minister tell us if it is her direction to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson)—does the Minister of Education make a recommendation in terms of the allocation to the PSFB for capital investments?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, it actually starts below—I do not like the reference to above or below—but it starts in a more immediate setting, maybe that is better than the minister that school divisions themselves will identify needs. They will take them directly to the PSFB. They go straight there with them, identify the extent, et cetera, of their needs. PSFB will put all of those in a priority order and make recommendations.

They will check everything out, and ultimately a list of priorities will come to the minister's office which will say, you know, we have had these many requests this year from school divisions, and these are the projects that we feel must be done this year and cannot wait. You know, they need a new boiler here or a new roof there or a complete new building someplace else. They may say here is a project that was on the slow track, so to speak, for needing eventual work here, but now we have had a hailstorm and it has to be done right now, so we are going to move it up the list. They will present that to me with the recommendations and an amount that they feel they need to be able to do that.

That then I will take to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and be given permission or approval to spend all or a portion of however much I am allowed. That allocation, of course, then goes to the PSFB and then they will distribute it accordingly and begin work on the next set. There is always a pending list of secondary items that are the kind of items that need to be done but not right now, things that will probably come up the next year or the year after as being the year they need to be done.

They will stage them through. Sometimes they will say we feel that this particular project they are going to need a new school in town X, and we feel this year that

they should proceed to the design stage where they can design the building and get some architectural drawings done and everything because next year they are going to have to start doing some building. So it will be a cost for the architectural drawings and so on. So they will get money in stages. But it actually will come straight from the field to that third body through the minister, then through the Minister of Education to the Minister of Finance and then back through the same route into the field.

Ms. Mihychuk: I am aware that the school division, Winnipeg No. 1 in particular, has been particularly frustrated with the funding levels and the school replacement cycle in especially the decaying schools, the older schools, that the need perhaps is not being met. So I would ask the minister if consideration would be given to do an assessment of Manitoba's public school structures, compare it from, let us say, over the past decade and perhaps prove me wrong. I hope that I am not right. My belief is that, yes, we do have a decaying infrastructure, that perhaps one day we will be caught up in it, that a penny saved will cost us a dollar in the future very quickly as things pile up. I am sure the minister is aware that you can do household renovations on an annual basis, and it is important in the long run. It actually is more cost-efficient.

We have been through some very tough financial times in the province. One of the areas that school divisions have looked at first is perhaps delaying their own maintenance and further structural as they invest in the classroom. Who can blame trustees for making that a priority? I know that the province itself has looked at that type of policy—let us do the emergence projects, let us do the emergency projects, let us do the ones that we have to do and prioritize. So I am wondering if the minister, perhaps now that we are looking at economic recovery, would the minister conduct such a review of our capital facilities in public schools in particular? I would ask her perhaps in that review to pay special attention to the older schools which are, in my opinion, in dire need of support.

Mrs. McIntosh: I just wish to clarify, because perhaps I was not clear enough and maybe left the wrong impression. The Public Schools Finance Board is not just approving emergency items. They are approving those items that are deemed most important for any one

particular year, just as they always have. This is nothing new, but they will obviously bump a school up the list if it has an emergency.

I know what the member is talking about. I can remember, in the mid '80s, when I was chairman of the St. James School Board and the NDP were in power here in Manitoba, the fire alarm needed replacement at St. James Collegiate, and the Public Schools Finance Board steadfastly and repeatedly refused to allow us to put a new fire alarm system in. Even after the school subsequently burnt down, they refused to put the new fire alarm system in. That was under the NDP.

We felt it was an emergency to have fire alarms in the school. We kept pleading our case, saying that we felt it was critical that there be fire alarms that worked in a school that was an older school, and the NDP Public Schools Finance Board steadfastly said that was not important enough. After the school burnt, we still had trouble persuading them to give us the fire alarm system, but I am pleased to say there is a fire alarm system in the school that works well now. The member is familiar with St. James Collegiate. I believe it is in her constituency.

So the track record today I believe is imminently better than it was a decade and a half ago when school divisions were having trouble getting those kinds of approvals, but we are building new schools. We are renovating and upgrading. I believe in Winnipeg No. 1, we have Greenway School, I hope, operating well now. The old building has been replaced with a much better building. Although I must say when I was attending school as a child, many times we spent our schooling in schools that were much like the old Greenway building and never had the opportunity to upgrade them or replace them, as we have done, and I am pleased we have with Greenway School.

I do not really think there is a need to study this, because we do assess the buildings annually. Every year the buildings in Manitoba are assessed by each school division and an indication to the Public Schools Finance Board is made by the school divisions. I think the schools divisions, in assessing their buildings, are pretty good about letting the Public Schools Finance Board know where they need upgrading. For example, when we were going with the fire alarm, we were quite

definite, clear and persistent, so there was no way the Public Schools Finance Board would not have been aware of our concern, just as they are not aware of today's concerns.

We cannot cap the sum available. If the member thinks maybe that we cap the sum available, that is not correct. It is not that we are told every year here is a sum of money, now you can go fix buildings with it; it works the other way. We say here are the needs, and then we are given the allocations. So it is a demand-driven kind of a thing as opposed to there is a set budget that you get every year that can go up 1 percent or down 2 percent. It is based upon the application of needs and the assessment of when those needs need to be met. The needs will vary every year, so the allocations will vary every year. It might be that some year, although I doubt it, it is possible that some year the divisions could feel they do not have any capital needs that year, and in which case the budget would be zero. But as I say, I doubt that would happen.

Again, I say we can get into that under 16.7 under the specific category that deals with the Public Schools Finance Board. Just to give an indication last year, '96-97, the government spent \$20.4 million on schools upgrading and capital expenses. This year, '97-98, they have allocated \$23.9 million to meet the needs that school divisions have identified, and the Public Schools Finance Board has determined as ones that should be done this year as opposed to next year or on a longer time line.

* (1520)

If there are buildings that are decaying, and by decay we mean falling down, they would not be allowed to operate. A building that was decaying and falling down would, in all likelihood, be condemned first of all, and would need to be, if it were bad enough, replaced as we replaced or built a new Greenway. We will be replacing another school shortly in Winnipeg No. 1. We have, not that long ago, replaced Robert H. Smith School. We are looking at one of the other schools in Winnipeg No. 1.

I think we have replaced three just since I have been in government. I mean, most divisions would say, gosh, replace three schools in three years, that is pretty

high, but that is not unusual because Winnipeg No. 1 has a lot of older schools. They have buildings that will have a lifespan and when that lifespan is up will either need to be extensively renovated or replaced, but the needs in Winnipeg are given, I believe, a really good priority.

We are renovating three labs in total at Kelvin and Sisler. Now this is not a school replacement, but it is a renovation of laboratory space. We are converting one into an open area; we are putting an elevator in one school there. We have done several school boiler replacements in Winnipeg No. 1. We have got a major new school, three other renovated schools. These are all in Winnipeg No. 1. So I think it is illustrative of our recognition of the needs put forward by the Winnipeg School Division. It is not insignificant. They do receive a majority of money in terms of what other divisions get, but then as I say they have a much larger division, and they do have a large number of older schools that will be in need of repair or replacement in some cases or additions.

But we do not have an allocation; we do not cap the amount. So if we had six schools that were suddenly decaying and falling down, we would have to deal with that as it happened. We would not be able to postpone it. I thank the member for the question, Mr. Chairman. That is my response for now, anyhow.

Ms. Mihychuk: Well, it was this Conservative government that delayed the construction of Greenway School by three years. It was this Conservative government that still did not replace Greenway School when the ceiling collapsed in the little building. It was this Conservative government that felt that was not an emergency and decided to still wait. It is this Conservative government that cancelled the program of one school replacement per year in Winnipeg No. 1 on top of the schools that are in an emergency replacement requirement. It is this Conservative government that has rejected and denied the policy of putting in a daycare centre with new construction, and ultimately it was this Conservative government that refused to invest in historic buildings and forced the demolition of the old, historic Greenway School.

It was this Conservative government that decided it was better to raze the school rather than add an addition

and renovate because it was their priority. They refused to put the same amount of money into renovation and addition than a new school. So when the minister chooses to use an example of fire alarms, I would suggest to the minister that it is also this Conservative government that has refused roof replacements in Winnipeg No. 1, this Conservative government that has refused numerous requests for enhanced boiler replacement needs in Winnipeg No. 1. It is this Conservative government that has refused Winnipeg No. 1's request numerous times, and I know that they have appealed to the minister directly for—

Mrs. McIntosh: No.

Ms. Mihychuk: I take that back. It is my understanding that the board has approached the minister, but if I am incorrect, they must have gone to the Public Schools Finance Board in an appeal—in an appeal. I was part of that appeal in 1995, and I do know that they continue in a very serious effort to lobby and have their needs met in a policy direction for that type of investment. I would like to inform the minister, perhaps, that the investments of schools in schools is not only an investment in the future but also a strong commitment towards community improvement.

Recently we see that the—this is as of actually yesterday, Wednesday, June 4, 1997—the B.C. government will spend \$126 million to create more student spaces—of course, they are in a fairly large expansion mode—buy new school buses—another area that I hope to have a chance to delve into, as that is another area that school divisions are particularly concerned about—renovate and repair older schools around the province. The funding which will also cover such things as making schools more accessible for people with disabilities was announced by the minister yesterday.

