



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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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.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David, 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.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
Vacant	Charleswood	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 21, 1998

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): I must inform the House of the unavoidable absence of Madam Speaker (Mrs. Dacquay) and therefore, in accordance with the statutes, would call upon the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair, please.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): I beg to present the petition of Marge Lange, Chris Pawley, Bill Maltman and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba ask the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to put an end to decentralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospitals food services.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

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

THAT the Urban Shared Services Corporation (USSC) has announced plans to privatize laundry, food services and purchasing for the Winnipeg hospitals; and

THAT it is estimated that more than 1,000 health care jobs will be lost over the next year as a result, with many more privatized in the next two or three years; and

THAT under the terms of the contract, Ontario businesses will profit at the expense of Manitoba's health care system; and

THAT after construction of a food assembly warehouse in Winnipeg, chilled, prepared food will be shipped in from Ontario, then assembled and heated before being shipped to the hospitals; and

THAT people who are in the hospital require nutritious and appetizing food; and

THAT the announced savings as a result of the contract have been disputed, and one study by Wintemute Randle Kilimnik indicated that, "A considerable number of studies have compared costs of service delivery in health care between self-operation (public sector) and privatization. Invariably, privatization is more expensive."; and

THAT no one in Manitoba seems to benefit from this contract, especially patients.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLYPRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospital food services.

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

THAT the Urban Shared Services Corporation (USSC) has announced plans to privatize laundry, food services and purchasing for the Winnipeg hospitals; and

THAT it is estimated that more than 1,000 health care jobs will be lost over the next year as a result, with many more privatized in the next two or three years; and

THAT under the terms of the contract, Ontario businesses will profit at the expense of Manitoba's health care system; and

THAT after construction of a food assembly warehouse in Winnipeg, chilled, prepared food will be shipped in from Ontario, then assembled and heated before being shipped to the hospitals; and

THAT people who are in the hospital require nutritious and appetizing food; and

THAT the announced savings as a result of the contract have been disputed, and one study by Wintemute Randle Kilimmik indicated that, "A considerable number of studies have compared costs of service delivery in health care between self-operation (public sector) and privatization. Invariably, privatization is more expensive."; and

THAT no one in Manitoba seems to benefit from this contract, especially patients.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospital food services.

* (1335)

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mr. Ben Sveinson (Acting Chairperson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions. It directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again. I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before moving on to Question Period, may I bring to the attention of the House that we have seated with us in the public gallery from Robert Andrews School forty-one Grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Sandy Copp. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay).

We also have seated in the public gallery from Springs Christian Academy thirty-eight Grades 9 and 11 students under the direction of Mr. Brad Dowler. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry).

We welcome all of you here today.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Ste. Agathe Dike Status Report

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the International Joint Commission in December of 1997 stated that some residents feel the stress of dealing with the claims with the government, and that process was equal to or greater than the stress that they endured during the flood. We had written the government last year. We invited them to a public meeting last September in this House, and we wrote them after that on November 12 to ask for the status of the dike at Ste. Agathe. The government wrote back a month later, and there is still a great deal of confusion about this dike and its impact on flood victims in the Ste. Agathe area. In fact, there is even more concern in that some residents are being told that they will have to pay \$10,000 as a contribution towards the dike even though their houses are proposed to be expropriated to build the dike.

I would like to ask the minister if he could clarify the status of the situation which I think all of us would agree is very, very unfair.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know where the Leader of the Opposition would have received that information. The status of the dike is that we have general agreement on the location of the dike. One of the troublesome parts about that is that there are some houses that will be on the wrong side of the dike. There are probably some properties that may in fact have to be removed during the construction of the dike.

I met, along with the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura), last week with representatives of the municipality and of some of the owners who found themselves waiting for an answer in regard to the issue I just mentioned, and we assured them that, between the municipality and the province, we will have a resolution to the issue in terms of moving forward with the construction, because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, technically what we want to do is to have a written agreement between the federal government, the

province and the municipality. That is imminent, and then the decisions will flow very quickly from that.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Doris Koczera, a person who attended a public meeting at this Legislative Building, a meeting that none of the Conservatives attended unfortunately after being invited through their House leader, has been informed of this. I would just like the minister then to say that this is not being proposed by the government. I certainly would be absolutely delighted if he would inform the residents today through this Legislature that the \$10,000 would not be required for people obviously that are having their houses expropriated as part of the Ste. Agathe dike. I think if he can clarify that today, a lot of the stresses built up over the last year and the stress that still will remain about the location of the dike and the payment of the dike will still be there, but one piece of stress could be removed here today in this Legislature on behalf of those flood victims one year later.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to be very careful about the context in which the Leader of the Opposition is asking the question. The way he has just stated the question, I see no reason why those same people would have to pay, but let us remember that there is a community cost share to any proposed community dike. If the people with whom he is discussing the issue are intending to relocate within a ring-dike community, and depending on what agreement the municipality makes regarding some co-payment towards that community share of that dike, then there might be some truth to what he says. But the way the question was stated, that does not automatically flow.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I certainly want to, as I did in my meeting last week, assure all of the residents of Ste. Agathe that the municipality and the province are working very closely to bring a quick and speedy end to this issue. Very much part of that is that we in fact have had the land value appraisal representatives in the community last week making sure that they have their work up to date, and then we will be able to present figures to the people involved. That is the first step in bringing finality to this issue.

* (1340)

Water Commission Interim Report Tabling Request

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Deputy Speaker, again the devil can be in the detail for a lot of the flood victims, and the words "quick and speedy response" one year later for the residents of Ste. Agathe I regret to say ring rather hollow.

I would like to ask the government to be very specific in writing with these people who are concerned about the \$10,000 fee on top of the expropriation, very clear in writing, because these people are quite concerned about what they are being told verbally out in the Ste. Agathe community. Further, I would like the minister, who promised in this House a week ago to table the interim report from the Water Commission—he said it would be only a matter of a few days. He has had that interim report for three weeks now. Victims in the area, the Red River flood area want that report, and I would ask the minister to also follow through on his word of last week where he said it would be tabled in a few days.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is correct that the devil may well be in the details. He also knows that the devil may be in Hansard if he or I put on the record misleading information that would then be directly taken by the residents that he is referring to. I want to be very, very careful that I do not add to the pain that these people are already experiencing by responding a simple yes or no to the question that he asked.

The way he asked the question, the answer is no, but we should remember that this is a 45-45-10 arrangement, a tripartite agreement between the municipality, the province and the federal government. Depending on where those residents may relocate to, then there might be some element of truth to what the member is asking, and I am certainly willing and willing in the nth degree to subscribe the detail of the program that we are going through. I resent very much, however, that the Leader of the Opposition would characterize the response to the flood-proofing programs to be anything less than expeditious, because previous experiences with the '79 flood, we were talking about a five-year

agreement and it took Year 2 before the program even kicked in.

We have 17 communities that have asked us for additional ring-dike protection this coming couple of years. Out of that, I believe five of them are in the design-to-construction stage, and we are very close to signing agreements with those communities so that the dirt can start to move. That compared to what response has occurred in previous flood events is light speed.

Elk Ranching Illegal Shipment

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the government made its way into elk ranching, people were very concerned about the illegal movement and illegal capture of elk in this province. We raised the issue with the Minister of Agriculture and he said, I quote, we now “believe that there will be a far better measure of control exercised on the illegal trade and business with respect to elk as a result of the introduction of legislation.”

I wrote to the minister asking him questions about illegal movement of elk, and he gave me his assurance that there was none. I would like to ask the minister if he can now indicate whether or not animals that are not properly registered in this province under the legislation are in fact illegally moving out of this province.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Very directly to the honourable member, no. I believe that there are no animals that I am aware of that are moving. I hasten to indicate to the honourable member that there is a situation where continuing investigation is looking into the fact of whether or not some specific animals moved illegally, and that investigation is being pursued vigorously.

Ms. Wowchuk: I would like to ask the minister whether he has followed up and whether steps have been taken with respect to Mr. Phil Houde who, in fact, put ads in two papers in 1997 indicating that he had elk out of Riding Mountain National Park that were for sale, whether those activities have been followed up, whether they have been brought under control, or whether Mr. Houde's elk are still leaving the province.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I should remind the honourable member that it is important, when specific charges are made like that, that at least the name is correct. But two aspects to that answer: there is nothing specifically prohibiting anybody, any one of the 72 elk ranchers that we now have in the province of Manitoba—I might add, a very successful start to that new and innovative livestock alternative to producers in Manitoba—that prevents any one of them from placing ads in any farm publication for the sale of their animals. That has been legal since the bill was passed here in this Chamber. There is a specific issue that is under investigation with respect to a Mr. Patrick Houde of the Elm Creek area that is being investigated. We are aware of that situation and officials are investigating that situation.

* (1345)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Swan River, with her final supplementary question.

Legislation Compliance

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to correct the record. I did say Phillip Houde; I meant to say Mr. Patrick Houde.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to ask the minister whether or not there are other herds in the province where elk are being held in captivity for the purposes of ranching that do not comply with the legislation law—mainly the livestock diversification legislation. Are all people who have wild animals in their possession in compliance with that legislation?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Deputy Speaker, certainly those animals that have been correctly, under the act, registered with the Department of Agriculture as appropriate licensees or permanent holders of domestic elk farming in the province of Manitoba are all inclusive with respect to animals held in captivity.

There are, in my opinion, no more licences issued by the Department of Natural Resources, although I will let the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) speak for his department, of the kind that there used to be prior to the legalization of elk farming in the province of Manitoba.

Again, it is not appropriate for me to comment on it. I am aware that every effort is being made to work with our aboriginal communities who see an opportunity in elk farming, and one that I encourage very much as an opportunity, that they are working with the officials of the Department of Natural Resources to in effect establish an aboriginal herd of elk from which aboriginal communities wishing to get into elk ranching could obtain their seed stock.

Hunt Farms Government Position

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): To the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns). Penned hunts or hunt farms are a disgusting concept that should not be allowed in Manitoba. Releasing an elk into a pen and then charging a fee for a so-called hunter to kill as a trophy is a vile practice. According to Natural Resources staff, this government is in fact considering this practice. Does this government support this disgusting concept?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will have to choose my words carefully or Hansard will ask me to withdraw them. I think the member knows better than to put that kind of crap on the record.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson, on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would suggest that the comments by the minister are out of order. I have not checked Beachesne, but I suspect if it is not in Beachesne it is because there are other words that do not even make Beachesne because they are so far out of order. I would ask if the minister might withdraw that comment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Minister of Natural Resources, on the same point of order.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I apologize for my choice of vernacular, perhaps garbage would be a better word.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thank the honourable members for their advice on that. I do believe the

matter has been concluded, but I would ask members to choose their words carefully during the debate.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Dauphin, with his second supplementary question.

Mr. Struthers: The question is very simple. Has this government taken any steps to consideration of hunt farms? Yes or no.

Mr. Cummings: The reason I take strong objection to the nature in which the question is asked is that if that member for Dauphin knows anything about standards, knows anything about the true nature of sportsman hunting and the fraternity in this province, then it is he who should be apologizing for raising that spectre in this House. The answer is—

* (1350)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Hansard was shut off at the moment when the minister answered. Could I just ask the minister to conclude his response.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, the reason I am so annoyed and disappointed in the member for Dauphin for asking the question in the manner that he did is that if he understands the true sportsmanship and the nature of the hunting fraternity in this province, he knows the answer is no.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Dauphin, with his final supplementary question.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Deputy Speaker, has the department consulted with the Manitoba Wildlife Federation to obtain their position on hunt farms?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know my feelings about it. The member should now understand my feelings about it, and do I have any intention of consulting about it, the answer is no.

Urban Shared Services Corporation Review

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): We have now learned that over a hundred kitchen jobs at St. Boniface

Hospital have been notified that they are going to lose their jobs because of the frozen food fiasco of the provincial government—Filmon's frozen food. Mr. Deputy Speaker, pardon me, the frozen food of the province. My question to the Minister of Health is: given the fact that in Estimates last week where the chairman of the USSC and the minister concurred that the major business plan and the premise upon which the business plan for the frozen food was developed has changed significantly and the so-called \$5 million in savings has been reduced by over \$2 million in savings, will the government put the frozen food plan on hold and allow for an appropriate investigation by an independent body of this idea of frozen food in our hospitals and nursing homes in Winnipeg?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): I always enjoy a factual debate on any matter of public policy. Let us for a moment listen to the comments of the question of the member for Kildonan. He seems to leave some kind of impression that patients in hospital are going to be served the old traditional TV dinner or frozen food. He sat through a discussion on the process in Estimates and knows that is not to be the case but perpetuate the myth seems to be in his purview. I notice he flags only St. Boniface Hospital, so I can assume his information is coming from United Food and Commercial Workers, and I do not accept it, without investigation, as being accurate.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Chomiak: Will the minister not confirm that, in Hansard last week, the chairman of the USSC confirmed that of the nine hospitals that were supposed to be part of the cafeteria services for USSC, seven of the nine are not participating in the plan, which means that \$2 million in so-called savings that this government is planning and which all those members wrote letters to their constituents saying we are going to save money in cafeterias is not going to be materialized? The business plan is changed significantly, Madam Speaker, and it justifies an investigation, just like the \$10 million that was going to be saved in home care justified an investigation.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, again the member for Kildonan forgets to work into his equation some \$35

million in capital need the existing kitchens would need to upgrade their facilities.

As well, what is very interesting, I have just received a note from my staff, and they tell me that the chief executive officer, Mr. Sheil, was on the radio and that there are no job losses—this, again, was part of the UFCW propaganda campaign—and we indicated to him, many of those people are being moved into other positions within the system, which is absolutely consistent with what we are talking about.

My only advice to the member for Kildonan was not to look at United Food and Commercial Workers for anything resembling accurate information.

* (1355)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, will the minister who could not duck the question in Hansard, in fact confirmed that seven of the nine facilities will not be participating in the cafeteria food services, therefore, \$2 million in so-called savings will not be realized and was confirmed by his own chairperson, Mr. Sheil, that hundreds of jobs will be lost as a result of food services, and it is confirmed that 90 percent of Manitobans are not in favour of this, will the minister consider sending this deal to the Provincial Auditor for review by the Provincial Auditor of the financial figures with respect to this so-called food deal that has been entered into by the provincial government?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, this is a very instructive, to me, line of questioning, because for one thing, we talked about the cafeteria, the public cafeteria food and, yes, many of those hospitals want to keep them. These are the same hospitals that a year or so ago collectively lost \$2.5 million of health care money that we needed for hip and knee replacements—who lost it in subsidizing cafeteria food.

I am pleased to indicate today that we have instructed the WHA to take that \$2.5 million out of their budget—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health, to complete his response.

Mr. Praznik: Thank you. Madam Speaker, we have heard the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) support the system of independent boards, which means he supports \$2.5 million of health care money that we needed for oncology, for nurses, for a host of patient care issues that the New Democrats would rather waste on cafeteria subsidy, and that really is the issue.

Winkler Hospital Emergency Services

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

I have received a number of questions and concerns from the citizens of Winkler with regard to the Winkler hospital and the fact that they no longer have the services that they used to have. They are requesting that Winkler Bethel Hospital services be reinstated and the hospital be upgraded to higher standards.

Can the minister tell this House: what are the chances of having the Winkler hospital emergency ward reopened?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member for St. Boniface, but if my memory serves me well, both Winkler and Morden currently share emergency services, that they have effectively been combined into a Boundary Trails hospital organization that shares services between the two facilities. That was done as a prelude to—the beginning of their planning for the creation of a new Boundary Trails hospital on a site between the two communities.

Madam Speaker, that has been approved. The details now are being finalized, and I look to the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck); I imagine we will be in the ground on that hospital, we expect, in this calendar year.

Mr. Gaudry: Given there are still concerns as late as this morning, is the minister going to direct the RHA to look into this matter expediently?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, the regional health authority has the responsibility for administering health care in that particular area. I know that you have two

existing hospitals that have been combining their services over the last number of years as a prelude to building one hospital between the two facilities. If I remember correctly, this time last year when we had a withdrawal of emergency services, I believe the doctors from Winkler withdrew their services to the people of that community while the doctors from Morden continued to provide them. So there may be some differences of opinion within that community, that maybe the member is only hearing one side of that.

* (1400)

St. Boniface General Hospital Food Services—Layoffs

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, to the same minister: in regard to the layoffs at St. Boniface Hospital—we know that it is a done deal with the food services—what does he intend to do for the employees that will be laid off in the near future?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): I thank the member very much for that question, because despite the New Democrats raising the issue, they really stay away from the real critical issues, and the member for St. Boniface has raised this.

Last year, Madam Speaker, when the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), along with CUPE, brought a group to this building, I asked for a pause in that particular project to ensure that the labour relations issues could be worked out. I have met with CUPE since. The objective that everyone in those facilities is working towards is ensuring that a proper, a voluntary separation plan—I think 30 weeks has been offered to those who want to leave the system. The jobs in the new system have been posted for those who currently work in it. Thirdly, those who do not fit into either category are being retrained for other positions within the system.

I know at Concordia, for example, they have been so successful in placing people in the new system, I think they actually have to hire some new staff in their food services area. Regrettably, from all reports I have had of United Food and Commercial Workers, they have not been encouraging their members to work through that process, so they have to accept responsibility if it does not work out for their members.

Health Care Forum Minister's Attendance

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, there was a time that governments and ministers were not afraid to face the public, but in the space of one week alone we have seen the tough-talking minister of today talk about staying away from debates—stay away. In fact, he ducked a meeting on frozen food on Tuesday, a health care forum on Thursday and the unveiling of the nurses' report this Monday. I would like to ask the Minister of Health if he will now correct the record and indicate that, for example, when it came to the health care forum, that he actually arrived at the forum after the health care forum sponsored by CBC was held, that he actually could have spoken much later at the fundraiser, and in fact, he ducked the meeting.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I feel somewhat like the bear who has chosen a different course and escaped the trap of the hunters who are now angry that the bear did not walk into it. The member for Thompson should be somewhat shamed by his involvement in a particular forum this week that he referenced. That particular organization, and I do not have it to table but I will, sent me a letter, an invitation under a name of some organization that sort of was put up for the purpose, on blank stationary, sent it to my office on Thursday afternoon before a long weekend to invite me to attend a forum in St. Boniface on the Tuesday night, never said who they were, and the only thing we learned is reading in the paper that it was United Food and Commercial Workers. So if people are not going to be honest in setting up a forum, then it speaks greatly about them.

Madam Speaker, we have spoken much about the way that the CBC structured this forum. To basically ask and hand-pick an audience, it is evident of what it was about. It was not really in the interests of good public debate.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson, with a supplementary question.

Audience Members

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, the minister referenced that he felt like a bear. Chicken would be more appropriate.

I would like to ask as a follow-up: is the minister somehow suggesting that the CBC and the Free Press handpicked this forum, this audience? Is he then essentially agreeing with his Premier (Mr. Filmon) who suggested it was a political setup, and is that how far he has sunk when he will not go to a public forum open to all members of the public, sponsored by the Free Press and the CBC? Is that how paranoid he is as a minister?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I table now the copy of the letter I have from one Christine Martel, for the so-called public service project, which members will note is on a totally blank piece of paper in terms of identifying who they are. I notice in the story that the member for Thompson was involved with those United Food and Commercial Workers. At least people should have the honesty to identify who they are.

Madam Speaker, from the few clips I have seen of the forum, and if one canvasses the audience and some of the people reported as speaking, they were a hand-picked audience. CBC advertises for only people with problems, not for people who have general comments, good or bad. The CBC is noted for forums such as this. They did what they normally do, and the only beef they have is that this minister did not get caught in their trap. I make no apologies for that.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, I realize the government is getting paranoid, but does the minister seriously expect the people of Manitoba to believe that there is something suspicious about having Tony Quaglia, the former director of St. Boniface Hospital; Brian Postl, the Canada centre for policy health alternatives and Department of Health representatives at a forum sponsored by the Free Press and the CBC? Is that a setup or is it a fact that this government is absolutely afraid of facing the public on its disastrous health care policies?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I have spoken in many forums across this province. I have participated in many debates. I have been in forums with the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). Every day in this House I rise to defend our policies in front of this television camera and speak to Manitobans. I have spent hours and hours in committee being questioned by members opposite. I have brought even the planners and the

administrators within the system to that committee to be questioned by members opposite. We have had interesting debate.

Regrettably, I did not see the CBC come to legislative committee to follow this. I rarely see the Free Press, and when I scan that audience and I see people who have been out of the health care system for many years, when I see people who had their issues in certain hospitals, now living out of province being brought back, and I see a Free Press ad that does not say tell us your good and bad stories about health care but only the bad ones, you have to be pretty foolish not to see what the CBC was attempting to do.

Health Care System First Nations

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): My question is to the Minister of Health. Madam Speaker, ever since this government embarked on this health reform trip I have consistently pleaded with the Minister of Health to consider the general state of health amongst our people. To abandon the treatment aspect almost overnight and switch everything to prevention, education and community-based health would place our people in an untenable position. Many of our people would die during the transition phase because they are simply not receiving the treatment and the care that they should be receiving today.

My question to the minister is: what plans does he have today that would address the Third World health care conditions that exist that are being faced by our people today and being exacerbated by this government's health reform plans and being confirmed by the latest health report by the nurses yesterday?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I am not sure who the member for The Pas is referring to with respect to certain people, because surely to goodness he is not arguing that our health care delivery mechanism in Manitoba is Third World. That would be absurd. If he is referring to the fact of inadequate services in many First Nations communities in northern Manitoba, I would agree that they are far from adequate, and that is why I am very supportive of the process of transferring those dollars and authority from the national government to those First Nations.

We discussed in Estimates last week how that could be accomplished respecting our different jurisdictions, and I am fully supportive of that.

Madam Speaker, if he is making that accusation of Manitoba, we had a physician visit us yesterday from South Africa who spoke about our delivery mechanisms in Canada and spoke highly favourably of our system. When you compare our delivery system in terms of what is happening in the rest of the world, I think the member for The Pas' statement would not stand the scrutiny of fact.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for The Pas, with a supplementary question.

* (1410)

Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses Standards

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, my second question to the same minister is: given the nursing shortages, the increased amount of time nurses have to spend on paperwork and denying patients the service, the necessary medical trips that are required to come to Winnipeg and compromising nursing standards, which is the mandate of MARN whose existence, I believe, and whose mandate is based on The Registered Nurses Act, could I ask the minister what priority he places on ensuring that standards are not compromised, and lastly, who is monitoring what nowadays?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I have never denied in any public statement in this House or at any debate that there are not pressures on the system. I think the member is referring to the Manitoba Nurses' Union and not MARN. The report that was put out yesterday was by the Manitoba Nurses' Union. If one goes back to 1983, many of the same kinds of statements they were making in that report, they made at that particular time—but not to make light of an important issue in any way.

I know discussions that I have had with the Manitoba Nurses' Union with respect to working conditions, burnout, need for more hands in many of those circumstances, the high use of overtime—which we do

not have an accurate assessment of, but I have no reason to doubt is not taking place—many of these particular issues require the general employing authority of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, which New Democrats, I gather, have opposed. We would expect that if we can get the tools that we need to better manage the system, many of these areas can be addressed.

As I have indicated, Vera Chernecki and I meet regularly, and we wish to pursue many of these areas. As well, nurses are now involved in the program development in each of the 13 teams within the Winnipeg Hospital Authority.

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Speaker, I am going to ask the minister the same question, because I think he may not have heard me and he may have misunderstood me, or he deliberately did not want to answer my question, and that is the mandate and purpose of MARN, M-A-R-N, Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses, the licensing body in Manitoba for registered nurses, I believe exists on a piece of provincial legislation, Manitoba legislation called The Manitoba Registered Nurses Act.

My question to the minister is: what standards are being compromised, and who is monitoring if standards are being compromised in the health care delivery, especially in the remote northern nursing stations?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, first of all, many of those remote nursing stations that the member references are not within provincial jurisdiction. Some of them are, some of them are not. Some of them are federal. The Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses is the licensing and professional body for nurses. Their job is to ensure that they are properly trained and educated and that in the course of their practice they maintain the proper professional standards that are required of their profession. They operate like every other professional body in the province, as a complaint-driven organization, that if people file complaints about the performance of particular nurses, they are filed with that body and that body has the power, I understand, to revoke their licensing.

The administrators of each health delivery facility have the responsibility to ensure that its facility is

meeting acceptable standards in the delivery of care; otherwise, they are liable to lawsuits.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Madam Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

During Question Period on March 25, 1998, the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) raised a point of order respecting words spoken by the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik). The point of order alleged that the minister had imputed unworthy motives to the honourable member for Crescentwood.

I took the matter under advisement in order to review Hansard. The words objected to, I believe, by the honourable member for Crescentwood were “time and time again we have seen members of the opposition, particularly the member for Crescentwood, exaggerate and take out of context remarks.”

I wish to read into the record some words of former Speaker Fraser of the House of Commons: “. . . this place has never been a tea party and strong-minded men and women who believe passionately in things are going to express that passion and conviction from time to time . . . this is a tough place . . . that is not an excuse for excess, but it is and must be remembered that the most precious things and the most vital issues that this country faces are debated here and there will be at times expressions of great commitment, conviction and passion. I am sure that people will understand that in a free country, provided that those expressions are done in such a way that they do not wound others or bring into indignity the institution itself, that is probably something we have always had and probably something that will continue.”

I do not believe that the words used by the honourable Minister of Health did constitute an imputation of unworthy motives to the honourable member for Crescentwood. There was, therefore, no point of order.

* (1420)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Premier's Volunteer Service Awards

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, volunteerism has always been strong in Manitoba, and today the Premier (Mr. Filmon) announced the 10 recipients of the 1998 Premier's Volunteer Service Award. This award celebrates the efforts and dedication of all Manitoba volunteers. Recipients of the award have all made outstanding contributions to their communities, demonstrating leadership, personal initiative and determination through their volunteer activities. The Premier's Volunteer Service Award is a great honour, and it serves as a reminder that there is a lot that Manitobans can accomplish in our province.

On behalf of all members of this Legislature, I would like to congratulate all who have received awards this year, and I would just like to note that the panel of judges who sifted through all of the applications and selected the recipients are themselves volunteers and their contributions are also very much appreciated.

Just as a P.S. to this, we would just like to say to members and any who are listening, volunteer activities, anybody who is interested in them need not look any farther than the 1999 Pan Am Games. There is still a need for volunteers, and I cannot think of a better way to promote our province and our people on an international scale while at the same time learning about other people from all over North and South America. Thank you.

Highways—Northern Manitoba

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): As anyone who has travelled on northern roads the past few weeks knows, many of them have deteriorated significantly over the past winter. The mild winter has been followed by a record number of potholes. Highway 6 north of Grand Rapids and Highway 60 are in particularly bad shape. Last weekend I experienced several severe potholes on these roads, and I have had many calls from others concerned about the conditions of those roads. I urge the Highways minister to either personally drive on some of these roads over the next few weekends or have staff investigate the situation so that action can be taken to make the roads safer.

Disappointment over the broken promises of the department to tackle on an orderly basis PR 391 continues to come in. On April 15 the Leaf Rapids town sent the Minister of Highways a letter requesting the minister to reconsider his decision to not have the PR 391 base and AST capital project on the 14.6-kilometre section west of PR 280 in the 1998-1999 highway new construction program. This follows a similar letter sent to the minister by the Leaf Rapids Chamber of Commerce which I tabled in the Legislature earlier this week or last week. I hope the minister will now take the situation seriously instead of quoting out-of-date letters or clippings.

As the Leaf Rapids mayor noted, the community is striving to develop economic diversification and encourage companies to do exploration in the area and to attract business people. PR 391 must be brought up to an acceptable standard as soon as possible. It is our hope that the minister will now accept this reasonable request and live up to past promises and that he will improve this section of PR 391. Thank you.

Regional Alternative Education Centre

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, last night I had the pleasure of attending the grand opening of the Regional Alternative Education Centre in Altona as part of the Education Week celebration in the Rhineland School Division. The theme of the Rhineland School Division is Community Through Learning, and Learning Through Community. This is seen in the division's long-standing commitment to providing quality education to learners, young and old.

The Regional Alternative Education Centre is an important link between the school division and the community. It serves an adult constituency that has expressed a desire to achieve high school graduate status within the context of their busy family and working lives, and some of the people are actually using it to increase their knowledge through higher degrees of learning past high school.

The centre first started its co-operative venture which included among the partners: Manitoba Education and Training, Pembina Valley Development Corporation, Pembina Valley Learning Centre, the Pembina Valley Literacy for Adults, Red River Community College and

Human Resource Development Canada. The Altona centre is in its first year of operation and has experienced significant success as a large number of students have taken advantage of this important service.

The centre shows considerable promise in being an important factor in helping the region achieve economic and social success. More than 90 students have registered in the centre today. They range from high school to adult. The centre is obviously fulfilling a real and important need for southern Manitoba. I congratulate the organizers and staff of the Regional Alternative Education Centre in Altona for a job well done and wish the students well as they upgrade their education, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Andy Drummond

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I would like to use my member's statement today to say goodbye to a staff member who has been our lone staff member since the '95 election, and he has carried a lot of weight on his shoulders; that is Andy Drummond.

His last day of work for us is on Friday. He is going to China to teach English on a program being done by Red River Community College, and I believe the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) will know something about the program. This is a person who has acted beyond and above the call of duty, and that is Andy Drummond. He has been a loyal, loyal employee who has been there, and not only put in his 40 hours a week, but working for a number of elected officials—he has political leanings, and he spent many hours of his free time helping us out. I think if you look back at the newspaper clippings, the stories since the '95 election, the three members here, with the assistance of Andy Drummond, a number of times have brought issues forward with his keen research and hard work, and I want to commend him for what he has done, how loyal he has been to us, how he has followed direction and wish him the best of luck in his travels to China. Thank you.

Manitoba Book Week

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): As most members know, Madam Speaker, Sunday, April 19, to Saturday, April 25, is Manitoba Book Week. I believe all

members have received a package of information from the Association of Manitoba Book Publishers, and an excellent package it is, including a calendar of events, biographies of accomplished Manitoba writers, a directory of Manitoba book publishers, the names of book stores participating in this week of literary celebration, a celebratory week which features book launches, readings, meetings, awards, and draws for book prizes. This list is not inclusive since Manitoba Book Week is richer than I can document in a member's statement.

Manitobans are justly proud of our writers from the time of Frederick Philip Grove and his work of the '20s and '30s, to writers like Margaret Laurence with her now classic Manawaka novels, which delineate prairie consciousness only to suggest finally that the local is the only universal, to the many fine Manitobans writing in the '90s, Ian Ross, for example, who recently won the Governor General's Award for drama.

Manitoba writers have contributed to the myriad of voices that we call Canadian. As a Manitoban who loves literature and remembers a time when Canadian literature was disregarded, even denied, when a colonial mentality so prevailed that our universities did not teach our literature, I am terrified at the prospect of the MAI and the disastrous effect it could have on our writers and culture. Clearly we must be vigilant, and I know the NDP, federally and provincially, will be just that.

In closing, I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating Manitoba writers, publishers and bookstores for their creative work and dedication to culture. These people help us to see who we are, and because of them our lives are richer, our vision stronger and our voices remembered.

* (1430)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, for the information of honourable members, I propose to call bills tomorrow, on Wednesday, once we get into government orders.

Madam Speaker: For the information of the House, the government House leader has indicated that tomorrow he will be calling bills.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair, and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to her Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

ENERGY AND MINES

Mr. Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Energy and Mines.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 23.1 (b) Executive Support (2) Other Expenditures, on page 47 of the Estimates book. Shall this item pass?

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): If I remember correctly, I believe the minister was about to answer a question I just posed in regard to the change of a goal that was set one year, last year, at 50 percent increase for exploration and this year has dropped to 40 percent. It was my understanding that these goals were set back in '94-95 or maybe even earlier. I was looking for clarification or the rationale for that change.

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines): The goal was 50 percent. It has been revised to 40 percent. We wanted to be more realistic given the market conditions that influence exploration. We, of course, cannot control world metal prices and product demands that ultimately influence corporate investment decisions. What we can do and we are doing is to attempt to create the kind of investment climate in Manitoba that will make our province an attractive place to do business. We are doing this through our nine-point mining investment strategy.