(Mr. Mervin Tweed, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Chairman, it was this government who decided, yes, to allocate, and in this case \$23.9 million. Let us even be generous, let us say \$24 million. However, let the minister review the record. During the NDP government expenditures exceeded \$40 million, \$40

million on schools. Since that time, 10 years later, we see the capital expenditures by this Conservative government cut to half. The minister talks about needs as if the school divisions are being assessed in a total comprehensive way. The needs of school divisions are probably put forward to the Public Schools Finance Board, but the prioritization is to the degree where you have to be in a situation which is, as the minister says, falling down. I would suggest is this a wise investment of Manitoba funds? Should we wait, should we wait until schools are falling down? I hardly think so. It is not wise economic policy. It is not good for our children, and it has no commitment to community development.

Mr. Chairman, we know that a school is the heartbeat, the heartbeat of a community. A school that responds to the children can be the meeting place of children, families, seniors and daycare centres. We have many adult literacy programs housed in schools. We now have some health services in schools. We are looking at a new model.

What we are asking, and I am asking a simple request from the minister, review the situation of our infrastructure. We know that jurisdictions have, unfortunately, had to prioritize and put their money into the classroom to save the teacher. We have examples where windows have gaps in their frames of an inch or more that are today's reality that proposals have been refused by this minister, by this minister's predecessor. Over and over and over this Conservative government has said no.

* (1530)

We have brought the Public Schools Finance Board—the minister asked for specific examples. I would suggest that she review with her Public Schools Finance Board the proposal that I brought forward with pictures in 1995. The needs have accelerated and, yes, there has been a moderate increase. Is that going to meet the needs over the last 10 years? Mr. Chairman, \$40 million was committed by the NDP government, and the minister rightly cites, perhaps not all the needs were met. She cites a case where the NDP, she feels, did not finance the fire alarm systems in St. James School Division in a school.

Mr. Chairman, the condition of our schools under this government—and she chooses to politicize it. I chose my words carefully, suggesting that we look at a facilities review. She chose to cite what government, so I would like to cite that it was this Conservative government that had consistently underfunded, underfunded our public school system to the point where we had a ceiling collapse, a ceiling collapse. Was the school condemned? Did the minister take action? No. It was the choice of this government to take remedial action and, in fact, we had to wait, we had to wait for the replacement of that school.

It was this government who decided to stall and not replace schools as was the previous policy of the NDP government. So when the minister talks about a commitment and that the needs of school divisions are being met—

Point of Order

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): The honourable minister, on a point of order.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, we have been dealing exclusively now for the past 15 minutes with 16.7. The member is way off topic, and I would like to have the appropriate staff here to answer these extremely serious, serious charges she is making about an independent body that allowed ceilings to fall on children and did nothing, et cetera.

I would ask, Mr. Chairman, that the staff for the Public Schools Finance Board be brought in immediately so that these serious charges and allegations can be answered. I had indicated yesterday that I would appreciate the opposition staying on topic when we bring staff in. We are now on to 16.7. I am excusing the staff that was brought in to deal with the issue we were supposed to be on and bringing in the PSFB staff to deal with what the members opposite are actually doing rather than what they indicated to us they might be doing.

So I am excusing the staff from Programs Division, bringing in the PSFB staff to answer the questions that are actually being put to us. Mr. Chairman, if we could do that so that we can comply with what the NDP wants here, which is to deal with 16.7 and the PSFB.

It is not fair to that board to have allegations about them being put on the record with them not here to be able to answer those allegations.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): The honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), on the same point of order.

Ms. Mihychuk: On the same point of order, Mr. Chairman, the minister has given a certain amount of latitude. The questions that I raise are based on policy and direction from the minister and her administrative staff. When we started this session I asked for a certain amount of latitude and there was no objection from the minister.

This is clearly a policy and directional question related to the government's policy. Mr. Chairman, we are talking about fairly broad subjects. I would suggest the minister, if she chooses to bring in more staff, let her, but we also have numerous other policy matters to discuss in these Estimates, very important issues. If she does not choose to come clean on her government's policy, I think that is debating the fact.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I would like that remark withdrawn please. On another point of order, to say that I am not coming clean—

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Order, please. Excuse me. I will deal with the first point of order first. The first point of order, there is no point of order. There was an agreement made to discuss, but if the minister is willing and wants to bring down staff to answer those specific questions, she can.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, there was agreement to talk about policy today. She has been talking about Public Schools Finance Board for the last—

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Order, please.

Mrs. McIntosh: I can bring them down, but otherwise she should go back to policy, Mr. Chair.

School Programs is where she is. Public Schools Finance Board is not where she is. I can bring them down if I may. I would like to bring them down to answer these questions.

Point of Order

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Order, please. I have made a ruling on the first point of order. Does the minister have a second point of order she wants to bring forward?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the member has asked me to come clean, and what I would like to do is exactly that. I would like to be able to answer some of these allegations she has made, but she is introducing 16.7 Public Schools Finance Board concerns. She is not talking about programs, which is what we are here to do today; she is talking about Public Schools Finance Board specifically and absolutely. Hansard will show that is very clear. I would like to indeed come clean, which she implies that I am not, but I need to have the staff here to answer these allegations that they have let roofs falls down on children and done nothing about it.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): I think the point of order that was brought forward the second time is very similar to the first one, which I have already made a ruling on. If the minister decides or wishes to bring staff in at this point, if they are available to answer those questions, that is certainly the prerogative of the minister.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the staff are not here, of course, because were told we were coming in to do programs today, but since we have gone onto this new topic, if they could wait, we will bring in the staff and we will deal with these answers before we do anything else because that is obviously the issue that is important to her today is PSFB. The buildings, the structures, the money for buildings for structures, the way in which the PSFB operates, the recommendations made by the PSFB, and the record and history of the PSFB are the concerns that she has been addressing in the last 15 minutes, with no opportunity for the PSFB to provide me with advice on responses because they are not here, and she knows they are not here. We have got program staff here today. So we will go get them, come back and answer what she wants answered.

Ms. Mihychuk: On the same point of order, Mr. Chairman, I would ask that you call in the minister and we continue with Estimates. We would appreciate an answer to the questions. If she needs administrative

assistance on these policy questions, that is fine, but I would not agree to the halting of Estimates to wait for the administrative staff to come down. My question was broad based, policy based, and I think this is a way—the minister is just feeling a little bit of heat about the government's policies and is trying to divert the topic.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Just again to rule on the point of order, there is no point of order.

What I might suggest, if there is agreement, to allow the time for the people to answer that can answer the questions that have been asked and deal more specifically to 16.7. I would ask that they be brought down, and if we want to start limiting the debate or the questions that we have, we can go back to line to line to allow for the staff that are here to answer the questions.

* * *

Mrs. McIntosh: In an effort to help the opposition decide which line it would like to be on, we were told that we were to be coming here today to do programs, so hence we have the appropriate staff people here. We would like to get on with that particular line, so we are prepared to do that.

If the member then would be willing to let us revert back to—[interjection] Excuse me. Did the member want to participate in this? If the member would like then when we get the staff here to answer the questions that she has actually been asking on line 16.7, if the member would then agree to allow us—[interjection] Excuse me—if the member would then allow us interrupt the program questions to provide the answers, just as she interrupted the program to put in the questions, we would like to be able to answer those questions accurately and not be denied the opportunity to answer them later just because they have gone off the agreed upon protocol for doing Estimates. So we can carry on with what we are here to do, if she will let us give the answer to the questions she asked out of order.

* (1540)

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): I would think that that is probably not a bad suggestion in the sense that the questions have been put and the answers can

come at any time throughout the Estimates process. So can I ask that we bring things back into reasonable order and stick a little bit closer to the schedule.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Ms. Mihychuk: My question is one of basic information. There is a program available to many, I believe maybe all if numbers warrant, known as the heritage language program. Is that a provincial program?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Mihychuk: Could the minister, for the record, give us a description of that program.

Mrs. McIntosh: We have a formula grant that goes to school divisions. School divisions will make decisions as to whether or not they want to offer a heritage language program. They might decide they want to offer Ukrainian, if they have a large number of students wanting to take that language, for example. There is a grant that is provided to the school division. I believe it is \$205 per student, the same as the French Immersion grant. It has always been tied to whatever the French Immersion grant is, so this year Ottawa has provided us—I believe it is \$205 per student for French Immersion, therefore the heritage language grant will be the same amount, \$205. That is always adjusted according to what the French Immersion grant is.

A decision as to whether or not to have a Heritage Language Program will be made by the division. The province does not tell divisions they have to have Heritage Language Programs, certainly will assist them and certainly does not discourage it, because we like to see school divisions trying to reflect their communities, et cetera. We also believe that the acquisition of other languages is a very valuable skill for people to have.

So that is basically the nuts and bolts of it. If she wants details on specific programs, I could answer those.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister tell us what the structure of that program is? I am familiar with the heritage language program that is conducted in time slots of 20 minutes per period. Is that a provincial

direction for that sort of program structure? In addition to that I would like to know the effectiveness of that program, the participation we have in it and what we see as the future of that program. I understand that it is quite different from the immersion programs that we have in other heritage languages. For example, we do have Ukrainian immersion or bilingual programs. We do have Hebrew, for example, and German. But this is a separate program I understand that is operating, and I am interested in how effective it has been, what is the participation student-wise and division-wise?

Mrs. McIntosh: The pupils in Kindergarten to Senior 4 who receive 38 to 50 percent of their instruction in a bilingual heritage language program are considered to be an immersion-type student. They are the ones eligible for the \$205 per pupil grant.

Pupils in grades one to Senior 4 receiving less than 38 percent are eligible for \$80 per pupil. Kindergarten pupils, of course, receiving less than 38 percent are not eligible for funding, but to receive funding for language of study programs, pupils must receive instruction in a heritage language program for at least 120 minutes in a six-day cycle. We have both heritage and international languages. Since 1979 we have had three bilingual programs introduced, and they currently exist—are you able to hear me all right?

An Honourable Member: Yes, I can hear you.