Having said that, how are we progressing towards achieving our goal by the year 2000, using 1993 as a baseline? In 1993, exploration expenditures in Manitoba amounted to \$27.4 million. A 40 percent increase would have been \$38.4 million. A 50 percent increase would be \$41.1 million. In 1996, exploration expenditures totalled \$41.2 million. In 1997, although the final figures are not yet available, the forecast is for a slightly higher expenditure level at \$41.7 million.

These goals are intended to serve as one of the indicators of how well the industry is doing. Clearly, it is something we as a department cannot take sole credit for. The targets represent our vision of where we would like to see the industry performing in Manitoba on a sustained basis. Our role is to do whatever we can to help industry achieve these goals consistent with the philosophy and policies which I outlined to a certain extent yesterday.

Ms. Mihychuk: One of the other inconsistencies, it seems to me, is the identification of mineral production as a mission. In the '96-97 departmental expenditures, it is identified that the mission or the goal was to increase mineral production in Manitoba by 20 percent. In this year's, '97-98 and '98-99, I do not see that goal represented in the two Estimates books. Can the minister clarify the elimination of that goal?

Mr. Newman: Because of our lack of control over value, because of a lack of control over prices, we felt that it was an indicator which was not even as reliable as the last one to measure progress. So we have forgone utilizing that as a target indicator.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister tell us when these goals were established?

Mr. Newman: The original goals were established three or four years ago, and the revised goals were established in the early part of 1998.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister tell us if the department and the ministry at that time when they set the goals, did they believe these goals were achievable? Were they realistic goals?

Mr. Newman: Long-reach achievable targets, yes.

* (1450)

Ms. Mihychuk: I note that in the 1995 Estimates that the goals are already identified at that time. I have with me other years as we go back. My questions are basically related to the fact that this looks like a long-term attempt to set what I would have considered fairly optimistic goals.

However, it was, I assumed, the result of a process that the department undertook with Industry, perhaps, Labour, the mining sectors and that those goals were taken with some seriousness. I would like to ask the minister what type of process was established to change the goals since they have, in effect, been the department's goals for over three years.

Mr. Newman: I have personal knowledge of the planning process. Shortly after I became minister after January 6, 1997, I participated for the concluding part as an observer to see how the process worked. It is an inclusive, participatory senior-management process where they, with flip charts and facilitation, try and determine the goals.

In previous years, I gather that they have had a participatory process of senior management, and every year they look at revising goals with the view to create optimistic but achievable goals. In the course of reconsidering year after year, they look at market conditions and redefine in accordance with the unforeseeable becoming foreseeable. In other words, they recalibrate based on current information.

Ms. Mihychuk: Well, going back to the '94-95 annual report, I see that there too were established five goals that were carried on for several years, obviously with the long-term goal of reaching them in the year 2000. It seems to me that a person may argue that the goals are changed to meet the convenience of reality, and I question that. It appears to me that we have, in terms of exploration, reached the 40 percent increase from '93. We knew those numbers. I have the history from '93 onwards and it is, I think, somewhat questionable to change the goals based on, I guess, what is convenient and what looks good.

The fact is that the mining prices and values have dropped; therefore, perhaps we will not be able to

achieve that target. But it seems misleading or it lessens the value of those goals if we feel that we are able to change them to the convenience of meeting the targets. There have been significant changes in the goals, and one of them is to increase mineral production. That has been eliminated completely. By 20 percent was the goal; it is no longer a goal identified by the department. We see the reduction in the target for mineral exploration has been decreased from 50 percent down to 40 percent.

One of the goals that has been consistent, as far as I can see, is to increase oil production. That is a program that has been highly successful and, you know, that goal is achievable and maybe even might be surpassed, and so be it. If history finds that our goals were somewhat off, I think that is the assessment we make in the year 2000, but at that time we would be able to take a review and analyze our process in an open way and perhaps use the exercise as a way of improving our service or looking at a more realistic target for the next five years. But I would have serious questions about changing the goals, what apparently seems on an annual basis, for what is convenient for the department.

I would ask the minister to perhaps define a more collective process for the definition of these goals, and that may include more of a partnership goal, especially in the area of mineral production and exploration where we have industry presumably working in partnership. Does the minister see a role for the mining association or the mineral sector participating in these goal attainment levels?

Mr. Newman: Since I have become minister, I will always treat your thoughtful considerations which you express here, as will my staff, in deciding what approach they should take in future. I am comfortable with the adjustments that have been made which are relatively minor to the goals. I think given the realities of what has happened in the international marketplace, it would not be sensible to just proceed with the previous year's goals when a 40 percent increase would be an aggressive target, given the attractiveness of investing at this time in any jurisdiction.

But I will share with you something that I have learned so far which sometimes has caused me to wonder whether anything is more important once you

have achieved a friendly environment, an attractive environment for investment in terms of fiscal policy and reliability and rule of law and general infrastructure being relatively good, all of the basics for being an attractive place to invest. Once you have done that—and I believe that has been done in Manitoba—we always have to adjust to changes in other jurisdictions to make sure that we continue to be not left far behind or ahead.

But the curious thing that I have learned about the mining industry, even the oil business—maybe mining particularly in Manitoba because it is a much bigger industry—is that the excitement of a find seems to be the most important factor in attracting investment. Now, whether that is right or wrong, it is reality. I just look at Newfoundland and ask myself why did they attract as much investment as they did. If it had not been for Voisey Bay, would they have attracted anything near what they have achieved?

* (1500)

So my greatest hope, which all of the efforts are directed toward, is having a real major mine brought into production, a real major deposit found here that attracts the interest of the world. Nothing else, my experience would suggest, all the other things being attractive, will make a difference and to that extent, and then the forecast will be so inadequate that whoever is fortunate enough to be in the ministry at that time will have difficulty explaining why suddenly your exploration expenditures have increased by maybe 100 percent or 200 percent and why has this happened. I would argue that it is probably because all of the effort was made to have an attractive environment earned over many years which resulted in all of this exploration going on, and suddenly one of them—not suddenly, but at a given point in time pursuant to this evolutionary exploration process, all things came into place and a major discovery was announced or a major mine came into production. That will make all the difference.

So I really will be very candid. I have put less stock in these indicators and far more stock in what kinds of efforts are being put in by the department and what sort of third-party endorsements we get from people in industry and knowledgeable people in mining who speak to how Manitoba is doing relative to other places

in the world. The interesting thing I have also discovered is that the statistics, in many cases, do not reflect what I would regard as the superior job Manitoba is doing relative to other jurisdictions, but it does explain why we continue to more than hold our own in the competitive environment out there, that what we need is the magic, the attractiveness of a major find announcement or a major new mine coming into production.

Ms. Mihychuk: There is always a debate as to whether to focus department energies on finding the new big one or directing energies to preserving and supplementing what exists already. Manitoba is facing a crisis in a number of different areas, Leaf Rapids, Flin Flon. Snow Lake underwent a serious closure and reopening. I am not sure of the length of reserves there. Bissett. These are mining communities who have been severely impacted by mine closures. The department has a policy, 8.2, which states: Programs shall be developed to encourage and direct exploration into areas threatened by permanent mine closures. It goes on to state that the intent of the policy is to maintain the economic viability of communities by finding new ore reserves. It goes on as to how the department will conduct its business to meet those ends.

Is the minister saying that in his view the department's goal should be focused on finding the next new ore deposit rather than continuing to look for reserves in established mining community areas?

Mr. Newman: No, it is a combination of both, as that particular policy indicated. There is still a significant amount of proven deposits in the traditional mining areas, and much of that information being in the records, probably of Inco and Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting, and how many mines they have in waiting we can never be sure of.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister tell us the mission or the purpose of the Mining Reserve Fund?

Mr. Newman: I cannot quote it, but the purpose is laid out in the statute, and it is a listing of a number of different items. If you had the statute handy, where we could put our hands on it, I could accurately put into the record what its purpose is. In essence, its purpose is to contribute to the continued employment and

economic well-being and health of communities that suffer from the inevitable closure of mines.

The reserve, under The Mining Tax Act, which takes, in an exercise of discretion, a percentage of mining taxes, is used to fund initiatives about or for the benefit of mining communities that may be affected by the total or partial suspension of mining operations.

Ms. Mihychuk: The monies that are collected are through a percentage of the mining taxes. The major producers are, I would presume, the major contributors, or do we have list of companies that are contributing in that sector to supplement the Mining Reserve Fund?

Mr. Newman: The amount of contributions by company is directly related to the profitability, and the size of the company is not the factor. Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting, for example, I am not sure the last time that they made a contribution in the form of mining taxes. Inco is probably the biggest contributor over recent years, and had some dazzling years in the past.

* (1510)

Ms. Mihychuk: How much money was directed from mining taxes into the Mining Reserve Fund in the past fiscal year?

Mr. Newman: The transfer from mining taxes to the reserve for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1997, was \$244,000.

Ms. Mihychuk: Is the decision to transfer money made by the Minister of Finance, or is there a set formula for the transfer of funds?

Mr. Newman: It is determined by the Minister of Finance.

Ms. Mihychuk: Would the minister provide, if it is not available now, but for information, the contributions made to the Mining Reserve Fund in the last four years since '95?

Mr. Newman: Yes.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister tell us what projects were funded out of the Mining Reserve Fund?

Mr. Newman: I can give you right now the payments out of the fund made in 1997-98 as at October 31, 1997. I can update that to March 31 of this year. I have been given another listing which is more current, and the project, on account of the Sherridon tailings initiative, the cleanup was \$1,975. The education support levy for the Ruttan Mine agreement was \$117,957.45. That is the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company Limited arrangement that has been ongoing since the New Democratic government of the past negotiated that arrangement. Support for the Prospectors Assistance Program, \$99,261.50. Another item with respect to addressing the Sherridon tailings issue, \$39,706.43, for a total of \$258,900.38.

Ms. Mihychuk: Have monies been withdrawn from the Mining Reserve Fund to cover MEAP advances or grants?

Mr. Newman: No. The process that was used to fund MEAP was to have funds moved from the Mining Reserve that exceeded the \$5-million cap into the Consolidated Fund. Those funds were then used to finance MEAP. So the way it was handled was to, in effect, deem, if you will, a surplus to the fund and then use it for the purposes of MEAP.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister indicate what he considers a surplus to the fund, and was all of the money then transferred out of that to general or consolidated revenue?

Mr. Newman: No. The current minimum value of the fund is \$5 million. As you indicated in your opening statement, we have legislation which I know you support to increase the level to at least \$10 million, the minimum level. You have indicated you would like it even larger than that and I have taken notice of that.

Ms. Mihychuk: What was the amount in the reserve fund in 1996-97?

Mr. Newman: Maybe I could be helpful by giving you what the opening balance was April 1, 1997. It was \$19,458,231.86. There was revenue generated, again, from April 1 to March 31, 1998, in the amount \$685,474.86, less the payments that I have already referred to, of \$258,900.38, for a closing balance on March 31, 1998, of \$19,884,806.34. Of that,

committed to projects, some of which I outlined in their total, is \$4,366,141.13, for a noncommitted balance of \$15,518,665.21.

Again, to be helpful, one of the committed items that I did not refer to, because nothing has been paid out of it, is a commitment of \$260,000 for an economic development officer in the Local Government District of Lynn Lake.

Ms. Mihychuk: Well, I think that it would be reasonable, given the numbers the minister has provided, to basically say that the Mining Reserve Fund has been used to cover the cost of the MEAP program to the tune of \$4 million. I would ask the minister if he views the MEAP projects, the exploration projects, as being in compliance with the mission or the goal of the Mining Reserve Fund.

Mr. Newman: Again, to be factual, the transfer to general revenue, the total committed from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) was \$6 million. The transfers, or the amount paid for MEAP, was \$1,292,556. We do not yet have the 1997-98 figures of payouts, so the MEAP transferred amounts are external to the uncommitted balance of \$15,518,665.21.

Ms. Mihychuk: If I understand the minister correctly, he just indicated that \$6 million was taken out of the Mining Reserve Fund. Can the minister explain why the government felt it was valuable and necessary to put that money into the Mining Reserve Fund, and now, during the last budget, or the year previously, has decided that it is appropriate to take \$6 million out of the Mining Reserve Fund?

* (1520)

Mr. Newman: I do not want to play with words. The fact is that the act presumed to protect or intended to protect at least \$5 million from any uses other than those stipulated in the statute. It is arguable that utilizing the funds for the MEAP program is consistent with the listed intent but, because that argument was not advanced and there was not any desire to nitpick, the investment stood on its own merits out of general funds by moving what was considered the excess out of the Mining Reserves minimum into general revenue kinds of decisions. Based on what I have heard from

the industry, based on results which are apparent, the use of MEAP dollars has been a very useful and important investment in the development of mining and the generation of exploration activity and therefore revenue to employees, entrepreneurs, and so forth, and suppliers in the province of Manitoba.

With respect to the legislation, which is going to increase the limits to the \$10 million, the minimum to \$10 million, in the new legislation, I indicated last year, and I listen again this year as to your position about having a right to encroach on the Mining Reserve to do MEAP program, and I am getting the message that your position is that that right is something that you feel should not be there. That would then mean the \$10 million would be protected against use for this purpose.

I have indicated to you last year and I indicate to you this year that if you want to have that fund protected in those ways, and the industry agrees with that and generally the communities think that is a better way to go, I have indicated that I am prepared to give serious consideration to that, because all of this is designed to really be a community decision, an industry decision, and designed to fulfill the intent of the legislation to the maximum.

Ms. Mihychuk: Is the intent of the government to withdraw again in this fiscal year money out of the Mining Reserve Fund and to what extent?

Mr. Newman: So we can make sure we understand and the public understands this. The question that I am responding to is whether or not monies will be spent on MEAP this year in addition to the \$1,292,556 already paid out. The answer to that is yes. Exactly to what amount is not known at this time.

Ms. Mihychuk: Is there the intent by the government to withdraw funds in addition to the money needed to supplement the MEAP program? I understand that last year some of it went into the general revenues. Is that the intent again in the future?

Mr. Newman: Just so we make clear. I have treated the \$6 million transferred to general revenue for the purposes of an informed conversation between you and I as being committed dollars out of the Mining

Community Reserve. So that is in addition to what is a noncommitted balance of \$15,518,665.21.

Ms. Mihychuk: Does the minister see the balance of the money in the reserve fund falling below \$15 million?

Mr. Newman: That would depend on how aggressively and successfully and consistent with the intent of the legislation applicants to the Mining Community Reserve make cases for funds to be advanced. For example, the Local Government District of Lynn Lake, through their mayor, put through a very persuasive case over the past year which has resulted in a multiyear investment commitment subject to certain performance measures of \$260,000. I am directly, and through my staff and through you and through this process, encouraging applications from communities that are victims of the suspension or discontinuation of mining operations, encouraging creativity and encouraging real efforts to build a healthy sustainable economy not dependent on mining to the greatest extent possible.

Ms. Mihychuk: If I understand correctly, in 1997, \$244,000 was taken from mining taxes and put into the Mining Reserve Fund to supplement the fund. Is that correct?

Mr. Newman: That is correct.

Ms. Mihychuk: In 1998, an estimate must have been made for the '98-99 year as to the government's commitment to the Mining Reserve Fund. Is the minister prepared to share what we anticipate will be going into the Mining Reserve Fund?

* (1530)

Mr. Newman: I can give you some figures again that might be helpful, not directly responsive to your question, but the magnitude of mining taxes which in the discretion of the Minister of Finance, the government of the day, has been transferred out of mining taxes into the fund from 1970-71, March 31 fiscal year, through March 31, 1997, is \$15,744,541. The total interest earned on that principal amount, if you will, in its various incremental forms over the years is \$15,210,935 for the period 1970-71 fiscal year through March 31, 1998.

Ms. Mihychuk: Is the MEAP program dependent on monies available in the Mining Reserve Fund?

Mr. Newman: I would put it another way. It is a portion of mining taxes which have been earned which have initially found their way into the Mining Community Reserve Fund and then have been moved out of that fund, the total committed amount of \$6 million, and then, once in the general revenue, utilized for MEAP purposes.

Ms. Mihychuk: Given that the balance in the Mining Reserve Fund now is \$15.5 million approximately, is the continuance of the MEAP program dependent on the balance available in the Mining Reserve Fund? For instance, is there a base level? If the Mining Reserve Fund is tapped to the point of \$10 million, which will be our new minimum, will that mean the ultimate end of the MEAP program, or is there a direct relationship like that for the funding of the MEAP program?

Mr. Newman: We are, at this very time, in the process of doing a final evaluation of the MEAP program. We have input from industry, and the department will be making recommendations regarding the continuation and modification of the program in the next month or so, I think, before the end of May, is it not? Before the end of May 1998. Part of that review will include a consideration of whether the Mining Community Reserve Fund should or should not continue to offset additional expenditures for MEAP. So this discussion is relevant and helpful, as is input from the community.

I frankly do hope that the legislation we are putting forward might generate some discussion, which I invite. I am open to making modifications to that legislation, as I say, to work in the public interest to the advantage of the affected communities and mining development in the province which is designed to benefit all communities, particularly in the North of Manitoba, who derive benefits from successful mining in or around them.

Ms. Mihychuk: Well, I guess my interpretation of the Mining Reserve Fund, it is more limited, that the purpose was to provide a cushion or a fund that would be there for those workers and the community that is going to be directly impacted by mine closure or a shutdown for a while. So that is a point of deviation,

and we have been there, so I do not wish to go over that. We will have an opportunity during our legislative debate. I see that the minister wishes to respond to that before we move on.

Mr. Newman: Before we do move on, and thanks for your indulgence in allowing me to make a comment, but I would like to put on the record what my position is so that in your constituency—I see the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) here now—and in your responsibility as critic, responsible for all the—certainly the New-Democratic-Party-represented constituencies that wish to represent views that can get the best from this minister and this government.

I may or may not be of a different point of view than you, and maybe a different approach, but whereas there is no question that the Mining Reserve is there to be there in a time of crisis to address major negative impacts of a closing, I repeat and expand on some of my earlier thoughts which are that proactive steps, creative steps to be less dependent on mining may offer a longer solution and healthier, more sustainable communities. Every time I meet with people from the North who are focusing on long-term health and sustainability, they make that point to me, and I just listen, but to make that even very, very clear, knowing that many mines have identifiable minimum lifetimes—and I have encouraged communities to look at them in many cases as bonuses—it is very helpful to have another reason for existing and have a long-term vision that perhaps excludes mining as a portion of it.

* (1540)

If effectively a heritage fund or foundation could be created out of what is a bonus, a windfall by communities, that is something that could helpfully ensure a long-term healthy and sustainable future for communities. So that kind of approach I am, rightly or wrongly, actively encouraging because I am getting the message that that is the desire in community-driven ways now, and it is causing a certain amount of, I think, positive, exciting activities in communities like Flin Flon, Snow Lake, Leaf Rapids that have been exposed to the recent possibility that Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting might discontinue its operations.

So that is where many of the most positive, creative ideas are coming. Lynn Lake is another recent

community that, as I have already indicated, has been invested in out of the Community Reserve Fund.

Ms. Mihychuk: I thank the minister. I have with me a colleague who represents Flin Flon. I am wondering if it would be appropriate to ask some general comments in terms of the area that he represents, and I look for some discretion here, rather than waiting maybe until the Mines department and hope that we can indulge some time for him.

Mr. Chairperson: I would like to advise the members of the committee that the correct procedure for considering items in the Committee of Supply is in the line-by-line manner, and in order to skip ahead or revert back to lines already passed, unanimous consent of the committee is required. Now, I have allowed some latitude with the questioning that has been going on, but I have been tempted to interrupt the proceedings and the questioning with regard to this.

We are on line 23.1.(b)(2) Other Expenditures \$75,500, and if there are any other questions pertaining to that, then I would certainly entertain any questions. If there are not, then maybe we might consider passing that and then go on to seeking unanimous consent, if there is some area of the Estimates order that we wanted to address out of turn. What is the wish of the committee?

Ms. Mihychuk: I look for clarification. I have another colleague who represents the community of Thompson who also wishes to have an opportunity to discuss the situation there for Inco. Unfortunately, he is not able to be here at the present time which leads us into a dilemma because we do—if we moved into the Mines Branch, would we be obligated to then complete that whole section, or we could move through the two of them and revert back into that area.

Mr. Chairperson: Just for the benefit of the committee, as long as there is unanimous consent of the committee to revert back or to move forward, certainly that is all right by the Chair. That is acceptable, and I guess in light of what we are looking at here, if there is anything that we can move in being accommodating, to pass any items, certainly with the wishes of the committee, the Chair will be somewhat lenient in respect to that, to entertaining, moving back after a line

has been passed. So I just offer that, you know, subject to the committee's approval.

Ms. Mihychuk: I have no problem with that. The section under 23.1.(a) Minister's Salary and 23.1.(b), I believe is where we are, under Executive Support, I use it as an opportunity to look at broad-based policy issues, and I have completed that section as far as I need to. We will have other opportunities to go into more detail, so I am prepared to pass that section.

Mr. Chairperson: Just for clarification, we are on 23.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (2) Other Expenditures. Is there willingness of the committee to pass that portion of the Estimates?

An Honourable Member: Pass.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 23.1.(b)(2) Other Expenditures \$75,500—pass.

Item 23.1.(c) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$622,500.

Ms. Mihychuk: I would ask for unanimous approval to move to the Mines Branch where we could have discussions on Flin Flon and Hudson Bay Smelting.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there unanimous consent to move to section 23.2. Energy and Mineral Resources (c) Mines (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,370,900? Is there unanimous consent to move to that portion? [agreed]

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): I realize I inconvenienced the proceedings somewhat, but I am very glad you allowed me a chance to ask a few questions. I promise to be fairly brief.

First of all, I am very happy to see that the town of Lynn Lake is getting some money out of the Mining Reserve Fund to help with its municipal costs. That is certainly a very positive direction, and I am very happy to see that. I want to thank the minister on behalf of the people of Lynn Lake.

The concern, of course, I have is other mining communities, one-industry towns that have their ups and downs, as we saw in Snow Lake. They were down

and out early 1990s and now doing very well; Bissett, down and out and, hopefully, doing well now; Lynn Lake is certainly still in some tough times. But the community that concerns me very much at this moment is Leaf Rapids because it appears that, from what HBM&S spokesmen are telling me at any rate, by 2003 that orebody will be exhausted for all their purposes, and that would mean that the main reason for that town to exist would appear to be gone. I am just asking the minister; in the past we have worked out some arrangements to stave off that disaster. I am fully aware, you know, that at some point in time the mining reserves will disappear in any given area, but in the case of Leaf Rapids, particularly, when 2003 hits, are there any plans in place, any funding in place to help tide that community over, to cushion that community, specifically from the Mining Reserve Fund?

Mr. Newman: This is a very timely question, and your analysis coincides with what my staff have advised me. Efforts have been made by Geological Services staff to help determine other opportunities, but, predictably, if the information we get from HBM&S turns out to be valid, the life of that particular operation, that particular mine will conclude by 2003, approximately.

This is the kind of proactive time when I would hope, encourage you, encourage Lynn Lake—I am sorry, encourage Leaf Rapids community members, many of whom I have met and are very capable people, to look to applying to the Mining Reserve to help them develop an alternative to mining and have it in readiness, in operation for that very real probability.

We, in terms of philosophy, will respond to community-driven approaches, which, in terms of philosophy, in all my responsibilities, I favour. We encourage, we facilitate and that is what we do through my remarks now and through you and the official opposition critic—transmit, communicate to the people in Leaf Rapids and vicinity.

Mr. Jennissen: I thank the minister for the answer. One of the concerns I have, of course, is that not only for the sake of the community itself, but I am thinking of the Sherridon line that we managed to pull out of the fire. When I say we, a lot of players, stakeholders and certainly northerners were involved in making sure that

line remained viable. Now, if the material sent out by Ruttan no longer travels from Lynn Lake south to the smelter, that may indeed jeopardize that line. I am just guessing. I hope it does not, but if that happens then that would jeopardize the people in Pukatawagan, perhaps even, you know, the Tolko operation. It is like a domino. If one key domino falls, it could affect a lot of others. That concerns me a great deal. That is not just maybe hardship for Leaf Rapids, but it would have some tremendous negative spinoffs in other directions as well. I wonder if the minister would comment on that.

Mr. Newman: When a program, an idea emerges from a community or there is a desire to involve the provincial government through any one of several different departments in helping develop a future in comprehensive ways, the Department of Rural Development will characteristically assume the lead, as they have done in Lynn Lake, for example, with respect to the funding of the economic development officer over time, and if it is a bigger picture issue involving a number of departments of government and there is a plan or an approach which would attract the talents and experience of the Economic Development Board Secretariat, they would become involved.

I would invite, again, the community through its various leaders to come forward. I know that I recently met with the Community Futures people from your area of Flin Flon. I met with the Greenstone Community Futures people sharing this kind of information with them, and I am willing to do that at any time, if not to directly assist, to certainly facilitate through staff and work in conjunction with you as the MLA, to try and co-ordinate a multidepartmental effort to address the challenge of, as I say, a probable closing with all its implications.

* (1550)

As I say, I find this a useful process to invite that, but I do not want to impose a government-driven initiative. I want it to be community driven, but I share your concerns about their future. They should be collaborating. They should be looking at the big picture, and I am very pleased to facilitate that on their behalf. As I say, in all my conversations I let them know that.

You should know that approximately 10.2 percent, according to my staff's calculation, of MEAP money has been spent in the Lynn Lake-Leaf Rapids area since the beginning of MEAP in 1995-96.

Mr. Jennissen: Mr. Chair, I attended the last mining convention, as I always try to do, and I was very enlightened with some of the presentations, particularly the exploration initiatives. But in reference to what the minister just said, spending 10 percent of MEAP money in that area still seems terribly low, because obviously there is a major community at risk. I know Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting is doing considerable exploration in that area, as well, but considering that that is a community at risk, should we not be spending a lot more money in that area, in the Greenstone area, in the area where the threatened community actually is?

I know a lot of effort and energy is going in further to the east and the north, but even if there is a major find, you are still a heck of a long ways away from a major existing community, as far as I know.

Mr. Newman: As you know, MEAP reacts, responds to applications, so the interest is really demonstrated by the experts, the explorers and the mining—the explorationists out there who are taking the risk of investing a majority of their money or publicly subscribed money.

If what you are suggesting is we should have an additional incentive to explore in known areas rather than in the unknown areas like the Northern Superior, I have answered that question on a number of different occasions, and the position of the department at this time is that the rationale for the additional amount is—rather than redressing, in effect, failing situations, the inducement is to encourage investment in areas which have impediments to explorationists going in there unless they are lured into it.

The kinds of impediments that I understand exist in the Northern Superior include the large overburden, the lack of infrastructure accessibility and simply the newness of it. Even the geological data is not as complete in that area as in what are the very well-known areas in the Flin Flon, Lynn Lake, Leaf Rapids, Snow Lake kinds of areas. There is not a whole bunch of difficulty in attracting investment in those areas

because of a lack of knowledge. So I have concluded that it would not even be likely to attract more, and if it did attract more, it would not necessarily be in the best interests, one, of getting the big find, which I have said could make a big difference, and secondly, a big difference in terms of the attractiveness is Manitoba as a place to invest, to attract attention, attract the excitement, romance, but it may be using MEAP in ways that I have indicated that I do not support, and that is rather than making up for a negative view of the mining environment in the province, it would be closer to the kind of handout designed to partner with the people who know the underground well, know the area well. So for those two reasons, it would just be inconsistent with the philosophy which so far has driven MEAP.

I indicated yesterday that I take the approach that MEAP, once it has accomplished its goal of restoring the positive good will in this province, I am not inclined to be supportive of that as the best way to spend money. I would then tend to emphasize spending it more on geological data and that kind of thing.

To give you some specifics, the breakdown of the expenditure of MEAP dollars by region really supports the natural continued attractiveness—in spite of the extra inducement to invest in Northern Superior—the natural attraction of the Flin Flon, Snow Lake, Thompson nickel belt, and even Lynn Lake, Leaf Rapids areas. The breakdown of the areas of Northern Superior, 12.2 percent; Flin Flon/Snow Lake, 34.6 percent; Lynn Lake/Leaf Rapids, 10.2 percent; Thompson nickel belt, 24.4 percent, is quite instructive, I think.

Mr. Jennissen: Perhaps I did not understand it quite clearly. Is the minister referring to MEAP expenditures percentage?

Mr. Newman: Yes.

Mr. Jennissen: What would that look like if we talked in terms of the department's own expertise in staff and geological crews and surveys and so on? What percentage would be devoted to this at-risk area?

* (1600)

Mr. Newman: The Geological Services Branch's allocations for field activity expenditures are: Northern

Superior, 37.5 percent; next largest, Flin Flon, 22.6 percent; Thompson, 20.6 percent; Lynn Lake, 0.5 percent. My comment, in addition to those facts, would be that we have a concerted effort which is consistent with the industry desire, request to have us provide more information for the lesser-known areas.

Once again, I can share with you that anecdotally in my meetings with mining explorationists, on an international basis many of them, over the many, many decades, have had very considerable experience with the Flin Flon, Lynn Lake, Snow Lake, Leaf Rapids kinds of areas. So in my conversations with them I can almost picture their minds being able to see what the underground looks like, but they do not have that same appreciation for the Northern Superior. Of course, there are vast areas there that have not received the attention that the other areas have, and we are hoping that what can emerge there will be another Flin Flon, another Thompson, another Lynn Lake and Leaf Rapids, for example.

Mr. David Faurshou, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Jennissen: That is actually a very good point the minister makes, but some of the experts suggest that that will never happen again, that mining is now in such a phase, a technological phase that mining will never require huge communities even if there is a large find. I do not know if that is true or not, that is just what some of the people tell me.

I am just wondering if that is indeed the direction of the future, where it is no longer going to be labour intensive—it is kind of speculative, I realize that—but highly reliant on technology. If that is the case, then maybe even future big finds in fairly remote areas may not necessarily lead to communities anymore, maybe some flying in and flying out stuff, but the kind of Thompsons and the Leaf Rapids and the Flin Flons may be something of the past according to some mining experts. I really do not know. I wish someone could give me a more definitive response to that.

Mr. Newman: This would be a very useful exercise to discuss with people in the industry, particularly suppliers of all the new technology and the explorationist kind of equipment that can do things that

were never dreamed of before. So, I mean, if that is not the case, that is, if it is not necessary or it simply does not happen that a major new community emerges, it will depend on the creativity, the ingenuity, the diligence of any northern communities that are nearby to put forward an approach to doing mining which will make the costs of doing that mining, doing exploration, world competitive. That seems to be the way of the future. Whether it is Northern Affairs communities, whether it is First Nations communities of the North, whether it is Thompson, Flin Flon, whatever is now an existing centre with an infrastructure, and therefore competencies and natural advantage which they can capitalize on to the benefit of, as I say, more cost-effective mining and exploration, it will be a win-win.

I have heard many times major mining companies in this jurisdiction and others talk about if they have reasoned and helpful well-trained supportive communities, First Nations communities, Northern Affairs communities, urban industrial communities, which want to work with them and provide them services, they will take advantage of that because you cannot overcome extra costs of transportation from a major distance.

So there are many, many opportunities without, say, building a new city or a new town, many opportunities for communities that just have to be more proximate to exploration and development, and that is reflected now in the participation of First Nations in doing work for even junior exploration companies, Northern Affairs communities, the greatest extent possible trying to look at it in ways that they can be of service to mines in urban industrial communities having a developed infrastructure, trained people, a much higher percentage of high school and university graduates than surrounding areas.

I think there will be positive benefits no matter what form new mining takes for them—and why should they not be?—with their knowledge of the North and so forth, the creators of the best ideas and the generators of the most cost-effective solutions. Their local knowledge can also help. So I think it can be very much a win-win, and the future will be to their benefit more or less depending on how they approach it.

Mr. Jennissen: I guess part of it is we also have to look for a balance. Certainly, I am very much in favour

of exploring newer areas, hoping to find that mother lode of all mother lodes. I hear many a prospector from Bissett to Sherridon talking about that kind of stuff, and certainly we want to move into those areas that have been less explored. But at the same time, I think, there has to be the balance of existing communities that have to be protected, perhaps treated with some kind of a cherished status. I do not know if you would call it mollycoddling or not, but you maybe need some special kind of treatment.

I do know that if infrastructure keeps deteriorating or, you know, is removed—we are talking about housing or town centres or roads or railroads, whatever—then you reach the point of no return, and Northerners complain enough about PR 391. Lord knows what is going to happen if there is no Leaf Rapids or a very small Leaf Rapids. We are having trouble getting a dime now, we are going to have trouble getting a nickel later on. That is certainly one of the concerns that I have in that whole region and would be somewhat at risk.