Mrs. McIntosh: They currently exist, Ukrainian-English, Hebrew-English, German-English. Japanese was introduced as part of the Asia-Pacific studies in the 1992-93 year. That is offered right now, Mr. Chair, at Dakota, Vincent Massey, Miles Macdonell, and Kelvin schools. We also have Spanish now growing in popularity in French Immersion and français schools. Every year the number of schools offering Spanish grows, and the growth in Spanish, of course, is encouraging, because we have the Pan American Games coming and we will have an ample opportunity to use Spanish. As we have the free trade NAFTA corridor growing in a straight line from Manitoba down to the Americas, Spanish becomes an increasingly useful language. We do set out guidelines, instructional time in heritage language, but this time as a guide it can be allocated differently by an individual school. It does

not have to be exactly according to the guideline. The guideline is a suggestion, not a command.

I am presuming it is the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) has asked the question. Obviously the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) is not particularly interested in the answer. I hope it is not distracting the member for St. James. I find it somewhat distracting here, but I suppose that does not really matter either.

As of the 1996-97 school year the basic heritage language students are eligible for—Mr. Chairperson, I have been asked a question. I am attempting to provide an answer. The member for St. James is, I think, trying to listen, although she was just momentarily distracted, but if the Education critic does not want to hear the answer and wishes to have conversations with the government House leader (Mr. McCrae) and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), could they please go do that in the loge so that the member for St. James and I could have our dialogue? I wonder if you would ask them to discontinue their conversation right next to the questioner's seat and go to the loge to conduct their casual conversations. I would appreciate that.

Ms. Mihychuk: I am interested in the minister's comment about the flexibility of program delivery, and the minister has looked at flexibility in several different venues, and I would like to direct some attention onto the way the whole system is set up. Right now school divisions get funding on the number of school days. Has consideration been given to looking at other models, the number of instructional hours, for example? That also would allow a great deal of flexibility if a different model was allowed.

Mrs. McIntosh: To complete the answer that I was giving on heritage language before I asked if the opposition critic would mind taking her casual conversation to the loge, which she has not yet done, I would like to complete that answer. I know the member for St. James thinks this is very funny, that rudeness in Estimates is funny. I do not really think it is.

As of the 1996-97 school year, Mr. Chairman, basic heritage language students are eligible for \$40 for FTE from Grades 1 to 3—

Point of Order

Ms. Mihychuk: Point of order.

* (1550)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for St. James, on a point of order.

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Chairman, I would ask you to call the minister to a sense of decorum. I am listening, and we are having Estimates, where I am asking questions, and she is responding. I would ask the minister to focus her attention on responding to the question and not trying to, you know, make things more difficult by pointing out what goes on in this House both sides, and so I would just ask that we stick to the business and respond to the questions. I mean, it is not bothering me. I can hear the minister's response, and I would just ask her to please co-operate.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister, on the same point of order.

Mrs. McIntosh: Perhaps the fact that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and the Education critic are standing one and a half feet from the questioner and having a conversation does not distract the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk). It does distract me, and I have asked them as a courtesy if they would have their casual discussion in the loge, which on numerous occasions, Mr. Chairman, you have asked members who are carrying on conversations in the seats to take their conversation to the loge, so as not to interrupt the proceedings of the House.

Now, if it is not bothering the member for St. James, that is wonderful. It is bothering me, and I would appreciate the same decorum from them that they constantly request from us, so that I am not distracted by the Leader of the Opposition and the Education critic having an extensive conversation a foot and a half away from the person who is asking me questions. I do not think that is out of order. I think that is quite in order to ask for that. We could be giving answers to questions right now instead of this nonsense.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the official opposition, on the same point of order.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): On the same point of order, the Deputy Leader and I were consulting about a matter of public interest. [interjection] If I could continue. For somebody to complain about noise in the House and then to interrupt what I am saying is quite rude. Yes, we were having a whispered conversation dealing with the opening of a new police office in her constituency that I inquired about because I am quite interested in it. Unlike the member opposite, we do not yell and scream our interventions, we whisper to each other, and I think we should get back to the Education Estimates.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), on the same point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): I find it absolutely amazing that the minister who often carries on private conversations in this House would take objection to that fact. The minister should understand this is the Chamber. There is a Hansard recording process. Everything that we say is recorded. If other members have—there have been a number of developing issues that happened this afternoon that the minister may not be aware of, or people are not aware of generally. It is quite common practice. For example, as House leader, I constantly have to inform members of the House what is happening not only in this committee, in other committees. I must admit that I was, indeed, involved as House leader, in talking to our Education critic and the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) about important developments in the House.

So I do not know who the minister thinks she is, but I would suggest that she stop wasting the time of the House with this. I would also suggest that if she was concerned about interruptions in the House, that she go and look in the mirror, because I find it absolutely offensive that she lectures us with this scorn that we see from this minister, a minister who routinely lectures members opposite on body language of all things. I remember that was her big concern in the committee Chamber.

I do not know why the minister has such scorn for other members of this House when she has such a double standard. I mean if she sat there quietly, never once had a private discussion or heckled from her seat, I must admit some of us might feel somewhat guilty.

But she is, to put it lightly, one of the more active participants in the House. I remember yesterday her yelling from her seat to me about, grow up, Steve. Mr. Chairperson, I just let that brush off, but I put it down to one of those normal interjections we get in the House.

I would just say to the minister, I mean, get serious. I mean, if you cannot handle the kind of minor disturbance going on in the House, I would suggest that you are in the wrong place. This is a democratic institution. We are entitled to have private discussions in here, particularly related to House business. We are not going to be bullied by a minister, an arrogant minister, who seems to want to have complete silence when she speaks but can speak from her own seat as much as she wants, heckle as much as she wants. Talk about body language, Mr. Chairperson, there is a word for that. It is called hypocrisy, and I suggest that the minister go look in the mirror if you are concerned about interruptions in this House.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable members. On the point of order that we are dealing with, the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) started the point of order. She did not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the way the House was functioning at the time.

I would ask honourable members though, if they are going to carry on conversations, to do at least out of eyesight, maybe up in the loge or in the back, so that it does not disrupt the people who are speaking at the time. Any type of disruption whether it be quiet conversation or just being in eyesight sometimes, does distract people, so I would ask honourable members if they are going to carry on conversations to do so in the loge or in the back of the Chamber.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister to complete her response.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that, and I would also indicate that if ever I have been talking, and it has been brought to my attention that I have been talking, I have immediately ceased and I have always obeyed the Chair, which I would have wished that the

government House leader, that the Education critic and the government opposition Leader had done, which they did not. However, I always obey those directions and I—

Point of Order

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): On a point of order, I was not going to get into this discussion, but I do not think the minister should put incorrect information on the record. There was no refusing of the direction of the Chair; the issue was that it was the minister's directives that were not dealt with and they were not dealt with through the Chair. So I think, Mr. Chairman, that should be clearly understood. The minister is not minister and Chair and director of this House.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable member for that. The honourable member did not have a point of order, though. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to conclude her response.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, to conclude my response, and to acknowledge indeed that I had asked you to ask them to obey the rules of the House and I had not asked them directly, I will say in answer to the question that students in bilingual heritage language programs are the ones eligible for the \$205, and total funding provided in the '96-97 school year was \$40,832 for language and study courses; \$163,182 for bilingual heritage language programming. Major emphasis in '97-98 will be placed on participating in the western protocol for collaboration on basic education and developing frameworks for international heritage languages, for bilingual language and study programming. The development is to commence in April 1997.

We have, Mr. Chairman, western protocol frameworks to be developed, which will provide a basis for resource development and will provide common frameworks for foundation for implementation documents for bilingual and basic international language programming. Aggressive curriculum development will be required in 1996-97 and onwards.

Schools offering Spanish will receive special support for enhancing their audio-visual resources in '97-98 as one of our contributions to the Pan American Games initiative.

Funding on the number of days is what we do now. Have we looked at funding based on hours? We did have a study involving stakeholders on the length of the school year and some other models including year-round schooling. The unanimous advice: stay largely with what we have. Since then, we have introduced flexibility regarding the application of the school year.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to draw to your attention some other dialogue but the members opposite do not wish me to, so they will not and I will not, because we have all agreed we will not do that anymore. I think that shows the fallacy in their not wanting the House to be orderly because it works against them as well as for them, but we have also given some thought to another model such as 200 days or the equivalent. We have introduced flexibility regarding the application of the school year in some ways, but we have rejected it due to the view that too much flexibility could make it very difficult to plan interschool, interdivision and province-wide interactions.

We do receive requests for a deviation from the norm. We consider each request seriously on a case-by-case basis. Where we can accommodate, we are not totally adverse to doing that, but we do have to have a little bit of consistency, cross-jurisdictional consistency so we will continue to provide school authorities an extra measure of flexibility to set a school year calendar which can balance the community wishes and provincial program requirements.

We have established parameters for deviation from the school year, which applies to public and private-funded schools. School divisions have been allowed to set their own calendars, including school start dates and end dates within a ministerial requirement of 200 school days, and that has given them a little bit of differential on Christmas and school start-up, et cetera. Deviations from the calendar for reasons of local religious holidays and celebrations and so on no longer require ministerial approval provided deviations are within the 200-day parameters.

* (1600)

Some private schools like the Jewish education have been granted dispensation to run a shorter school year. They have things they do in the meantime to make it up because they do not, for example, require the same Christmas holidays that we have, and they will often go on religious field trips at certain times of the year when they are out of school, not sitting in classes.

We have had some complaints about starting before the Labour Day weekend. I think the member is probably familiar with those, but that, again, is up to school divisions to decide. They do not have to come back before Labour Day unless they wish to do that. Post-Labour Day starts are not likely unless school divisions reduce their Christmas breaks. They can do that, but most of them want to have that 10 days at Christmas.