* (1610)

There are many people not directly involved with mining, or perhaps retired miners, who do not wish to leave that region. I hope a lot more effort will be put into place to diversify. I do not know to what degree we can use the Mining Reserve Fund for creative initiatives to diversify, like some of the people perhaps have simplistic directions or answers for this problem. I know there is one gentleman in Flin Flon that delights to tell me, look, there is not a problem here. If HBM&S should leave and we are out 2,000 jobs, all we have to do is find 10 more areas that each create 200 jobs.

But, you know, I have a heck of a time finding 10 areas where we can employ 200 people. In the case of Leaf Rapids, well, there are not nearly that many people employed, but certainly I would like to see that very creative town survive and survive well, particularly, in light of the fact that the government pushes tourism a lot. I know Europeans and Japanese people and a lot of people that come into Manitoba would like to go up North, and part of what prohibits them from doing so is the nature of that road. So, yes, I would hope that there would be some creative ways or some access to money,

perhaps via the Mining Reserve Fund, that would stabilize places like Leaf Rapids.

Mr. Newman: It may be that there is some difference in terms of the philosophy of the official opposition and the government that I am part of in terms of the approach it would take to community development. I have indicated, perhaps before you arrived here today, to the official opposition critic that the approach that my department takes consistent with the government policy is to have to the greatest extent possible community-driven, community-based kinds of initiatives and solutions to which we will respond collaboratively and in facilitative ways.

One thing that is inconsistent with the philosophy that drives this department through this minister is that you do not want to perpetuate something that all market forces and all indicators show will not have a future walking a certain path. The best way to ensure a future is for a community to have a long-term vision which they are committed to and they are working towards and they are excited about. If they do not have it, no matter what support is given, it will simply be temporary transitional funding which really is not as well invested as it could be if there were a positive vision instead.

There are many of the communities of the North and elsewhere—gosh, in southern Manitoba—that have lost their original reason for being, and they have not rediscovered a new one, sometimes simply cease to exist as anything but a retirement community or whatever.

The people of the North who are representative of self-reliance and have a capacity for self-sufficiency that sometimes is superior to anywhere else in the province have enormous resources at their disposal which may or may not involve mining at all. We encourage them all to identify what their assets are, what their strengths are, what their weaknesses are and develop a long-term vision.

The Department of Rural Development plays a role in that. The Round Table on Environment and Economy through sustainable development policies that have emerged out of that and are within government address that. The Economic Development Board

Secretariat addresses that, and to the extent that the Mining Community Reserve Fund can be used as a funder, it is a fund of a kind which is not available in other departments.

So there is, in effect, an opportunity for those communities to access funding through a proven plan that can help them move toward that vision I am talking about and a sustainable future.

Mr. Jennissen: If I understand the minister correctly then, a plan such as the one set out or the vision set out by the Grass River Tourism Corridor Inc. people which is rather ambitious and far-reaching and does encompass a large section of the North would be able to access funds from the Mining Reserve Fund, because certainly they are having trouble getting necessary funds from I, T and T. These are the people pushing ecotourism, doing research on the history of the area, I think tremendous potential there, and they are a little bit frustrated with the lack of funding. Could those people possibly access some of the funds from the Mining Reserve Fund?

Mr. Newman: The simple answer is yes. The broader answer is that any application will be considered on its own merits. I have indicated how I am challenging the people of the North that are in these situations to be as creative as possible to contribute to their being healthy, sustainable communities, and my own sympathies, my own inclination for support would be precisely for those kinds of creative ideas.

Mr. Jennissen: I would like to switch now to the Flin Flon region directly. Flin Flon is the second largest mining community in Manitoba. Certainly, we did go through some very scary moments in the last several months about whether or not that region would have a future. I think we all tried to be as circumspect—like we walked on eggshells. We did not want to jeopardize any negotiation process between unions and HBM&S and so on. I gather at this stage that 2012 will be a go. At least, certainly, all of us in the North are hoping that that will be the case.

I do not know if there is any privileged or confidential information on this, but just in general terms I wonder if the minister would be willing to comment about the government's role in expediting that

process. Certainly, we want 2012 to succeed for everybody's sake.

Mr. Newman: So you will understand the process that HBM&S followed in relation to the province, they wanted support of the province for their 2012 initiative, and I, personally, and my staff and other departments of government and the Economic Development Board have all had presentations made by HBM&S.

As a result of that process, we have communicated to the company officials a response as to where we stand as a government in relation to a number of aspects of their Project 2012. We had them do the quantifying of the benefit to them, so that we were not in, you know, our calculations-your calculations dialogue, and they have been very forthright and very co-operative in working through this.

The items we have communicated back to them are the identifiable new mines that have potential. In this business, as you can appreciate, a new mine having potential for realization often means are they going to invest blank millions of dollars in something and so forth. But in their plan, which you probably have seen and the community has seen, they were hypothesizing that there are two new mines there. Given the new mines that they have described, or the potential mines they have described, we look at new mine status using their figures as having \$11.4-million benefit to the company through 2012.

*(1620)

We have indicated that that new mine status in the circumstances outlined would be forthcoming. New investment tax credit for the two new mines would, using their figures, be \$9.2 million benefits to 2012. New investment credit, a zinc plant expansion has been valued by them as \$4.2 million. The budgetary changes which are not custom tailored for HBM&S, but do benefit them, would have a value to 2012 of \$1.3 million. The motive fuel tax exemption through 2012 would have a benefit of \$6.6 million for a total of \$32.7 million, in effect, being contributed by the taxpayers of the province of Manitoba, based on their figures to 2012.

I am reluctant to deal with in any detail two other items which are under consideration which we have not

yet formally communicated to HBM&S and we continue to discuss with them, so I would appreciate, for HBM&S' sake and the communities out there as well as us, be sensitive to the fact that they would involve a certain amount of confidentiality and I would prefer not to discuss this at this time. But other than that, that is where we stand in the process of addressing the 2012 issue.

Mr. Jennissen: Just basically one last little question. The two mines referred to are Chisel north then and 777? [interjection]

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Faurschou): I might just recognize the member for Flin Flon first, prior to his question being posed, please.

Mr. Jennissen: I am sorry, Mr. Chair. I was just, for clarification, the two mines then are Chisel north and 777?

Mr. Newman: Those are the names that have been shared with us as being names of those two identified potential mines, yes.

Mr. Jennissen: I thank the minister for indulging me to let me ask some questions. [interjection] Sorry for jumping the gun here; a little edgy in the North lately. I want to thank the minister for answering the questions that are certainly very relevant to the communities that I represent up there, and I would like to turn it back to the real expert here, my critic in Energy and Mines.

Ms. Mihychuk: I would like to suggest that we go back to the order of Estimates according to the outline in the book, and we can move along through the department, I think, with a deal more haste than has been. Since my questions have been broad ranging and there has been a degree of latitude by the Chair, many of the policy questions have been answered, and I would like to go through the department according to the Estimates book. The next one I understand is Administration and Finance.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Faurschou): Financial and Administrative Services 23.1.(c). Is it the unanimous consent of the committee members to revert back to item 1.(c) Financial and Administrative

Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits? There is. [agreed]

Ms. Mihychuk: This is the area that I believe held or is responsible for the computer services. Is that correct?

Mr. Newman: Yes.

Ms. Mihychuk: It is my understanding that the three computer people that are with the department will be maintained after the Systemhouse project is enacted in full. Can I ask what type of supports they will be providing?

Mr. Newman: Systems design and programming.

Ms. Mihychuk: So the three individuals will be maintained, and then there will be a service contract with Systemhouse. That contract will be worth what amount? I understand there may be a first year to capitalize or get into the program, and then we anticipate an ongoing service contract with Systemhouse. Can the minister give us a detail of that so that there would be a—can the minister provide the salary for the three individuals that would be part of the computer support that the department is going to have? The rest is Systemhouse. So if I could have an outline of the two components for computer supports the department will be maintaining.

Mr. Newman: The salaries of the three staff, that is, manager and two computer programmers, will total \$174,500.

Ms. Mihychuk: That includes—just for clarification, I am sorry my mind had moved onto the activity identification for the branch—was 174. That includes the service contract for Systemhouse as well as the three?

Mr. Newman: No, I thought you had asked for the salaries of the three. That is the salaries of the three, \$174,500.

* (1630)

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister now provide what we would expect the service contract, after we adopt the Systemhouse program, to be on an annual basis?

Mr. Newman: The net full year costs, which I gave you yesterday, would be \$279,176, and the content of the services provided pursuant to the Systemhouse contract relates to desktop management which encompasses all tasks associated with buying, installing, configuring, maintaining, and using personal computer hardware and software. It also includes training support and selected software programs, telephone support, and deskside support. The support services are specifically designed to help employees resolve issues quickly, regardless of whether the problem is software- or hardware-related, and the desktop management contract also provides for maintenance and support of all personal computer networks and associated printers.

Ms. Mihychuk: Will the minister provide the contract fee, the service fee, that we pay to Systemhouse for their trouble-shooting work that we now contract out? So, on an hourly basis, if we need to get Systemhouse to come in to provide support, what would be the hourly rate paid by the department?

Mr. Newman: The charges are on a per unit basis, not on an hourly basis, and the charge is \$2,600 per year per unit, and there are 150 units.

Ms. Mihychuk: It is my understanding that the department at the present time has not been included in the desktop project as yet. Right now, as government policy or procedure, we are moving towards it, I understand that. But at the present time, we have departmental units and we obtain trouble-shooting expertise to the tune of \$35,000, approximately, and that is on an as-needed basis. Is that correct?

Mr. Newman: The answer to the question is that the service provided by Systemhouse is anticipated to be, and, in fact, it is now being provided and currently is a better quality, more comprehensive, longer hour 24-hour-a-day service. As I outlined yesterday, the trouble-shooter function performed by an employee previously was not serving the needs of the department to the degree of effectiveness which this new opportunity provides.

Ms. Mihychuk: I refer back to yesterday's Hansard, and I did ask if the department was receiving services presently from Systemhouse. Even though we had not

moved into getting all the new units and part of the whole deal, it was my understanding that we receive supports from Systemhouse. That indeed were the numbers indicated in the Estimates, through pages 21, 25, 27, 29, 31 and so on, identifying a certain cost for the Systemhouse services provided, so presumably this is related to the service they provide. Is that on an as-needed basis until we adopt the full desktop program?

Mr. Newman: Yes.

Ms. Mihychuk: It is also my understanding that that amount then relates to the amount of service they provide. How many hours of service has Systemhouse provided to the department?

Mr. Newman: I am advised that we do not have that information handy or put together, but it could be done if that is your request.

Ms. Mihychuk: The amounts that are identified in the Estimates are for anticipated service calls. Is that correct?

Mr. Newman: As I thought, it was made clear yesterday, we are in a transition, so they are providing support under the existing hardware and transitioning into the new desktop hardware and software, and they are providing support for both. They will then provide full service on that higher quality 24-hour-a-day basis for the desktop system when the transition is over.

Ms. Mihychuk: How long has the department been accessing Systemhouse to provide for this trouble-shooting?

Mr. Newman: My information is that that was in November of 1997.

Ms. Mihychuk: I would be interested, and I will take up the minister on his offer, to see the number of calls that were placed by the department to Systemhouse. Of course, that relates to the anticipated supports that we will be using from Systemhouse. It looks like the department was able to sustain itself with four salaried individuals for approximately \$200,000. The Systemhouse contract and the additional employees that we are going to keep on total \$453,000, so it is again just to complete our assessment of whether we are

getting good value for our money, how much support we are going to be getting from Systemhouse for the department. So I do appreciate the minister's response that that information will be provided.

I am going to provide the minister an opportunity to respond to that. I am prepared to move on to another area.

Mr. Newman: You have now made the request to provide that information. We will provide that information to the best of our ability.

* (1640)

Ms. Mihychuk: In the areas of personnel, can the minister report on the goals in terms of affirmative action? We did talk a little bit about the aboriginal targets that were set, but in the other sectors, can we have a report?

Mr. Newman: The employment equity workforce analysis reveals that with respect to women, the long-term objective to the year 2006 is 50 percent. The start point of the process of analysis was March 1993, and the percentage at that time was 41.72 percent. The percentage as of March 1998 is 47.83 percent.

Aboriginal long-term objective, year 2006, is currently 10 percent. The March 1993 percentage was 3.31 percent. The March 1998 percent is 5.80 percent.

With respect to disabled, the long-term objective, year 2006, is currently 7 percent. The March 1993 percent was 2.65 percent. The March 1998 percent is 3.62 percent.

The visible minority long-term objective, year 2006, 6 percent. March 1993 was 3.31 percent. March 1998 is 3.62 percent.

Ms. Mihychuk: Has consideration been given to changing the aboriginal target, based on the population involved in the mining community? The 10 percent is, I believe, within the range of the overall population of Manitoba, but when we look at the mining community, the majority of mines occur in the north, the aboriginal population is significantly higher, and I would argue or

look for that discussion that that target be, in fact, increased.

Mr. Newman: When we achieve the target of 10 percent, hopefully before 2006, the department would like to move that percentage higher to better reflect the aboriginal population percentage in the province.

Ms. Mihychuk: Does the department have any plans to increase its aboriginal workforce within the department by providing training or education programs?

Mr. Newman: Based on response to a department employment equity questionnaire, an aboriginal cultural awareness session is being planned for departmental staff. The department's employment equity plan incorporates department-wide objectives and also individual branch plans and commitments. Examples of branch commitments include management and technical development for internal staff, exploring opportunities to second or employ geological assistance from First Nations communities to work with senior geologists in field camps, participating in university mentorship programs and career symposia, and providing work experience placements for volunteers, trainees, et cetera.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister tell us how many aboriginal people are presently enrolled in geology at the university or geological sciences at the university who potentially would come into the professional sector for the department?

Mr. Newman: We not only do not have that information, but we sought that information from the university and could not get it.

* (1650)

Ms. Mihychuk: This is an area that I think needs enhancement. I do not think that Manitoba has been particularly proactive in providing opportunities for First Nations people to access universities and secondary education, particularly in the mining sector. Again, we are looking to a goal, which I think the minister and I agree on, to getting aboriginals involved in a meaningful way in the mining industry. One of those examples is working for the department, and they are often the lead role in exploration and meeting with

industry and being out in the communities. So opportunities, I think, need to be developed. We have not been successful in having those opportunities fall into our lap. We are going to, it seems to me, take certain initiatives to recruit young people into the field of geology, and I think it is going to have to be more than providing opportunities for field season.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I have a personal story I would like to relate. In the summer when I was in Snow Lake, I had an opportunity to take a Red River Community College student with me, but the individual had, I think a Grade 9, had dropped out of school in Grade 9, Grade 10, and although he saw it as a career that he would love to get into, the idea that he would have to complete his high school and then go to university and then perhaps get a master's degree to become a geologist seemed impossible for the individual who was financially strapped and, unfortunately, had curtailed his education. So he was employed—it was actually a training program or an opportunity from Red River to provide that experience. I think that individual needs the supports of a program like Access, that indeed Access, I believe, provided opportunities in the engineering field, but maybe needs to be expanded to include mining so that individuals can be given the opportunity to get into that sector and provide a meaningful role.

So I look forward to the minister's comments and initiatives, and perhaps we could look to seeking our First Nations elders and leaders as to their ideas for providing opportunities or getting their young people involved in mining. Perhaps we can have a more comprehensive program which does develop opportunities for First Nations people.

Mr. Newman: I am not beyond examining any realistic approaches to stimulating interest, providing encouragement, and doing whatever is reasonable and responsible to get more aboriginal people involved in geology and other kinds of fields that are going to result in greater aboriginal involvement in the career in mining and related fields.

A couple of things that are not apparent from the statistics, but I personally, together with Native Affairs

Secretariat staff and I cannot recall who else attended at Brandon University, drove out on a Saturday and met with the president and others, including the head of Geology out there, with a view to encouraging them to get more involved in the whole process of getting more aboriginal students involved in geology. It was a very productive day and they were very interested as a university that has a very substantial aboriginal student population.