Mr. Chairperson: The committee will recess for five minutes.

The committee recessed at 4:01 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:11 p.m.

The Acting Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. We are dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training. Before we recessed, the honourable minister was going to comment.

Mrs. McIntosh: We are actually on one line but we did have a deviation from the line into 16.7. The member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) had asked a series of questions. I did not have the appropriate staff here at the time. I have since called them in, and we had agreed that when that staff arrived we would pause in our current line to answer the questions she had asked on that other line. So the staff is here now, and I can provide the answers to the questions she asked on 16.7 which was Public Schools Finance Board, and after we provide those answers then I would expect that

we would go back to the line we are supposed to be on for this session. But if you could give me just a moment to receive this information, then I will provide it as agreed upon with the questions from the member for St. James. I will just take a second here.

The member for St. James had indicated in her question that—I think the quote was: This Conservative government left Greenway School collapsing for three years before allowing children at risk to be put into safe facilities.

In fact, according to the information that is now being provided by the PSFB, the PSFB only responds to specific requests made by school divisions. The Winnipeg School Division No. 1 did not make its request for that three-year period to the PSFB. They had been deliberating as board members as to which priority they should decide. They had a heritage building and the Greenway School. That was the same school, Greenway School being the heritage school. They needed to determine, as a school board, whether they wished to replace a heritage building or not. It took them three years to make that internal decision. They then made recommendation to the PSFB which then granted the replacement of Greenway School.

So the delay was neither from the PSFB nor from “this Conservative government.” It was in fact the decision-making process gone through by the Winnipeg School Division No. 1. The member had indicated that there had been three, I believe it was, appeals to the Public Schools Finance Board to replace Greenway School, and my understanding here is that the formal request to replace it did not come during those three years of internal debate within the Winnipeg School Division No. 1, but then when the request came the request was granted.

The school is now replaced, and I believe students are occupying the new facility. In fact, in talking to some of the teachers from that facility just last week, they expressed great pleasure in it. So the answer to the question, in short, is that unfortunately the member's premise for the question was incorrect, and the Public Schools Finance Board did not deny students the right to have a school replacement. They waited until the division asked for the replacement, and Winnipeg School Division, obviously a difficult decision as to

whether or not restore a heritage building or replace it. So one could see that it would take three years, but that was not the Public Schools Finance Board, Mr. Chairman, nor this government. That was Winnipeg School Division No. 1.

There were a couple of other questions that were asked. The member for St. James had also asked if we could undertake a review of old buildings in the province, and the PSFB members who are here now are preparing an answer here for me on that particular question. While that information is coming forward, the member for St. James had said that when we did finally have the replacement of Greenway School, that the Public Schools Finance Board had torn down a heritage school, but, in fact, Mr. Chairman, the request to replace the school came from the school division. It was not an initiative from the Public Schools Finance Board. The Finance Board always responds to requests made to it from divisions. I believe the City of Winnipeg allowed the Greenway School to be demolished because after hearings it decided it was not a designated heritage building.

So, again, there were some faulty premises in the questions that were asked, and I hope this brief response to that will clarify for the record, because serious allegations about the Public Schools Finance Board repeatedly turning down requests to have safe buildings for children are very, very serious accusations. This now corrects it for the record with information provided from the Public Schools Finance Board itself.

With regard to the request from the member that the Public Schools Finance Board conduct a review of old buildings, the Public Schools Finance Board, by the nature of its mandate, depends on school divisions to identify school facilities that are of concern to them via the five-year capital plan process. This is a plan that has been in place for many years, indeed during previous administrations to ours as well. Every year, the Public Schools Finance Board supports renovation-type construction projects to upgrade entire schools. An example of that would be the Hazel Kellington School in the Beautiful Plains School Division No. 31.

When new construction or renovation occurs, the latest code requirements—fire code, building code,

plumbing and electrical—and standards must be observed to ensure maximum safety. Building inspectors regularly inspect buildings for safety. If orders are issued to correct a safety problem, the school divisions respond accordingly using Section D grant or their operating funds. When it comes to safety, it is the primary responsibility of school divisions to identify and address any safety concerns. The Public Schools Finance Board also provides emergency funding to school divisions when unpredictable systems fail or if a roof requires immediate attention because of extreme weather, for example. So the safety aspect is one that is never neglected, and this procedure that is gone through, I hope, for the record, will dispel those shocking allegations made earlier today.

* (1620)

Over the years, the public school system has experienced declining enrollments and many schools are underutilized in terms of space. More often than not, Mr. Chairman, school divisions are quite creative in using this surplus space to accommodate computer labs, resource centres, special education programs and other special programs like heritage languages. For many schools, standards are not a problem, but where there is a problem school divisions can make their case to the Public Schools Finance Board, whose record for safety considerations is exemplary.

So I think with this particular kind of process in place, there is an ongoing review that is constantly being done on an annual basis. Those buildings are looked at every year and recommendations on them are able to come forward every year and in between times, should emergencies come up. So I do not feel that to do a study on top of that would be a needed thing when common sense and practicality suggests that it is already being done. To do anything on top of it would be to begin duplicating effort, duplicating expense, and duplicating time and efforts of personnel.

The member for St. James had said that, quote, this Conservative government, end quote, through the Public Schools Finance Board had deliberately let buildings decay as in windows falling out of buildings, et cetera, and that we ignore these things, and that is just simply not so. This year we have again an

Environmental Assistance Program which will share with divisions in replacements of those types of things. The windows that I had asked for a specific example, when she said that we have schools where the windows have fallen out or are falling out, I did not get any specific example, but I assure the member that the Public Schools Finance Board has taken proactive measures in regard to these concerns relating to windows. The PSFB has recently added window repair and replacement as eligible, which it was not before. It is now eligible under its Environmental Assistance Program as well as under the section D grant. This allows school divisions to repair or replace windows on a 50-50 cost-sharing basis with the province or out of its section D grant.

Since the responsibility to provide and maintain sound environmental conditions in schools rests with school divisions, that is one of the mandates of school trustees. I think the member for St. James will probably recall that from her own days as a trustee, that that is one of the main functions of boards. They have facilities committees whose prime responsibility is just this particular task, so they have to select and prioritize projects under the program. That is the responsibility of school boards.

The Public Schools Finance Board and its staff performed a monitoring role, mainly ensuring that the proposed projects met the basic program criteria, and I just would like to indicate as an example of the parameters of the Environmental Assistance Program, which enable the following typical projects to be approved within schools: science laboratories; to ensure the exhaust and fresh air make-up; general mechanical ventilation where none existed; industrial arts; vocational shops; again exhaust, fresh air make-up; sound attenuation; the art rooms; fresh air make-up, exhaust; sound attenuation; improving air quality and air cooling; the removal and storage costs of PCBs; the remedial costs associated with radon detection in schools; asbestos removal and containment; window repair and replacement, Mr. Chairman, as I indicated earlier.

Those, I believe, answer in the main the questions put forward by the member for St. James on 16.7. I realize it is off line, but we did indicate we would answer those despite the fact that they were on the wrong line, and I

appreciate the opportunity to have the staff here to be able to provide input and information.

Did the member for St. James wish to ask any other questions on the PSFB while we are on this particular line that she brought us to? Would she like to pass 16.7 while we are at it?

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I think we are on 16.2.(a), and we are prepared to pass that one.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Just for a clarification, we are prepared to pass 16.2.(a). As agreed, we will revert back to Section 16.2. School Programs (a) Division Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$253,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$70,200—pass.

Item 16.2.(b) Manitoba School for the Deaf (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,589,400.

Mrs. McIntosh: I believe I introduced yesterday the principal from the Manitoba School for the Deaf, Ms. Norma Jean Taylor, and the interpreter that accompanied her from the referral service, and they will be joining us at the table now, along with Carolyn Loepky, assistant deputy minister of program development for the department.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): I thank the honourable minister for those introductions.

Ms. Friesen: Yes, the minister had introduced the staff at the last sitting of the committee. I wanted to take this opportunity just to ask one or two questions, but primarily I must say to welcome the new principal of the deaf school. I understand that there has been general rejoicing at her appointment, and I want to add those of the opposition to that and to welcome her to the school and to wish her the best of possible relations with staff and students and with the government as well.

* (1630)

I wanted to ask some questions about the residential students and what the numbers are in the residents at the moment, and whether in fact the minister has an historic pattern with her of the resident number of

students in residence and the regions that they come from.

What I am interested in essentially is what kind of a regional role the School for the Deaf is playing. How many students are coming from elsewhere? Is there a pattern to this? Are they increasing? Is there an intention on the part of the government for the school to play a regional role that I believe it once did?

Mrs. McIntosh: We have 10 residential students right now and that is about what we have always had, seven to 10, around 10 throughout history. If there is a pattern, that would probably be the pattern.

The residential students are generally outside of Winnipeg. They will stay in because it is too long to get home in the evenings, and they will frequently go home on the weekend. We have one student right now from outside of the province. That one comes from Saskatchewan, comes with—it is a band student. We get a First Nations sponsorship for that student. They come from all over—north, west, east, parts of Manitoba.

In the early days when they were in the old school, and the school was first opened, there were students coming from Saskatchewan. At that point, if you talked to the alumni, they can talk about those days coming on the train here. But at the moment do we see ourselves filling a regional role? Certainly, I think we have a state-of-the-art school now that could appeal to deaf students from any parts of the country, and we would be very pleased to have them. We have now a deaf principal who is conversant with the needs of the students.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

I think that we might well become a regional attraction in terms of drawing students who are looking for this kind of school. We have 75 students in total now. That, again, is close to the historical number, somewhere between 75 and 85. We are anticipating an increase of enrollment between four to eight students who would not necessarily be residential students. There are currently discussions underway with new intakes. These numbers will become more accurate in the next number of weeks, so we are looking at the possibility of maybe 80 next year.

Again, we just have the one from out of province and 10 living in the facility right now.

Mr. Chairperson: Could I ask the honourable members that are wanting to carry on a conversation to do so in the loge, in the hall, or back in their offices. I am having great difficulty hearing right now.

Ms. Friesen: I would like to ask the minister whether she intends this School for the Deaf to begin to play a role in post-secondary education? Is there an intention to use any of the technical equipment, for example, in Distance Education, adapted if necessary, for post-secondary students who are deaf?

Mrs. McIntosh: First of all, I should indicate that currently the Manitoba School for the Deaf is designed specifically for kindergarten to Senior 4. It is a K to 12 school. The students there are preparing themselves for that basic education that leads you into adult life.

The university students have a couple of options. Most of those students—and Norma Jean Taylor, our principal here, herself was at Gallaudet University in Washington which is where the majority of those go for university if they want a fully deaf learning environment. It is internationally known, and it is, I think, the only university of its type in North America, perhaps even the world—[interjection] In the world. They turn out very well-prepared graduates. They are a centre of excellence for this kind of education. That is one option those wishing to go to post-secondary have.

We are looking right now—and we see students going to Red River Community College. We have one, in fact, accepted for this fall to Red River Community College, using interpreters, much as we have interpreter referral service here today. We have another student applying for the National Technical Institute of the Deaf in Rochester or California state, and we have one who has applied for Gallaudet University in Washington.

* (1640)

We do not at the moment see our centre for K to S4 becoming something other than just that, although with distance education and the technologies that are there,

it might be possible to begin offering courses. This would be the type of thing that would be discussed with the Council on Post Secondary Education as they look at needs of students and delivery sights, et cetera, et cetera, and as we look at the whole spectrum of post-secondary education and where services are provided.

We have been having discussions with the interpreter referral service on a number of issues regarding not just learning but also needs that are there in the deaf community and patients in hospitals, for example, needing interpreter service for consultation on what is going to happen to them when they are having an operation, that type of thing. So as we become more used in our society to having interpreters around, then a wider field of opportunity for post-secondary education becomes available as you get interpreters into the post-secondary system.

In the meantime, we are not, at this point, looking at expanding into post-secondary education at our current site of Alexander Ross School or the Manitoba School for the Deaf. We have lots of excitement and challenges right there with the K to S4 at the moment. It does not preclude discussions on it. It is just we have not had any yet.

I apologize, the member had another part of her question. She was wanting to know if we had any capability for distance education out of the school. Yes, we do, because in the near future, just as we have technological capability for a number of things, we have a lot of technology in this school that would enable us to do a wide variety of things including distance education capabilities. Most of the technology in the school is internal to the school, and I would be delighted sometime if the member has some time—or maybe she has had a chance to go out there—but if not, I think she would be very interested in seeing how that school is set up with the technology. If ever she would like to, I know that the school staff as well would be pleased to show her about and just get a better sense of it by looking at it as to what the capabilities might be and then you can stretch your imagination as to how far they could be extended in terms of use.

Mr. Chairperson: Should the item pass? The item is accordingly passed.

Item 16.2.(b) Manitoba School for the Deaf (2) Other Expenditures \$384,400—pass.

16.2.(c) Assessment and Evaluation (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,988,400.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, are we waiting for more staff?

Mrs. McIntosh: May I introduce Mr. Norm Mayer who has joined us, director of Assessment and Evaluation. I believe I introduced Mr. Tom Thompson earlier in the Estimates session who has rejoined us.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the minister about the school review process which is indicated under 16.2.(c). How much is allocated for that? What exactly is the school review? Who conducts it? What are the results and where are they lodged?

Mrs. McIntosh: The member is referring to New Direction No. 3 under A Blueprint for Action or The Action Plan. The department, with input from schools and communities, has just begun to develop guidelines for the schools review process. This is one of the items that we slowed down on. I had indicated to the member earlier that we had slowed down the implementation of the Blueprint somewhat at the request from the field in order to give them all a chance to catch their breath and move along at a more manageable pace. But in terms of what it is, although it is not yet in place, the school review process is intended to strengthen educational planning, programming and accountability at all levels in the school.

The ultimate focus of the school review process will be enhanced student learning opportunities, experiences and outcomes. We are examining methods of obtaining input on the development of review guidelines from school communities and preparing a draft project charter to utilize. As I indicated, we have placed this—it is not on hold, because we have right now a person spending about a quarter of their time beginning to develop a process for this final model, but it has not been brought in quickly as a result of developmental

work on educational indicators which will help to support the review process, all of which as I indicated has been extended in time a bit to give the field time to be able to move along with us more easily.

* (1650)

The reviews are designed to be supportive. The process is likely to be cyclical and formative in nature. As I say, we have only got a person working about one-quarter time right now, say a quarter-time person on this particular aspect. Some Manitoba school boards have undertaken school reviews themselves. They have developed their own criteria and local processes. As well, they selected the personnel to undertake this type of review. We are intending to learn from these local initiatives to find out what they feel has been successful and helpful to them and their continued growth and development. As we seek input from the field on the process, those self-initiated reviews will be extremely beneficial to us in putting down ideas and so on.

Before we launch full-scale schools reviews ourselves, we believe that the school planning process has to be in place in Manitoba schools. That is underway. That has begun. We see schools this year beginning school plans, and this is the first full-fledged year for that. The school planning process will help us very much to determine what to look for in any given school review.

We will be looking at a variety of indicators, and, as I say, whether this is an exhaustive list I am about to give her or not is hard to say, but a review could look at these kinds of indicators. These are the types of items that we will, in all likelihood, be considering for inclusion: student attendance rates, rates of school dropout—these are examples; graduation rates; participation in advanced academic programs; student participation in extracurricular activities; the transition to community colleges, universities; parent satisfaction, student satisfaction, teacher satisfaction; external recognitions: honours, awards, scholarships—those kinds of things; student performance data. Those are the examples of the kinds of indicators we could use, but they do need to be considered with an eye to schooling inputs in light of pupil-teacher ratios, teacher credentials, as well as the schooling process, such as instructional and assessment practices. It is critical that

schools use a variety of indicators to evaluate their effectiveness continually.

We are interested in knowing more about the United States practices of voluntary school accreditation, where some schools are now actually becoming accredited. There are all kinds of creative ideas out there that could or could not form part of a school's review. That is kind of an indication of the types of things we might be looking at, and, as I say, that is about where we are at the present time on that particular initiative.

Ms. Friesen: I would like to pursue this a little bit. I am not clear from what the minister has said: who is going to do this? The minister is talking from the perspective of a department which is developing criteria, areas for consideration, possible methods, for example, accreditation, but who exactly is going to do it?

Is it going to be self-review and then essentially something which is lodged with the minister or lodged with the division, or is it going to be something which is conducted externally by the department or by others?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, as I indicated in my earlier response, we have not developed that yet. But as to the question of who will do it, we believe the very best people to do it would be the people directly involved, the advisory council, the school staff, the school board, the local people. Right now they are beginning to do their school plans. So as they develop school plans and set goals and objectives for themselves, then the logical extension of that would be for them themselves again to assess and evaluate how well they have done in achieving their goals and outcomes and their stated mission. They could do it school by school, their own review; they could do it divisionally, where the division office does the school review; they could do it in collaboration with neighbouring divisions, where they work together in a collaborative fashion.

What we do know is that it will be done. You will have school plans being done every year and then on a cyclical basis you will have a review of the school done to see if those plans are being met, to see if certain outcomes are being achieved. On rare occasions the

review could be done by the department or by the minister. Those would have to be done in places where for some reason the field or the people that are ultimately determined to be the ones to do the review for some reason have not been able to fulfill the task.

So we would be using a similar model to develop the guidelines for school reviews as we did to develop the guidelines for school plans, which is to go out and get input from the stakeholders, pilot it, and then check with the implementation committee to see how it is working. So we need the field to help us develop this, and they have indicated their willingness to give input. Well, in fact, they want to be able to give input. They do not want us going off on our own, and we appreciate that. We want their input as well.

That is likely the way it will evolve, although it is still too early to say exactly. I would not want to be held to that in case we deviate from it in some way. That is what we are thinking at this time, that we will end up with a model that ideally would be done at the local level, maybe division-wide.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The time being 5 p.m., time for Private Members' Business.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 200—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act

* (1700)

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), Bill 200 (The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative), standing in the name of the honourable member for St. James

(Ms. Mihychuk), who has 13 minutes remaining. Stand?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted to leave it standing. Also standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe), who has 14 minutes remaining.

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 202—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), Bill 202, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille), standing in the name of the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer). Stand. Leave has been granted to permit the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Gimli.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 14—Political Advertising and Government Guidelines

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I move, seconded by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), that

“WHEREAS in the six months prior to the 1995 provincial general election the Provincial Government spent hundreds of thousands of tax dollars on partisan advertising of Provincial Government programs in Manitoba in newspapers and on radio and television stations around the Province; and

“WHEREAS in 1993 the then Provincial Auditor called some of the Provincial Government's ads 'questionable' and stated that the Government should implement guidelines for government advertising; and

“WHEREAS on June 3, 1994 the Minister of Finance indicated that, 'I have staff working on this issue, and we will come forward with a position on the whole

issue of appropriate guidelines and so on. So we are undertaking it. We take it very seriously.'; and

“WHEREAS despite repeated promises before, during and after the election the Minister of Finance has still not brought forward any standards or guidelines and refuses to act on his previous commitments; and

“WHEREAS thousands of dollars continue to be spent on questionable advertising contracts many of which have been awarded to former staff of the Premiers' office; and

“WHEREAS the Provincial Government wasted over \$400,000 on advertising promoting the privatization of the Manitoba Telephone System prior to the sale of MTS and this advertising was clearly partisan.