Also, we had a couple of people involved in the department participate, in the interests of improving, enhancing the cultural sensitivity and appreciation of the human resource functions in the department. We responded with some enthusiasm to an opportunity to participate in an aboriginal cultural teachings experience offsite in an aboriginal context. The human resources manager went through a very meaningful development process which she reported back on in writing, very appreciative of the opportunity to have had that kind of experience.

All of these are the kinds of things that are being done to try and get a very positive appreciation of the contribution that aboriginal people can make to the mining industry in meaningful jobs over the long haul.

Ms. Mihychuk: One of the opportunities that young people or those with little experience have for getting into the department is as a summer assistant. The process, as I was familiar with it, used to involve interviews at the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg. Has that changed?

Mr. Newman: No, that has not changed, and the interviews are both University of Manitoba and the University of Brandon. In the summer of 1997 staffing, 26 summer students were hired through that process, of which 14 were employment equity designated group members.

Ms. Mihychuk: So I understand that three universities are being interviewed and I think that that is a positive step. Where in the past we have not gone out to the University of Brandon, indeed, I think that that is a positive step, and hopefully we will find somebody who is in the field or thinking about it and that is an opportunity to catch them.

Just following up on the affirmative action, how many women do we now have in the professional sector as geologists?

Mr. Newman: Seven.

Ms. Mihychuk: Out of a total complement of how many? I am looking for a percentage.

Mr. Newman: Seven out of 32.

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

* (1430)

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 Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 71 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Mr. Chair, I just would like to confirm by way of logistics that Gordon Webster from the Winnipeg Hospital Authority will be here at 3:30 as we discussed. I would also like to table on behalf of the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority the list of things in their portfolio. I think Ms. Suski has other copies. So I would like to table that here today for the benefit of the member. It lists the personal care homes, senior centres, support services to seniors, adult day care programs, respite care, community care and public health, including community health centres, health protection services, prevention services, service initiatives in progress, community care agencies; in the home care area, where the Winnipeg home care locations for the delivery of the services are, the external agencies that are involved with Home Care, such as 1010 Sinclair, Meals on Wheels, Alzheimer's, et cetera; in the area of mental health services, where our mental health services, our various organizations

that we work with that will be working with this facility are and their specific resources.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Just, again, by way of administrivia, we are going to confirm Mr. Webster and company here at 3:30. Then, I assume, Thursday we are going to continue with WHA.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, and Dr. Postl will be joining us for the day as well, so I think that gives us morning and afternoon sessions for that particular area. Ms. Hicks also will be here at that particular time, so, if there are any related questions to the rural health authorities that come in her purview, she is here as well, as well as Arlene Wilgosh who is responsible for that area.

Mr. Chomiak: One of the areas that we are going to have to cover in a good deal of detail, and I guess based on that arrangement Ms. Hicks will not be available, is we are still going to have to delve fairly significantly into Home Care and the continuing care area, but I assume we will have to reschedule the WCA to return at a later date in order to deal with that. We had talked about it, but we obviously cannot accommodate it all in this time period. Having said that, I am just going to pass the microphone on to my colleague who has some questions in this area.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): As the minister is likely aware, in the old metropolitan city of Winnipeg for one area in the province, a municipal government provided nursing services in public schools. That provision continues to this day. However, over the last school year there have been a number of vacancies in the public health nurse positions in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 and, I suppose, other school divisions that are within the old metropolitan city of Winnipeg boundaries. Those positions were not filled on the stated understanding that there was a transition in the works. That transition was a move of the jurisdiction for provision of these public health nurses in schools from the city of Winnipeg to the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority.

I understand and impart from answers the minister gave in Question Period in December that there was envisioned, I think would be the interpretation of the minister's comments, a process to consider the

continued provision of nurses in public schools. Would the minister advise whether there are any assurances he can now give that public health nurses will continue at least, if not have an expanded role, in the schools that I have described.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am going to ask my associate deputy minister, Ms. Hicks, and Marion Suski to provide the detail, because they are working on the arrangements with the City of Winnipeg and will be providing that service. As a matter of policy, we recognize that having two jurisdictions delivering service in one particular area did not make a lot of sense, and I would be glad to have them both provide us, provide them with that information.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Hicks.

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: On a point of order, has there been some agreement or consent that a public servant would speak directly to the members of the Legislature at an Estimates committee hearing?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I appreciate we run three committees and that members cannot be in every committee, but I would have expected the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) to have briefed his colleagues on the practices and procedures we have used here.

At the beginning of Estimates—in fact, we did this last year, and we are doing it again this year—this committee has agreed to have public servants—in fact, Ms. Suski is not even an employee of the Province of Manitoba. But given the large department, the variety of people who are delivering programs, the detailed questions that the member for Kildonan has come to ask, and rightly so, the need to have a good examination on the public record of what is happening in a whole range of delivery mechanisms in health care, this committee had agreed to such a process.

In fact, the member's colleague, who sits now to his left, utilized this benefit just the other day, and we had some very interesting discussions. On matters of provincial policy, I, of course, as minister, answer. On questions of detail and updating on specific progress of issues, we have had staff answer, which is certainly in

their purview. We have not asked staff to comment on matters of policy that are in my purview, but we have certainly had them provide the detail.

Surely to goodness, the member would recognize the absurdity of ministers having staff whisper in their ears great complex matters that they could be providing the information to this committee on. I understand this process has also been used in some other committees. I think the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman), by agreement, used this in his process, and it has worked very, very well.

So the member for St. Johns may want to take the opportunity to chat with the member for Kildonan, but it was agreed to. It has been used. The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) who was here today, who joins us, has used this process, and I think it has made for a much more effective use of Estimates time, and it has meant that our members of the Legislature have had the chance to get into some very interesting discussions on the detail of delivery of health care.

I would indicate as well to the member that if we wanted to play this strictly by parliamentary rules, the Ministry of Health traditionally has only been a grantor, an insurer. We have provided blocks of money to organizations to provide health care—each of the nine Winnipeg hospitals, for example—in which case, I guess technically I am not responsible for the administration of very much, just the sending of money, and that would not make for, I think, a productive examination of health care.

We have also recognized, the member for Kildonan and myself, that as the system has changed that we have regional authorities who are now making decisions on the expenditure of public money, that there is a value, and for members of the Legislature, not to have that veil of distance somewhat there between them. So on matters of detail and appropriate use of questions, we have done this. We did this last year and we are continuing to do it again, and the committee has given that authority to the committee.

So, Mr. Chair, I would ask Ms. Hicks and Ms. Suski to provide the detailed information to the member for St. Johns that he has requested.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The point of order that was raised, I do understand, however, it was agreed to by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), and I believe there was one more person at the time, but I will have that checked if necessary. I believe there was one or two other people from the government side, if you will, all of whom agreed that the minister could have some of his people give the reply necessary for the benefit of the members asking the questions—on technical questions only, of course.

* (1440)

To that end, I would say that the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for St. Johns, now on another point of order?

Mr. Mackintosh: Just a comment on the matter. We will certainly be raising it with my colleagues because the fundamental principle of parliamentary democracy is ministerial accountability for what takes place in the department, and what are matters of detail and policy is often obscure. What is important here in my questioning is that it was a question to the minister to assure Winnipeggers that they will continue to enjoy public health nurses in the schools. That is a matter of policy. It is not something that can be delegated. It is a matter that this government and my relationship to the minister can help ensure, and ensure accountability, not just to the Legislature but to the Winnipeggers who are affected. So, if it is the practice of this committee, I will deal with it through the appropriate channels, but the question I had was posed to the minister.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I say to the member for St. Johns, as we discussed at the beginning of this, the minister and the government are ultimately accountable for matters of public policy. No one is avoiding it. It is regrettable that the New Democratic Party is so split on this issue and cannot get its position unified. We discussed this matter of process in this committee. We have operated on that basis.

There are three New Democrats here today. The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) and the member

for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) have both availed themselves of this change of the rules, and the member for St. Johns wanders in here today, disrupting the process that this committee has used, I think, very effectively, challenging the agreement of the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) who is the health care critic, who has the responsibility in his party for the Health portfolio, whom I work with regularly in ensuring we have good discussion of issues. He wanders in here as if nothing has happened before he has arrived. I am somewhat offended by that.

I would just like to know if the New Democratic Party has one spokesman, two spokesmen or 23 spokespersons, I should say, in this. We do operate here on some basis of consensus, and by practice we have agreed to this. Members of this committee have used this process. I am not in any way taking away from my responsibility, but I think for those of us who will be in this committee discussing Health for, I suspect, 50, 60, 70 or 80 hours, this is a far better way of having a good discussion on the expenditures of health care than the old traditional method that this Legislature has used, which has had ministers sit here, be asked technical questions, have staff whisper details to them, repeat the details while the member waits, and then asks another question, and we go back through that process on many issues that our staff, who are much more up on the technical matters and detail of a variety of projects and issues, can answer.

It also, I think, is good for the staff to be able to speak about what they are working on in their area, the technical detail of what is going on, and for members of this Legislature to have the chance to put those questions. I have offered to have Urban Shared Services for which I have no direct ministerial responsibility. They are a creation of the nine Winnipeg hospitals with an independent board, and there was no rule of this Legislature that compelled me to bring them to this body, but we did in the interests of public debate.

So I would think the member for St. Johns, if he is a member of the New Democratic Party and they function as a caucus, and I am not sure if they do after this today, I would wish before he comes and disrupts the process that he have a discussion with his critic in fairness to members of the committee.

Now, as a matter of public policy, we have asked, in answer to the question, the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority to be able to work an arrangement with the City of Winnipeg to better deliver services rather than having two jurisdictions. We have also asked them in their needs assessment to do the work to develop a plan as to what services they wish to provide or need to be provided across the city, and before I commit to that in public schools, which may be a perfectly logical thing to do, I would like them to be able to give me an assessment as the minister of what they should be doing, what works effectively and what is the best delivery mechanism.

I am prepared today, because no one has made decisions, their work is not complete, to allow them to update members of this committee on what is a reasonable question of a member of the Legislature, and yet that member does not want me to do it. So I am going to ask, Mr. Chair, if they could now provide the detailed answer to that question.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The first thing I would like to do here is to make something very clear to all members of the committee. Yes, it has been a long-standing practice that the ministers of a particular department would answer the questions given in committee. However, there is no law, there is no regulation, there is nothing saying that, in fact, we cannot have, or the minister, I should say, cannot have his staff answer the questions.

Further to that, having the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), who is the critic of Health for the official opposition, and feeling that he would like to get perhaps—and this is not throwing a slant any way. He felt that he would like to hear something, maybe it is more precise or maybe it is more in-depth from the staff, and he agreed to having the staff answer some of the questions that the minister would put to them.

I see, at this point, there is not a point of order. I would suggest to all members of the committee that they try—it is their time. It is all your time. So use it as you will, but I would suggest perhaps take a look and perhaps we can use this time a little better than we are right now.

* * *

Mr. Mackintosh: I asked a question of the minister. I did not come in here and ask questions of staff. My question was very specific to the minister, and it was one of policy, not detail. I think the minister would offend users of the nurses in schools to suggest that this is some technical question or some detail. It is a very important matter, not just in health but in education.

I ask the minister, then, what is the position of the Province of Manitoba in maintaining public health nurses in these schools? Has it instructed the Long Term Care Authority to take a position, or is it developing such a direction?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I have answered the question, and just as the member has the right to frame his question as he chooses, I have the right under the rules of this committee to put my answer as I so choose. I have answered the public policy portion, and I am now going to invite both of these individuals to provide the detail to update him where the development of that policy is.

Now, he may not be interested in it. He may only want his quick question and make a fuss and walk out of here and leave the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and myself to pick up the pieces and carry on for the next 40 or 50 hours which he—members have made comment and they tend to be true, but for those of us who would like to have a discussion about health care—[interjection]

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a point of order.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would this arrogant minister deal with a serious question of health provision and education in this city and stop the nonsense? I ask a very specific question. I do not need this kind of nonsense from a minister who has the ability to ensure these kinds of—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for St. Johns does not have a point of order.

* * *

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

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, the only one who has come in here and been arrogant has been the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh). He offends all of us, both New Democrat and Conservative, who have developed a good working relationship on this committee to discuss issues. His own colleagues have agreed and operated under this process. He walks in today like some sort of knight charging into the battle where no battle exists. [interjection] Oh, the member says: old boys club. Is the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) part of the old boys club? The member for Osborne was here the other day engaged in the same process of debate.

You know, if the members of the committee would like to take a recess for the New Democrats to work out with Mr. Chomiak their position on how we proceed, I would gladly grant it. I am here to discuss public policy. I have indicated the direction that we have given on this issue on combining our public health services so we have one service in our provincial capital rather than two delivery agents. With respect to how that service is to be delivered, whether it be delivered in schools, which makes a fair bit of sense, or some other method, I have asked the WCA, the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority, to assess that as part of their overall work.

I am now asking, and I ask again from Ms. Suski and Ms. Hicks, to update members of the committee who are interested in that update. The member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) may not be interested in the update, but I am sure the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) and others are. So, Mr. Chair, if you could please have those individuals complete the answer to this question.

Ms. Marion Suski (Chief Executive Officer, Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority): I would like to say the WCA has made no changes to date with the City of Winnipeg. We have negotiated an interim service agreement which we are still working on until we can complete the transition agreement with the City of Winnipeg and public health managed services.

* (1450)

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister advise when the transition agreement is expected to be completed?

Ms. Suski: The transition agreement is expected to be completed December 31, 1998. That is an agreement between the city and the WCA.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister advise whether it is the policy of the province that the transition agreement will contain the long-term provision of public health nurses in schools as has been provided in the past at least?

Mr. Praznik: We are not going to bind by way of an agreement future policy decisions that need to be made, as the city is not bound in any way to continue that process either. The point of the agreement is to be able to deliver effectively public health services within the city of Winnipeg by one delivery agent instead of by two, and that is what the purpose of the agreement is.

With respect to the delivery of programming, where it makes sense to deliver programming in school and is an effective way of doing it, I would expect the WCA will do that, and that is part of their planning process. I am not going to tie their hands today because, if some change occurs, if a different delivery mechanism for a program is developed and is better, why would any of us want to do that?

Where it makes sense, where it is effective, it of course should continue. I think Ms. Suski will indicate that that is the direction that her board has instructed her as well. She may want to confirm that today.

Ms. Suski: I would like to say that, yes, we have apprised our board of negotiations with the City of Winnipeg and we are working on that as we speak.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the minister has taken the position that he is not going to ensure that these public health nurses are continued in the schools. I ask him, will he change his position now and have it as a condition precedent for the conclusion of this agreement that these public health nurses will continue, if not have an expanded role, in the public schools?

Mr. Praznik: I hate to answer a question with a question. But why, when we have structured the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority that is working on developing the best way to deliver programming, it obviously makes sense? If the member's case is so strong, and I believe it is, I believe it makes eminently good sense to use the schools as a vehicle to deliver public health. We have been doing it for decades and it is likely we will continue.

But what I have learned is if I give that commitment and some minor change takes place that members opposite, particularly the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), are then going to accuse us of lying and not telling the truth and of misleading Manitobans, so I am not going to put myself in that box. If it makes sense, it should continue to happen and, of course, he and I or any reasonable people will say, yes, it makes sense. It is likely going to continue to happen and it is continuing to happen now, but that is not to say that there is inflexibility in programs; many more programs may be delivered through the school as things develop. Certainly that is part of the mandate of the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority.

Mr. Mackintosh: If there are discussions ongoing now, as I understand from the information, I ask the minister: What is the current position of the WCA, insofar as the continued provision of public health nurses in schools?

Mr. Praznik: I am going to ask Ms. Suski on behalf of the WCA to update the committee.

Ms. Suski: Mr. Chair, I would like to say that it is a little too soon. We have heard a presentation from the City of Winnipeg on the public health managed services that will be coming under the purview of the WCA. At this particular time, I am not able to suggest or to tell you what the assessment will be. It appears that we do not know exactly all the services that will be transferred over. It appears that three sites, the one on Aikins, River, and I forgot the last one—will be transferred over in their entirety, but we do not know because we have not got into detailed negotiations.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): If I, Mr. Chairperson, can just continue this line briefly, because it is of great concern to members of my constituency as well.

I would ask the minister: Whom does he see as having a stake in this important policy decision, and who will be consulted by the care authority, or by his department, as they look at this decision?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the concern raised by the member for Crescentwood, because, you know, surely to goodness, there are people there who are wondering if this will continue, and whenever you have change, people are always fearful for the worst, and some service will not be provided.