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Premier consider following the advice of the Provincial Auditor in this matter and 'consider developing more explicit guidelines in this area, specifically defining the extent to which the political element is acceptable in ads paid with tax dollars'; and

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly request that the Premier order the cancellation of all non-essential advertising campaigns until such guidelines are publicly released.”

Motion presented.

Mr. Maloway: There is nothing new about our concern about this area of political advertising that this government involves itself in between elections. We have been on the record as expressing our concerns in the past about this issue and will continue to do so into the future, certainly until we get some sort of specific guidelines that have been previously promised by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) in this area and not been delivered upon.

For example, Madam Speaker, I think that we should look at appointing a committee of the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) to take a look at various aspects of this whole issue. I think the members for these two

constituencies would be interested in several criteria in trying to determine the extent of this political advertising.

Part of the criteria that I think they would be wanting to look at is the timing of the amounts of money that are spent on political advertising. I think what you would find is that as the government gets closer to an election window, an election period, that the tempo and the amount of political advertising increases. For example, I would suggest, and I think this committee will probably find this out over time, that they would find that after the 1995 election there is a big dip in the government advertising spending department and that as the government's political fortunes fall and the proximity to the next election increases, what you will find is that the political advertising will increase as a result.

Madam Speaker, back in 1994, it was unmistakable. You could not open a newspaper in this province, you could not turn on a radio, you could not watch a TV show without this constant barrage on the part of the government advertising its wares. At the time, what we were finding was that (a) an election was fast approaching, and (b) we were finding that the Conservative Party, the governing party, was in trouble with the electorate, and its polls were bearing that out. It was, at best, in a minority government situation if it were to go into an election, and what they had determined was that in an effort to bring themselves back out of the depths of despair that they were in at that time that they had to shovel tons of government money into this political advertising. Now, once the election was over in 1995, we saw a distinct drop in the amount of money they were spending at that time.

Another element that the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) mentioned is that the sections of the populace that this advertising is aimed at—and that would be another criteria, I think, that we would want to give this committee to examine, because I think it would be interesting to try to determine, based on what sort of polling results the government gets and which of its target groups it is in trouble with at any particular time, that, in fact, if we were to sit back and be able to look at this thing, we might be able to determine that, in fact, the advertising program of the government is somehow designed to correct some of the problems that

it—[interjection] I know the Minister of Housing (Mr. Reimer) is deeply interested in this matter, and well he should be because there was his seat and many others that were the target of some of this advertising, because at that time, in 1994, this government was very concerned about its chances in St. Vital and in the Minister of Housing's riding and other ridings.

* (1710)

So I submit, and I think our committee will conclusively determine and prove without any shadow of a doubt, that there was a conspiracy, that the Tory party and the government advertising were basically tied in together to work in tandem to produce the results that we later saw.

What were those results that we later saw? I mean, we saw an improvement. We saw the numbers go up in the government's popularity ratings just at the right time, just when they needed it. and, Madam Speaker, that is why they will not accede, they will not agree to guidelines as promised.

You know, I believe it was three years ago, June 3, 1994, when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) promised he would follow up on the Provincial Auditor's suggestion. The suggestion that curbs be put on this political advertising was made by the Provincial Auditor of the day, and the Provincial Auditor suggested that guidelines be developed and that they regulate the content of the government advertising. That was three years ago.

The Minister of Finance at the time promised that he was going to follow up on that, and absolutely nothing has changed during that time. In fact, rather than proceed with a follow-up to the recommendation and a follow-up to the questions, what the government did is that it continued—it just continued on its merry way, oblivious to these requests, because I believe it is almost like drug. This government is addicted to the government advertising program. It cannot get away from it, and, as the need arises, the money starts to be freed up. For example, Madam Speaker, there was \$200,000 spent on a Health newspaper distributed last fall; minister's photos were on it. The Premier's (Mr. Filmon) campaign manager Barb Biggar was involved in it.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): It really gave you a positive feeling when you read that paper.

Mr. Maloway: The former Minister of Health, of course, was quite satisfied with that program, although I guess in the short run it did not help him out in terms of his ability to hang on to his portfolio.

For example, in the telephone system, in the privatization efforts of the government last fall for Manitoba Telephone System, what did we find in that situation? The government spent \$400,000 in an advertising campaign to help push through the sale of MTS. This, Madam Speaker, was at a time when a poll was done. I had the results earlier today that indicated that an overwhelming number of people, both in the country, in the rural areas, and in the city of Winnipeg, were opposed to the government's privatization, but at that time they realized they were in a serious political problem. They pulled out the ready, tailor-made answer that this government has come to depend on, and that is a huge advertising contract was let and they sent out brochures and so on promoting their desire to sell the telephone company, and so it goes. This is what they have been getting away with all this time, so why should we expect that they should come up with guidelines? I mean, if they can manage to get away with this time and time again, over and over again, they have no incentive.

So perhaps my recently appointed committee here of the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), when they come up and do this study and come up with these guidelines, will be able to pass them on to the interested media outlets and maybe mail them out to interested people. Maybe the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) would like to join this new committee. See this committee has now got three members, and it is increasing. You know, good ideas always start with the first couple of people. They increase over time, and once the ball gets rolling, Madam Speaker, there is no stopping it, and the government may find that after a number of years of, in their view, successfully attempting to buy the people support with their own money, that may, in fact, not work.

Another area of basically political advertising and quasi-political advertising is the advertising on

Lotteries, and I know the former Liberal Leader, who is now in the Senate, I always thought that it was one of—

An Honourable Member: Mr. Molgat.

Mr. Maloway: No, not Mr. Molgat; no, I am talking about the more recent Liberal Leader, Mrs. Carstairs. As much as I disagreed with a lot of her program, I must admit that there was one thing that stood out that she advocated that I particularly liked, and that was a ban on the promotion of lottery advertising.

I mean, I could understand the government's need and desire to be involved in the lottery and gaming business. I was part of a government that certainly had a role to play, developed a very major role in that area, certainly not to the extent that has been developed by this particular government in its nine years, nowhere near that. But even during our tenure, I would have been happier had we laid off on the advertising and promotion of the Lotteries program.

I think we could live with a certain amount of gambling and lotteries in the province, because there was a demand for it, and we could live with that. But to spend money on advertising, basically lifestyle-type advertising, promoting a regressive form of taxation, I always thought was not the right way to go and something that I would rather do without.

Well, Madam Speaker, this government has become so absolutely addicted to lottery revenues, it cannot live without the lottery revenues and, as a result, it promotes and advertises gambling in unprecedented levels. I would think that is one area that the Conservatives should probably take a look, take a second look at what the newly-minted senator had to recommend when she was in this House—

An Honourable Member: Senator Carstairs.

Mr. Maloway: Senator Carstairs, one of her good ideas, that the government should look at that and try to tone down, if not eliminate completely, the advertising for gambling and casinos and so on in this province.

So, Madam Speaker, there are a number of things that this government should be doing rather than simply running holus-bolus into the future spending money

that need not be spent on advertising programs that do nothing more than promote lifestyle advertising and keep friends of the government in business. What we have here is the government's friends, the former Premier's staff member, Barb Biggar, being given contracts one after another to promote the government's programs.

We talked about the criteria for political advertising. What sort of criteria are we going to apply to political advertising? It is very simple. You look at the advertising that the government runs. There should be a sign on the bottom of it: paid for by the PC Party of Manitoba. In fact, the bill should be sent to the PC Party of Manitoba [interjection]

I would ask you to submit—look, I will make you a deal. I would invite the government—the government does not have to submit its advertising to our independent committee that we have just appointed here. We are not asking you to turn it over. We will add the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) to our committee now, too, so now we are up to four. We are not suggesting that you give it to our committee of four to vet, to decide whether it is political advertising or not.

We are saying turn the ads over to an independent body and have them come up with a decision as to whether or not your advertising is political or not. [interjection]

* (1720)

Yes, not to an equivalent of the Public Utilities Board that is loaded with Tory hats. I am talking about give it to an independent body, and that is why the Provincial Auditor was asked to take a look at this situation. That is why the Provincial Auditor came through with recommendations that the government do something about it. Now, how more independent can we get than requesting the Provincial Auditor to take a look at it? Surely, the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) could agree with that suggestion, that it be turned over to an independent body. [interjection]

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

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, let us tell it like it is today. The honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) and I were, I believe, elected on precisely the same day. We have been around this place on one side of the House or the other for some 11 years. I am going to say to the honourable member, if you do not try to fool me, I will not try to fool you. Today the honourable member has stood, as they say, on his hind legs and roared about the practices of the government of the day, never mind the previous one or governments in general across this country, and railed—I think the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) would say the honourable member for Elmwood is a railer—in his comments today.

I read with interest the resolution that he has placed on the order paper and listened with interest to his comments and could not help but smile pretty well all the way through as it was all coming back, Madam Speaker. All of the practices they condemn today were practices in which they engaged pretty well every day they had an opportunity when they were in government. Everybody knows that what I am saying is true, so I think that this is probably an hour of entertainment for honourable members and anyone else who happens to be tuned in to our discussion this afternoon.

It is true that the philosophical position taken by honourable members opposite and that taken by honourable members on this side from time to time can be seen to be quite different. In the light of the kinds of things the honourable member was talking about today, I was interested in an article that I have uncovered in Harper's magazine for April of this year. It talks about the kinds of regulation the honourable member is talking about. All of a sudden, now that he and his colleagues are not in office, now is a good time to have some kind of guidelines and regulations for governments when they spend money.