I think the rule of common sense always has to apply here, and programs that can be effectively delivered, and when I say "effectively," in terms of providing what they are intended, in terms of public health and improving health standards through the schools. We have used the schools on many occasions for many different what you could argue are public health or safety campaigns. I have been involved in many of them—in the Fire Commissioner's office; as Minister of Health, with antismoking, and other things. There are certainly services that public health do provide in the schools now—outbreaks of lice, other things. Those, of course, are all likely and going to continue.

The only thing I want to say to the member is that, you know, from time to time, sometimes programming changes somewhat, some needs change, et cetera, and there has to be some flexibility, but the WCA will be speaking to everyone. There are some things that just common sense dictates should continue, and are well delivered, and, in fact, I can tell the member now, things like personal care homes, generally, going into the WCA, by and large, as a flowthrough of dollars. There may be more programming put into personal care homes, day programs, and better use of space, et cetera, but you do not fix what is not broken. Where these programs are effective, I would expect fully, as a matter of policy, that they will continue. We are not asking the WCA to be goofy in any way. They have to apply common sense.

Ms. Suski may, in fact, want to add to that answer to give some sense of her perspective.

Ms. Suski: My understanding from the WCA is that we will be dealing with The Public Health Act, and that we will be providing services according to that Public

Health Act. We also will be reviewing and assessing all the public health services that are to date being—the services from the province, in the suburbs, and the service that is also in the city. One thing I can say is that we will be reviewing all those services to see that we do not have duplication. In fact, our mandate is to try and improve all the services to the best of our ability.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, with the greatest of respect to both the minister and Ms. Suski, neither of them came within a country mile of answering the question I asked. The question I asked was reasonably specific: Whom are you going to consult in regard to this decision? I say this for a couple of reasons: one is that inner city families, as well as traditional city families, the rest of the city, have long counted on the presence of public health in schools. Even more important, teachers who are already driven nuts by the level of demands presented by the special needs of many children in their schools have a great stake in the presence of health services in the schools.

I have not heard either the minister or Ms. Suski say, for example, that they will be consulting with school boards or with local schools or with parent groups involved in special needs children placement in schools or with any of the other advocacy groups that have long advocated expanding public health services. I have not heard anything clear about the question of the tremendous disparity in services between inner city and suburban areas, and I do not hear a recognition that there are now significant numbers of suburban areas where there are inner city like needs and socioeconomic conditions approximating those of the inner city. I can take the minister to some of those schools if he is not already aware of them, but I am sure he probably is.

So this is but one major issue that the Winnipeg Continuing Care Authority is facing among many, many issues, but the notion that this will be decided by December and at this point it is unclear even who is going to be consulted, both to the minister and to Ms. Suski, does not fill me with a lot of confidence.

Mr. Praznik: I thank the member for that statement. I have a better understanding of his concern now and where he is coming from on this particular issue. I would say to him on the record, I agree with him that

the inner city and poor areas of Winnipeg, particularly inner city, have some very different needs in terms of delivery mechanisms. It varies across the city from area to area and sometimes carte blanche policy decisions just do not work well in certain areas. I want to say that to him on the record. I think I have a better appreciation of what he is talking about after his last question.

* (1500)

The agreement, as Ms. Suski has indicated, is to do the transfer of what services and functions, not how they will change. It is administratively where they will be housed and directed. There are a lot of issues still to be worked out with the city, but as we started off in this discussion, we have public health in this jurisdiction being delivered by two different entities: the province outside the old greater Winnipeg, the city in the greater Winnipeg. It really is an anomaly of old legislation, and we are trying to correct that first.

So if there is a concern that the existing inner city programs covered by the city, which may be somewhat different from the programs covered by the province in the suburban parts of the city, will be lost in some uniform effort, I think it is fair to say that that will not be the expectation of the Winnipeg Long Term Community Care Authority. As minister I say to him clearly on the record we would expect that to continue in that transfer agreement, in fact, if those programs are part of the transfer.

So I would say that firmly to him on the record today as an assurance to those who are worried about those issues. However, as part of the long-term planning of those boards, the member has flagged a number of organizations and groups that should be consulted. Ms. Suski is there currently working with the WHA on how to do their needs assessment. If those groups are not already on the list to be consulted, from the discussion we have had today, I would expect as minister that they will be included. Ms. Suski may want to comment on that process.

Ms. Suski: Mr. Chair, I would just like to add that we have stated to the City of Winnipeg that we would like to transfer the services as they are being delivered today. They have come to us and said that they have

some vacancies at this particular time, and that is why we have worked out an interim service agreement to deal with those vacancies before we complete the entire transfer agreement. But we have been asked the question whether we are restructuring before we are transferring the staff over, and our answer to them is we are transferring them over as is today.

Mr. Sale: A very short question then to wrap up this particular area. Are you filling those vacancies then as part of the transfer process?

Ms. Suski: My understanding is with the interim service agreement, it is not signed yet. It has been presented to the city from us. As soon as it is signed, then the city will tell us of those vacancies, and they have to assure us that they will provide services as usual, as they have been, and maintain those services until we have a complete transfer. So to answer your question, I believe that the city will be hiring into those vacancies, but I am not sure of it at this particular time.

Mr. Sale: Not a question, but just a comment. I know the pressure that I am sure Ms. Suski is under in terms of the scale of what she is being asked to do, and I know the minister is also working more than eight hours a day, as are his staff.

The situation facing many inner city communities and schools in regard to public health issues is just incredibly acute in terms of chronic diseases and in terms of other issues that nurses deal with. There is supposedly a protocol of post-natal visits. I know from talking to public health nurses that they are unable to comply with that protocol in many cases. There is not time in the day. There is not the staff. When we fail to follow up on high-risk births, as the director of the long term care association, as a former hospital director knows, we simply increase the odds that we are going to see these kids in another form, in another crisis. Whether it is a child welfare crisis or a health crisis, we do not know. But the odds are that, if we do not do that kind of preventative post-natal work—and that is the most basic prevention to ask—public health nurses are not now able to do that in all cases.

I speak from personal experience of that because my own son's partner was promised visits which never happened. Now, she is not particularly high risk, but

visits were promised; visits never happened. I know from other reports that that is the situation, too.

So while we have talked a lot about investing in public health in this province, in fact we have not done so. Vacancies have been allowed to exist, and services have been reduced, not expanded, in the area of public health. We had a long line of questioning in the house two years ago in which the previous minister of Health had to deal with concerns for rural public health nurses.

I do not put these questions, and I know the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) did not put his questions, out of a pure partisan perspective at all, but, because we represent areas in the inner city in particular where we see human tragedy unfolding, and we know, as everyone in this room knows, that the great advances our society has seen in health status are primarily public health advances. They are not primarily acute care medicine advances. The failure to make those investments in a timely and comprehensive way does not help our long-term situation at all.

I know the minister and our colleague got into a somewhat testy exchange, but I want to underline that I share all of his concerns about this, and I think everybody here does. The problem is that while we said we share the concerns, we have not seen the investment, and we have not seen the systematic development of the kinds of services that public health nurses can deliver over the last 10 years of this government. I hope that will not continue to be the case, but I want to underline the seriousness with which we take this whole issue. I do not necessarily need a response, but I needed to put that on.

Mr. Praznik: First of all, I want to thank the member. The member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) and I got into a discussion on process, not principle in terms of issue but on process, the committee. I thank the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) for his comment about the amount of hours spent in the day on different issues, because that is always the difficulty in a department or an organization as large as Health, where you literally have hundreds of fires raging in issues that need your attention, and the member has flagged today a very important area in public health. He is absolutely right in the investment in public health and prevention

and particularly for children and baby visits. By the way, I congratulate him on becoming a grandfather.

An Honourable Member: That was four years ago.

Mr. Praznik: Four years ago, okay. Somewhat belated congratulations. I thought him too young to be a grandfather. Well, we will use that as a test.

The comment I just want to offer, and it is one of the frustrations about health care delivery today anywhere in Canada. In discussions I have had with my colleague Mr. Serby in Saskatchewan and others as provincial ministers is that decisions in health care, so much of the attention goes to those who raise their voices the loudest. Regrettably, so much of that has been in the acute care side, an area whose costs continue to rise at well above the rate of inflation and where one has seen huge growths in spending in health care. I am not saying that it is as much as everyone likes, far from it, but as you are trying to move resources around, you have so many voices out there saying: we need this, we need that.

By the way, my comments about the 1983 article I think were instructive of the fact that it does not matter who is in government, where they are in Canada, health care for 20 or 30 years has been an area in our society that has continually said it is unhappy, continually said it needs more resources, continually says it is underfunded, continually says it is in a crisis. Ms. Suski has been around a long time. She smiles when I say that. She knows it has been the case. It has continually everywhere been in a crisis for 20 or 30 years because I think each segment of health care, which is such a multifaceted area, says: we need more money, we could do more if we had it. Yes, they could, but there is only so much money available from the general public with which to provide the service.

I would agree with the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) wholeheartedly that the needs of the public health side, particularly in the poorest areas, have to be a top priority within the public health system and that those resources in those areas where need is greatest probably will have the greatest long-term effect in health care. The comments of the member today in the discussion we have had, I think Ms. Suski has noted it, and the sense of members of the Legislature I think will

take that back into the planning process at the WCA. She recognizes the priority of this committee and of this Legislature in carrying out her mandate.

So I thank the member for his comments. It is an area that I am glad that he has raised and we have been able to have some discussion on. I hope that in the course of the work that will go out over the next while that that is an area that will be high on the priority for additional resources, of course, to meet those needs.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I just want to talk briefly about a process issue just to alert the minister and the staff, I guess. My colleagues the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) and myself want to ask a number of questions in regard to Misericordia and the plannings around Misericordia.

* (1510)

The difficulty is that it bridges both systems. It is a hospital for the next couple of years or a year and a half or however long the minister indicates, but it is also going to be a long-term care facility. It is an outreach facility, so we are going to start asking questions about that. We know that some people have to leave at 3:30, we know they are coming back, but we will probably cross over a number of different boundaries at this point. I do not know that there is any way of doing it other than that. I just wanted to alert the staff and everybody that that is where we would like to ask a number of questions and would like to start, not have a long process discussion.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, the member has, I think, sort of flagged the difficulty in transition as we move a facility from acute care in one system to a long term. Who is looking after what and where does one put the questions? Who has responsibility for what piece of it?

Today in our planning, the planning work around the Misericordia has by and large been done in terms of its existing programming. Where that programming will move to, how it will be accommodated, the transition, the preliminary work in particular was done by the Winnipeg Hospital Authority.

I know there are issues around breast care programs and Dr. Postl. The reason I flag this is because Dr.

Postl and his team are the group that are most involved in working out those details, and we are making Dr. Postl available. I think he is here on Thursday for both the morning and the afternoon. I flag that with both members because I know they have had a long-standing concern in this area. We have told Dr. Postl he should be prepared to talk about the planning and the breast care program in particular, so that area, I think, if we could deal with it that time with Dr. Postl.

Ms. Suski's role really comes into—we have so many issues to deal with around transition which are the immediate ones—where programs will go, how they are working out, how will we manage those issues. It is going to be some time before that facility actually moves over into the purview of Ms. Suski, in which case it is likely to operate on a very similar situation as most of our personal care homes now do with a board, with sort of the funding formulas in place, et cetera, and in a fairly regular form.

So if there are some questions, sort of the future of where she sees things, I think she might be able to give some sense of that, but a lot of the meat-and-potatoes operational issues I know are of concern to the public at this time, it would be best for Dr. Postl to deal with on Thursday. I just flag that, so we can make sure we are putting the questions to the right people.

Mr. Sale: I will just make a couple of initial comments; then, perhaps, any of us that are here have a couple of questions we need to ask about the personal care home plans. First of all, I am sure that the minister has, and I think Ms. Suski has, the survey that was done by the Fort Rouge neighbourhood safety association—Earl Grey Neighbourhood Safety Association, it is called. I think you were at the meeting with a committee of that group not that long ago. I do not want to go into the detail of this information, but I do want to underline this little community group of volunteers did visit over 1,200 homes, and they actually talked to 1,024 homes in a 77-block area. If there ever was a community-based needs assessment process, that was a pretty impressive process done on volunteer legs and with probably less than \$500 in cost.

So I just let the minister know, next time he signs a cheque for \$100,000 needs assessment study for something, that Earl Grey knows how to do it. It is also

a testimony to the strength of that community, that they were able to do that and do it on a door-to-door basis with quite a detailed questionnaire. So I want to commend them again for that.

But I want to underline what an important role community involvement plays in building a facility like this. My first question, and I think this is a policy question to the minister, interested in staff's use, but I really think it is a ministerial policy question. I and my colleagues have a great deal of anxiety about a personal care home of over 400 beds. I am sure that the deputy minister and associate deputy minister know the literature about congregate care. The number of horror stories that emerge from large institutions, in particular, I think that Ms. Hicks and probably Mr. DeCock will also know that the term, "back wards" comes from backwards. So those who are backwards are those who live in the back wards, and that is where the term comes from.

My own family, my father-in-law died in a personal care home north of Toronto called Green Acres, some kind of a sad play on the television story, I guess, by the same name. I think they genuinely thought this was a lovely green place. There were lawns in front of it, and it was built in the 1960s. It actually looked not bad from the outside, but it was our experience that as his condition deteriorated, he was quite literally moved backwards. He was moved into the back wards. It was such a huge institution of about 450 beds, I tell him that the scale of that institution made it just about impossible to get the kind of humane and human response to his deteriorating condition.

We have enough horror stories out of small nursing homes, and this is not to suggest that the Sisters of Misericordia or the hospital authority are not good people, but simply running an institution of that size I think begs policy question. We have done a lot of things in our province over the years to downsize huge institutions and, yet, here we are going to build one that is going to have the care of people for a number of years at the end of their lives of that scale, and that alone gives me very serious concern.

Mr. Praznik: The member raises, I think, a very legitimate area of discussion about the size of facilities. Just to put the numbers at Misericordia together, their

personal care home component would be the first 100 beds and then two 90-bed units, so they would be operating at, I believe, about 280. We would convert existing acute care beds, of which half now are used for housing long-term care patients. We have to upgrade that area for fire and safety purposes, so we end up salvaging about 175 existing beds, which would be a transitional area.

So it would not be, say, part of a person's where they go to spend the rest of their life, in essence, in a personal care home. This would be the holding area, transitional area for people who are waiting for placement in their facility of choice. Currently that function is spread around the system in units across the Winnipeg hospital system, which takes beds out of the medical acute care side, surgery side; it takes those beds out of that system and puts more pressure on getting best use out of acute care facilities.

So we are talking about 280 where this would be the person's permanent home in essence and 175 transitional beds where you would have people coming in, waiting weeks, months, until a bed opens up in their place of choice and where they go. So one could argue whether it is a difference or not, but those people are not moving, those 175, to the back wards in essence because their condition is worsening. Their intention is to be panelled into a place of their choice.

There are somewhat different systems, I think, in different provinces in terms of proprietary, nonproprietary. One of the things that has impressed me on the home care side of things is that where there tends to be a religious or community backing for a personal care home, where they have a community support network around it, that there tends to be, and I cannot quantify this, it is just a perception that there tends to be a support group, family members, other people coming in, and so you have the kind of interaction that I think ensures ongoing good care in a facility.

* (1520)

I know some of the facilities that I have visited, places like Holy Family, for example, which has a strong base in the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate, they have a strong base in the Ukrainian religious

community. They have regular things happening there and people coming in and supporting them and raising dollars and providing volunteers. So you do not have that sort of, you are in a private institution, you are behind the doors and your family visits you once a month. I do not deprecate from what the member said, but that kind of stereotypical image we have sometimes seen of those kind of homes. So it is part of, I guess, public policy. Where we can find sponsors for personal care homes who have that kind of community, cultural, religious support group to sponsor that facility, it obviously is our preference.

Now, the Misericordia arrangements that we made, part of the planning, and I was very intimately involved with this with the bishop and the Misericordia and our staff. The sisters of Misericordia are very intertwined with the archdiocese of Winnipeg. In fact, my initial meeting was with not only the chief sister in Manitoba, but also with His Grace the Bishop, Archbishop Wall. We felt that within the Catholic community of Winnipeg that there were a number of cultural groups within that who would want to be sponsors for units of this facility.