He forgets altogether about the government of British Columbia, the new Democratic government of British Columbia, just weeks before a provincial election campaign called there, taking out full page ads criticizing the federal government and doing everything they can to get the people to get interested in an issue of importance to everybody, but certainly to New Democrats in B.C., who can read polls as well as anybody else, and see that if they have a strong card at

all, which it turns out they did, it would be in the area of health spending and education spending. So, well, let us take out full page ads, get the taxpayers to pay for those ads railing at the federal government for their vicious cutbacks.

Now, I would be the first to agree with the British Columbia government or honourable members opposite or anyone else who would like to suggest that the cutbacks in social programs at the hands of the federal government in recent years have indeed been vicious. They have been very painful for provincial governments across this country, but that gets away a little bit from the point that I am making. The honourable member uses the word "partisan" when discussing government advertising or government communications. And that is what this is all about. Is it partisan or is it not partisan? If it is not partisan and if it is relevant, it is probably okay. If it is partisan then it should not be paid for by the taxpayer. I can agree with that.

The honourable member made specific reference to Health News, something that came out under my watch as Health minister, and the honourable member made some suggestion that that may or may not have had something to do with the shortening of my term as Health minister and how disappointed I would have been at having lost the Health portfolio. Well, my goodness, let me remind the honourable member that I am still well and I am still smiling and I am still here, and more to the point.

But let me go back to Harper's magazine, because the honourable member seems to be advocating some sort of censorship or guidelines or whatnot for government advertising. Well, sure, it is appropriate that governments use appropriate judgment and do not cross over that line of partisanship. Everybody can agree with that, but I also made reference to the differences in ideologies. I think it could be said that New Democratic ideology more closely resembles that of Communist China than the ideology of honourable members on this side of the House.

In Harper's magazine, there is reference to regulations for journalists issued in China last October by China's central propaganda department. Now, we do not have a propaganda department, but the New Democrats

certainly did, in everything but name, when they were in office, but here are the regulations set out by the central propaganda department in China, and these rules appeared in the December, 1996, issue of China Focus, a newsletter published in Princeton, New Jersey.

I want all honourable members to listen carefully to this because this is the kind of thing the honourable member is proposing here with his resolution today, and I quote: In order to guarantee unity of thinking and to avoid a negative impact on political stability, all sensitive issues such as the campaign to protect the Dayu Islands—these were islands claimed by Japan—or the overseas democracy movement are not to be covered.

The regulation goes on: There have been over 10,000 cases of demonstrations and protests in urban and rural areas within the past year. All of these are not to be covered. All cases that have a significant impact or involve government officials should not be reported, such as the case of the former secretary of the Beijing Municipal Party Committee, Chen Xitong—and this person was ousted in 1995 for corruption, and it goes on—or the case of Zhou Beifang of the Capital Iron and Steelworks. Now, this person, about whom there was not to be any reporting, is a close ally of Deng Xiaoping, and this person was sentenced to life imprisonment for bribery.

An Honourable Member: This is very relevant.

Mr. McCrae: Oh, this is extremely relevant. This goes to the very pith and substance and to the very heart of what the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) is bringing forward here today.

The regulation in China goes on: When reporting on issues concerning Hong Kong, the media must act in accordance with the policy formulated by the party's Central Committee. When reporting on foreign affairs, the media must not reveal state secrets. Articles written by dissidents are not to be published. Propaganda departments must strengthen censorship of the media. Those that violate the regulations must be dealt with severely.

This is the tone taken on by the honourable member for Elmwood, but, you know, as the honourable

member spoke, I could not help but think back fondly on the days of Judy Wasylycia-Leis here in this House. I join with my colleagues, especially those colleagues opposite, I am sure, but I am sure all honourable members would congratulate Ms. Wasylycia-Leis on the success of earlier this week, and I know, even though I will not agree with the things that she is going to say in Ottawa, that she will take her message there on behalf of her constituents who voted for her with conviction, with sincerity and with a lot of energy, and that is good for Judy.

I am very happy for her in that regard, because Judy and I go back to our days in Ottawa when she first ran for public office and I was a constituent and got to vote in an election in that particular constituency. Next thing, you know, what do I find? Judy Wasylycia-Leis, she is here in Manitoba, and I lived in the neighbourhood which she now represents as a member of Parliament before she even moved there.

* (1730)

So I feel entitled to comment about Judy. But what Judy did—[interjection] Well, I am sure Ms. Wasylycia-Leis will not hesitate to say whatever she thinks about me as well, but the things I say about Judy I say with sincerity.

On the other hand, in her days here, in her days as Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation, as it was then known, she brought forward—after a lot of pushing and prodding, that government brought forward freedom of information legislation, passed it in this House.

The people of Manitoba, represented by the members here, passed legislation, and then what happened? Judy and her colleagues, of which one was the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), and I know the honourable member for Elmwood was around for part of that time, too, sat on that legislation for three and a half years. I am sure there was a lot of work going on, making sure what it was they were not going to make available to the people of Manitoba should they happen to request it.

So it is in that light and in the light of what I said about what is going on in China and that sort of thing,

that I look at this resolution brought forward by the honourable member for Elmwood today and ask myself, well, ought we not to look at the source of all of the wisdom contained in this resolution before we make up our minds about what we should do with this?

Now Charlie Farquharson would have had a thought about this sort of thing. He would say, I read it and immediately put it behind me. That is what Charlie would say. As for me, I think that some of my colleagues will probably want to join with me and discuss some of the items here, but the honourable member did make specific reference to Health News. I wanted to say a word about that, because as Minister of Health I was bombarded daily by allegations and misinformation and factually, totally off-the-wall information brought forward by people who had partisan interests at heart.

An Honourable Member: And malice at heart.

Mr. McCrae: And suggested it even goes as far as malice. But I know there was a wish on the part of some people around here to sort of mix up the facts a little bit and leave an impression out there that the state of affairs was somewhat worse than it was. In fact, Health News was designed to inform members of the public. The honourable member for Elmwood singled out that publication as a partisan publication, which is simply not so. There are all kinds of health administrators and people in the health system in Manitoba who ask me for months—nay, years, to get out more information about what is going on in our health system, so that the public can be informed and can be supportive or not supportive, but at least informed about what is going on. So that when criticism is levelled, when advice is given, it is informed. That was the reason for that. There is not a partisan word in any of that. If the honourable member can find it, I defy him to bring it forward and make an allegation.

It is not good enough. When you have two sides and when you have one party like you do in China, I guess you can say whatever you want, but here in our democratic system we have two sides. When the honourable member says things that need to be challenged, well, there are honourable members on this side of the House who are going to challenge it. So I cannot help but smile as I listen to the honourable

member today because it all came back, it all came back.

I remember the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans). The story is out that in the good old days of the Jobs Fund, one of the things about the Jobs Fund was that about 10 percent of all the expenditures were supposed to be used to inform the public about all of these wonderful jobs that were being created for Manitobans.

Now the story goes around about the honourable member for Brandon East who had under that program some grant to make or some such thing, which amounted to not more than about \$130, but there had to be a press release for that. There had to be a personal appearance. There had to be a sign. [interjection] We are going to check that one. So I am always willing to learn a lesson from anybody who has a lesson to share with me. It is a very good thing to do especially in public life because it is not my government, it is not my Legislature. I am here for a brief period of time and somebody else will come along and carry on, and that is the nature of our democracy.

I do find it passing strange that the honourable member for Elmwood, of all people, so supportive of the NDP ideology, so supportive of the previous NDP government headed by Mr. Doer—sorry, by the Leader of the Opposition then, Mr. Pawley, and so supportive of double-digit increases in Autopac rates, so supportive of scandals and \$27-million faux pax in the sands of the Saudi Arabian desert, and so supportive of all that. Surprisingly enough that the honourable member for Elmwood is still here, but maybe not surprising that he should bring in such a resolution as the one he brought in today. With no regret, whatsoever, I will not be supporting this resolution.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, it is a resolution, and when we read through it, there is a lot of merit to this resolution. When I see resolutions like this, there are a number of things that come to mind. What I would like to be able to do is to talk about some of those things because in a campaign there is a lot of advertising that is done and the advertising that is done is paid for by political parties. I do not have any problem whatsoever with that sort of advertising. In fact, I think that it is important. The

Elections Act allows us to be able to do that. After all, we get tax receipts and all sorts of wonderful things that allow us in order to be able to participate and try to get people re-elected and, in some cases, get some newly elected. I hope to see lots of newly elected as opposed to re-elected, and advertising plays a critical role in the elections.

The concern, of course, is the advertising that occurs prior to the election, the lead-up to the election. I have seen some things from this government that really make you wonder in terms of whether or not it should have been the Conservative Party paying for something, as opposed to the government paying. The first piece that comes to mind for me is the former Minister of Health, the Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae). When they were not doing too well with respect to the promotion of their own cause or their own actions within the Department of Health, what they did is they came out with this wonderful glossy, I think it was something like eight pages, and it had this glowing picture of the former Minister of Health. It talked about how wonderful the government is and all these good things that it is doing within the Department of Health. Now that particular piece of propaganda is an excellent example, I believe, in terms of the Conservative Party should have paid for that, not the taxpayers of Manitoba or the government department.

I have seen other things in areas such as tourism and other programs where you actually see more pictures of ministers. I can vaguely recall the Minister of Rural Development where there was one piece where he had about six to eight pictures of himself in one piece going out promoting in rural Manitoba. [interjection] No, no exaggeration whatsoever. Madam Speaker, it is absolutely amazing.

Who can forget about the gambling? The amount of advertising this government has done in gambling to promote Manitobans to go out and gamble so that the government can get more revenues. [interjection] Well, whenever I bring up this whole gambling issue—maybe what I should do is go back to the '93 leadership box that I might have somewhere and get a copy of that particular statement that I made. Everything that I have said since then has been very consistent with it. The idea, of course, is that you have to have a gaming policy based on tourism.

* (1740)

What this government does is it has a gaming policy based on revenue generation, and there have been a lot of negative social impacts as a direct result of that. Instead of talking about those negative impacts, what it does is it uses taxpayers' dollars to advertise on how wonderful and what this government is doing to enhance Manitoba by wisely spending those lottery dollars that have been generated, huge billboards saying: here is where we are spending the money on health care, here is where we are spending the money on a deficit reduction and all these wonderful things in order to try to rebuff the negative criticism that has been levelled at this government because of its gaming policy.

That is something in which, again, I would suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that the government, the taxpayers, should not have had to pay through the Crown corporation of Lotteries. We should not be promoting Manitobans to go gambling, and then with some of those proceeds put on this huge campaign to try to minimize and marginalize, if you like, the damage, the political fallout of a policy that has not been thought out.

So it is a form of damage control, and that is what this government does a lot of advertising on. In areas in which they detect that the public is reacting very negatively to some of the actions that it is taking, it takes a great deal of money, and it promotes a side that has been twisted only to fit their own political agenda.

That is not to say that there is not a need for advertising. There is, in fact, a need for government advertising. There are all sorts of wonderful programs that the government provides. I can recall, you know, a couple of years ago when I was really advocating strongly that the government actually advertise the SAFER program, the Shelter Allowances for Families. The budget was decreasing, and I said, you know, the reason why that is the case is because if people do not necessarily know about it, or you rely strictly on word of mouth, the demand for that particular program will decrease.

So that might be a good way to do some advertising, as opposed to trying to tell Manitobans that this is what

we are doing in health, but not to worry, it is a good thing; the government has everything on track.

Madam Speaker, there is a big difference. There are things that the government does in which the public needs and has a right to know, and the government has a responsibility through press conferences and other means, such as advertising, to use that as a tool in order to better inform the public on all sorts of things that could be happening.

But when I see the resolution, and we talk about, Madam Speaker, primarily with respect to how the province has been doing its advertising, it does beg the question on whether or not the government is behaving in a responsible manner. That is the reason why, as I say, in principle, when we look at the resolution, that form of advertising, such as some of the things that I have cited, is not acceptable, and the government needs to re-evaluate how some of these dollars are, in fact, being spent.

With those few words, Madam Speaker, I was more than happy to put my own personal thoughts on this particular issue.

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak in opposition to this resolution.

First, speaking to the preamble of the resolution, it focuses on health reform and focuses on lotteries, and the case is made based essentially on those kinds of subject matters which are addressed by this resolution. Similarly, Manitoba's telephone system and the sale of the Manitoba telephone system has been singled out in the debate and in the resolution.

I would assert, Madam Speaker, that in both cases the case is not made; the position is not founded. There is a legitimate purpose behind what was done in each of those three instances.

The health reform information and the way it was done was done responsibly and in a way that was demanded, not only by the opposition but by the community of Manitoba, the citizens of Manitoba. They wanted to understand more in ways that they could read with some interest, understand more what

was going to be happening to their greatly valued health care system, something that affects everybody in this province.

Are the honourable members opposite really suggesting that the humanity should be taken out of it, the simplistic kind of communication should be made into some sort of treatise, some sort of black and white, uncreative sort of approach that is dull and no one would read? That is not the kind of communication the people of Manitoba want, I would assert.

With respect to the Lotteries, a case for public involvement has to be made with respect to Lotteries. There are all kinds of other points of view. This government happens to believe that under government control, government regulation, Lotteries do generate revenues in an appropriate way with free choice of people involved, and there is a need to disclose information in relation to the purpose of the monies raised and how the money is spent and an understanding of the overall process, the morality of involvement in public Lotteries.

With respect to the Manitoba Telephone System, again, the case that had been made most loudly was for more transparency and more communication and more time and, again, whatever communication was done was necessary and demanded by the public.

So the resolution does not have a case in support of it that is proven and, as a result, I could end the discussion right there. However, I want to take it a step further and put this in the context of other situations where we have to draw the line. The boundaries have to be set as to how far one can go in communications, spending taxpayers' money for the purposes of communication. How do you ensure that you are not crossing the line and exhibiting unacceptable partisanship, that is, the advancement of your own political party, at the expense of the public and getting an unfair advantage over opposition parties?

Well, we have many, many checks and balances that assist the decision makers in putting together communications in an appropriate, balanced way. The line is going to be drawn in accordance of what is perceived to be the opinion of the ultimate jury, the most important jury, that is, the jury of public opinion.

So it has been asserted that the government should consider explicit guidelines as to where you draw the line. Well, coming from a legal background, Madam Speaker, I have difficulty applying strict legal guidelines, strict, explicit legal guidelines for this kind of situation, because those can interfere with effective free speech and necessary free speech and the kind of free speech which is going to be listened to by the jury out there who are evaluating whether their money is being spent wisely. We recognize as a political party and as a government and I as an MLA and a caucus the sacredness, the importance of our trusteeship for spending taxpayers' dollars prudently and conscientiously and with the best interests of the public in mind.

* (1750)

So in assessing what you are going to put in a communication, one must consider the consequences if you violate that trust. Who were the watchdogs besides the well-informed and conscientious public that we have in Manitoba, who have exposure to all kinds of information sources, whether it be the written media or it be the radio media? It can be the television media, it can be the Internet, all the different means of accessing the views of the critics of the government of the day.

The other critics besides the media are, of course, the official opposition, who have their chance in the legislative debates and especially during Question Period to single out what they believe to be inappropriate release or communication out of the government, and they do so. They do so with a great deal of zeal, and every time that they do it, that is another lesson for government and the advisors to government that they must be cautious, careful and respectful of public opinion.

We have the unofficial opposition, as well, that speaks often and loudly and with great vigour in this Legislature. They, too, are watchdogs looking for an opportunity to label the government of the day with an accusation of partisanship to make that sort of case, and it is done again and again and again.

Then in the media we, of course, are exposed again and again to the challenging interviews when you leave

the House, the exposure to telephone interviews and personal interviews by the print media and the other media sources. Once again, they are always looking for a story and the moment there is a smacking, an indication, a hint, a smell, a possible partisanship in something, they will jump all over it.

Then on top of that, of course, we have the public Auditor who looks at this kind of a situation and indicates that it might be helpful for a government to have, in effect, a checklist of its own to protect itself. I would argue, frankly, that is not necessary in my view, because it is something which is the product of common sense. It is not a science, and it is the same sorts of standards that govern a trustee.

It reminds me when I was on the Law Reform Commission, we were analyzing The Trustee Act. We used to have a listing of the kinds of things that a trustee could and could not do, investments a trustee could and could not make; a listing of those kinds of things. The listing which was intended to be a guideline turned out to be a constraint. It turned out to be a straight jacket. The Law Reform Commission of the day recommended that substituted for the listing of guidelines was a prudent-man, prudent-person test, the prudent-investor test. That has withstood, as a matter of fact, more than one government in this province, and the legislation under a Trustee Act is intact, and the standard is that of a prudent person.

Well, I assert that that is the kind of test that should be applied here, and we are as accountable, more accountable, than a trustee administering large amounts of money. To put this, again, in context we talk about government communications. What about communications from foundations? Whether it be the Winnipeg Foundation or the Sill Foundation, the Jewish Foundation, they have their annual reports. What about the United Way? They have their annual reports. All of them also have public communications, and they certainly want to let the public know, using charitable money, money that has been entrusted to them to spend in the public interest.

They want to share with the public in human ways that the public will understand, what is being done by

those trustees on behalf. Frankly, my own experience would be in government that the government is even more careful than trustees of those kinds of institutions, because they have to be politically sensitive in ways that can cause even appearances to get in the way of substance. So this government has been, I believe, very, very careful in this respect and very prudent and very responsible to the taxpayers of Manitoba.

The humanization of the communications is very important. One of the problems, I would submit, Madam Speaker, with government communications historically and even continuing to this day is that there is not enough personal touch to it. It is in the absolute commitment to be nonpartisan that things come out sometimes very dry, and it does not share the sort of heart that is behind the communication. To have constraints imposed and, in fact, monitored standards would cause the critics to, in effect, look at adherence to the guidelines almost like judges trying to evaluate whether or not they breached a guideline or they did not apply a particular guideline in a particular case, rather than looking at the total communication and looking at it in a way as to whether or not it was respectful of the public trust.

I also want to indicate how this drawing the line can be a very difficult thing to do in the professions. I know that in the legal profession and in the medical profession there was always a question as to when you were, in effect, engaged in advertising as distinguished from sharing with the public the facts about you as a professional, because advertising in the old days was frowned upon until there was an intervention, first of all, in the United States asserting the right to freedom of speech and therefore opening up the doors.

Another example of where you have to draw the line, and I would assert always on the side of free speech, is MLAs themselves. We honourable members in this Legislature, as you know, do not even have partisan or party colours on our signs in front of our buildings, and we cannot display any partisanship within our offices. We cannot conduct ourselves in that way, and that is good, but on the other hand, you have to be a human face within your own constituency, and you have to be able to share with some enthusiasm the information about government programs. You are wearing your hat as a service provider within that constituency.

So, I, in conclusion, would suggest, Madam Speaker, that the resolution should be defeated, and I heartedly endorse freedom of speech over constraints by—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned—just

for clarification, was the honourable member for Riel finished his remarks, because technically and legally he has one minute remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 5, 1997

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