I know that the Italian community, who have been looking for personal care home space, are very interested in sponsoring one of those units. Other communities may also want to be sponsors, and when I say sponsors, not just raising the money, but being able to identify units within that facility of being sort of the care facility that will have a cultural and community base for that. So I am hoping that this kind of approach will be able to give us some safeguards from the concerns that the member raises.

The other part that I say to this is, in my tours of personal care homes, those that are able to have larger numbers, and I look at things like Holy Family nursing home, for example, has 276 licensed beds; Maples is 200; Sharon Home is 229; Tache is 314; Deer Lodge Centre is 226. So we already have a number who are in that 250, under 300, up to 300 range. Where you have that kind of grouping of beds, hopefully in a number of different units with community support groups, you are able to muster a greater number of services in that facility that you can provide on a regular basis to those residents.

I tour a lot of personal care homes in the province. I think the ones that are 20 to 30 beds—we need some of those just to meet geographic needs in the provinces—cannot offer anywhere near the same level of service as the larger facilities. We have seen that with physiotherapy programs and other things. It is just harder to do. The numbers are not there. So this is sort of the dilemma, getting the right number of units together to be able to provide a really better service mix but, at the same time, not making it heavy institutional as the member fears can be a problem. So this is the way we are trying to maintain that balance as a matter of public policy in how we build these new facilities.

Mr. Sale: Two hopefully short questions. One is: who is actually responsible for the capital planning and capital movement here? I assume it is the government still and will be, but the minister perhaps could just confirm that.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, capital expenditure still remains a function of the Ministry of Health and, although working with regional health authorities, we look to their recommendations. This is a process that is just being built and being perfected somewhat but, ideally, regional health authorities will make their capital recommendations and we will be responsible for the capital programs. They may be administered by regional health authorities, if there is a loan that is being covered, et cetera, and it may be funded to the regional health authority to manage the loan, but those are administrative details that we will work out with each project.

Mr. Sale: I think the minister is confirming that the department, the capital planning branch or whatever it is now called in the department, is responsible for plans and agreements and approving, going to tender, and all of those steps that the Public Schools Finance Board does for schools, the same authority in financing structure is staying in place for health and will still follow the same financing model in health in terms of debenturing capital projects, as we have in the past, roughly. I assume he can confirm that quickly, but I also want to ask whether the capital agreement, the contributory agreement has been concluded with Misericordia and whether all of those hurdles are now in the past.

Mr. Praznik: There may be some change. We will not likely be funding all of our programs on debentures. Some will be paid for outright, safety and security, for example. So we are still working on how we finance it, but that should impose no additional burden on any facility as to how we finance it. If we are financing we would not expect the RHA or the local community group to have to finance 20 percent of the carrying costs of that, for example. So that is really an internal matter administratively.

With respect to the Misericordia, I believe it was earlier this week or late last week, we discussed at this committee, and again I know people cannot be in every committee, but we have made changes to the capital contribution policy. Misericordia has been informed yesterday of that. So they still have some work to do. I know I have a meeting coming up with them. There were still some issues that they had, so I hope that they are resolvable to go ahead with this plan. As I have said before, if it is not, if Misericordia does walk away from this proposal, we have potential sponsors for all those beds. So it is not a do or die for the system. For Misericordia, there are options in their future as an old plant site; in a world of change, this is probably the way to ensure a future for them. So I hope at the end of the day they are going to be here. They have, just I said, received that new information.

I can tell the member, as well, that one particular community which has wanted long-term care beds, that is also part of the Catholic community, the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, has indicated to me that they are very prepared to sponsor the first unit, and there are others who may be interested in other parts of it.

There are portions of the Misericordia Hospital, like the safety and security upgrades, which will allow for the conversion of acute care to transitional beds. Those will require no capital contribution because it is a safety and security matter. So it is by and large the three new units that will require the contribution.

Misericordia also has a number of very significant credits in terms of the cost of land, which they own and would contribute to the project. So, with the new policy, they have some work to do to calculate their contribution, and we have to finalize some credits, so we are not quite there yet.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I take it from the minister's answer that, in fact, nothing has been finalized in regard to these three new units, that there is more than one potential sponsor for each or all of them, and that Misericordia—perhaps the term is it has first dibs, but it is not yet committed to any or all of the expansions, and that you have alternative sponsors in mind should they decide not to be the primary sponsor. So we are still not sure whether these will all be Misericordia units or whether they might be the Italian community, Holy Rosary Church, or some other institution located on that site or perhaps located elsewhere.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, I learned a long time ago, in negotiations with anyone, no matter who they are, that one has to have options in your pocket or it is a very hard negotiation. We knew we had a need for more long-term care beds. We knew that we had a problem with Misericordia in terms of their long-term future within the system. They had a great need for capital upgrade, and we felt spending the dollars on rebuilding an acute care facility when we can add acute care capacity and get better function out of the other six acute care hospitals just did not make sense from a system's point of view. So it was a matter of marrying interests to give the Misericordia a long-term future, fulfilling need. We gave them, in essence, first dibs on these projects. We had an exchange of letters. I think that like any organization going through an extreme change in their function, there is a lot of back and forth as to where they are, and I have watched this over the last number of months.

* (1530)

There are some issues now coming up around the breast program and plastics. I can tell the member he may get one set of signals; I am getting another. On the ground level, I think there is kind of a process as people go through change, but within the next short period of time, I expect a lot of these things will be firmed up along the announced deal, and I would expect Misericordia is going to be part of this, but we have been working to find sponsors within the unit. Again, because a hundred beds stand alone, cannot offer as good a program as being part of a 250 sort of unit in terms of delivering of certain specialty programs—physiotherapy, those types of things. So we hope it will go ahead, but I just want to tell, there are still a few

issues that we are hammering out, and I hope to be able to march on shortly.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, there is a certain disconnection here between public announcements and current reality. The announcement—I guess it was one day prebudget—about the conversion and the building sounded enormously like Misericordia Hospital was going to do these things. And what I have heard since, and the minister is now confirming what I have heard since, is that there is no real clarity about what is going to be done at all.

The new units will likely be built somewhere. Whether they will be built there or not, it is not clear yet. It is not clear whether they will be sponsored by Misericordia or not, and it may not even be clear whether the Cornish wing will be converted to transitional bed use, that indeed there are options, as the minister is indicating. This is one option but it is not the only option, and the hospital is not in fact committed yet to any or all of the proposed package. It is still in flux.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I agree that there is some uncertainty around this. I do not think it was generated by the Ministry of Health. I think we have been very clear, and the WHA has been very clear where we want to be and what the proposal is about.

The Misericordia has had a hundred-year history of providing acute care services in the city of Winnipeg. This is a very significant change for them. What was announced prior to the budget was the fact that their board had accepted the principle of change, and we were then moving towards setting up, and still are, our implementation team, et cetera. They have sort of—because I am never quite sure. There are so many lines of communication out of that place that are contradictory, it just absolutely amazes me too, but we have heard since that, that they have some concerns around specific programming. I would just put it down to being hard bargainers who are looking for a little more on the table before the deal is sealed.

Let me just say this to the member—what is clear and what is known. I will wait till he finishes the conversation. I will say this, what is clear and what is known is the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, in its planning around programming, is planning its

programming around a change in function at the Misericordia. The Misericordia requires some major capital in the long run.

We have the ability in our other acute care facilities, and part of that will be additional acute care beds in some other facilities, to be able to manage our acute care services better out of six than trying to keep seven, particularly one that is in need of major capital. That will happen whether or not the Misericordia Hospital walks out of this arrangement or carries forward with it, so the programming will continue to be consolidated and planning is going on and that will happen.

I suspect at the end of the day, and again this is very much human nature, the Misericordia has a number of people on its board. It has a whole bunch of people practising—there is a whole divergence of opinions. People are saying one thing to one group and another to other people as always happens when you have major change. In fairness to members of the opposition, they will get one set of story and comment, and we will get another through our channels. I put it down to, quite frankly, the Misericordia board accepted this change in principle, the details now have to be worked out. People within their facility, and in fairness to them, they could not—they had to make a decision on the principle, and they had to tell their people that is where they are going, now let us get on with the planning.

You cannot plan every detail without your own staff, so you could not say here is the whole plan, done, without involving them, so you had to make the principal decision first. I suspect what is happening is that there is some hard bargaining going on for a little bit more, and they are having certain programs and staff people saying we really do not want this to happen. There is a lot of second thought and this and that going on. It will get focused and ultimately move forward, I believe, because at the end of the day if you have an objective analysis of the Winnipeg acute care system, and we have asked the WHA in their planning, and the advice I get from them and the program developers—when you look at having that acute care capacity in the downtown of a city or a city this size, and what one needs in its acute care capacity.

This has been an issue for 20 years. The Misericordia's future is not a bright one. Ultimately I

think that this has given them a chance to have a future, to be meeting need both in the Wolseley and downtown area of the primary clinic, and also in meeting needs for the whole city. It is very much part of human nature that you have second-guessing and criticism and people trying to get a little bit more on the table, and everybody tends to go through this and change and that is what I put it down to, but at the end of the day I suspect that people will be there because, quite frankly, without a huge, in essence, subsidy to keep them going within the system—and all our program people, the view that all of this is probably better managed with six than seven. The Misericordia is going to continue in fighting for its purpose within the system, and I do not think that is in anyone's interest. So at the end of the day, which I do not think is too far away, I think things will continue. The principle will become reality in a firm transition agreement which we are not too far away from, and it will become reality when construction begins.

I understand as well that the Misericordia, even before the board voted in principle, they acquired the last piece of property that they needed for the new facility, so that is usually a pretty good sign that people are serious about it. But it is a big organization with lots of different views, and what you are seeing is that kind of ripple its way through the Misericordia family or organization.

Mr. Sale: This is the last question in this area before we move on, I think, as the committee had agreed. Given the level of uncertainty the minister is still expressing—and I am not taking a position one way or the other on that, just it is obvious that there is uncertainty—my understanding from the outcome of the meeting the other night was that there are some off-the-shelf plans that can be updated and modified to fit the Furby site. These may have been Betel nursing home plans. I am not sure as to whether that is the project or not, but it appears that it might have been. If it was not, it is out there somewhere.

When does the minister expect zoning to be completed and a shovel to be in the ground?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chairman, I am going to have Mr. DeCock, who has been managing this project, give an update.

Mr. Frank DeCock (Deputy Minister of Health): The Misericordia is looking at zoning. They are expecting it would take them two to three months to complete that zoning, but while that application is going on they will be able to work with the plans, and the plans—the two can go in parallel stream.

An Honourable Member: And clearing the site?

Mr. DeCock: No, they could not clear the site until they got the zoning.

Mr. Sale: I am sorry, I may just not have heard Mr. DeCock's answer correctly, but I certainly did not understand it. So if perhaps he could repeat it or rephrase it.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I had asked if during—while they are waiting for zoning, if they can start to clear the site. He indicated they thought they could not, but it may have something to do, as a lawyer—Mr. DeCock is not, and it may have something to do with taking out the existing tenants, et cetera, but legally people have the right to clear their own property without a change in zoning. So hopefully that kind of work can be done as the zoning is going through approval of City Council.

* (1540)

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, again it seems to be a disconnect here. We do not know whether Misericordia is even going to be the sponsor of the project at this point. We know they own the land. We do not know whether they are going to transfer it or whether they are going to even have it built there. One of the options is to build somewhere else, given the availability of sponsors. So I cannot imagine them destroying their income base from the premises now on there before they know the answer to the question as to whether (a) the zoning will go ahead, because it is not a fait accompli. It is a very major rezoning, and there is some opposition from some community residents already based on traffic and some other questions. Residents will want to see the sited plans with parking and traffic flow, because this is not a small addition to that neighbourhood. So I would find it strange that they would voluntarily take the risk of cutting off their income stream when it is not even clear whether they will be the sponsor.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, they are an independent organization, and they have to manage and make their decisions and have their processes. I know that before their board had agreed in principle that their administration with direction of the board had purchased the last piece of property that they required. So it suggests to me that, although one may be negotiating for some additional services at the table, in reality their signals have been that they are very firmly committed to this. Now, if they change their mind and walk away from it, and again that is their decision to make, I want to let the public know that I have other sponsors for that facility with bare land, one of which, I think, even has a zoning in place in which we can take the very same plan and be in the ground.

The reason why we have actually held these over for Misericordia, coming back to first principles, is here we have a hospital with a 100-year tradition which has a care group around it—and I am not telling the member anything he does not know already. He knows very well, coming from that part of the city, representing that part of the city, but it has a very strong care group. It has the Catholic Archdiocese of Winnipeg, which has a number of communities who are looking for personal care home space. So it has the right grouping to be able to support a large long-term care facility. It has a current hospital that is not needed in the system, that requires a great deal of capital in the long run. By marrying the two interests, I think it allows us to keep a large support base working in health care. If we did not come to this approach of sort of marrying those interests, I think the long-term future of Misericordia would be a bleak one. It would just be a matter of fading away over a number of years as its infrastructure wore down, because it is not the best investment in infrastructure in an overall health care system.

So this was a way of ensuring that the Sisters of Misericordia, their foundation, their support group, have a future. That is why we married these two interests, to give them a new and needed role. It is one that they are still struggling with a little bit, but I think that has a lot to do with negotiation on some of the things they want to keep. There are different fractions within that organization. I have seen this happen before, but, while they may be giving that signal of some fraction in negotiation, the reality also is that they have quietly acquired the last piece of property. They

are doing their preparatory work to go to city for rezoning, and the signal that clearly sends to me is that they are going to be on track with this project.

Now I need them to make a firm commitment to this very quickly. If they are not prepared to do this, if it is still going to be one of, well, yes, we are in, but, no, we are not, yes, we are in, we need more of this, we need more of that, then simply there is not a deal. Misericordia has made its decision on what it wants its future to be, and the world will evolve and we will get on with other projects elsewhere. I do not want to be in a position where the people of Manitoba are being held hostage by one particular group. I do not want to put us in a position where Misericordia can say, well, we will now only do it if we get this, and then we get that, and we get this, and we get that, simply because they are the only people that I have to deal with. That is why I have indicated I do not come to the table in any negotiations without other options. I have those other options.

Now, if Misericordia does not want to commit firmly, we are moving on. The world will move on. What was announced by them in terms of going to their employees was a change in principle. We are seeing some of this happen. Do I regret it? Absolutely. I wish it were more firm. Does it lead to confusion? Yes, but again I am dealing with an independent body, independent owners who have a variety of opinions within their organization, all of which are talking to MLAs and the public, and people are expressing their concerns. I do not think there is anything one could do to have prevented that, given human nature.

Mr. Chair, if we have kind of reached the point—the member may have another question or two—but if we are prepared to change, I recommend we have a couple of moments break, if we are prepared to do that, and then come back with Mr. Webster.

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

The committee recessed at 3:45 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 3:55 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Would this Committee of Supply looking at or investigating the Department of Health Estimates please come to order. The honourable minister, to introduce one of his staff.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I would like to introduce, not my staff, Mr. Gordon Webster, who is the chief executive officer of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority.

Just by way of information, Dr. Postl, I am advised, is not available on Thursday afternoon, so we will have to make him available at other times—[interjection] Well, he will be here Thursday morning, but we will make him available on other times because I know there is a lot of the programming area that is of interest to members. But if the member for Kildonan might wish to advise his colleagues the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) who had questions with respect to the breast program, if we could maybe perhaps do that on Thursday morning, that would be most useful.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, just to commence, I wonder if we might have, if it is at all possible to table an updated list of the board of the WHA, as well as the staff, an updated list of the staff of the WHA.

Mr. Gordon Webster (Chief Executive Officer, Winnipeg Hospital Authority): Mr. Chair, I have an organization chart of the WHA outlining the various positions that have been filled and the ones that are vacant, if you would like me to table that.

Mr. Chomiak: Just in terms of this organization chart that appears in front of me, is this the sum total at this point of the staff of the WHA, and if it is not, do we have any estimate as to how many people it will comprise this year?

Mr. Webster: The chart that you see in front of you, you notice that there are some to-be-announced positions. As far as we anticipate, this would be the ultimate organization chart for the core management group of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority. In addition to these individuals, there are members of our clinical program teams who will continue to work within the hospitals who, effective April 1, will also be employees of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, though will continue to work within the hospital system.

Mr. Chomiak: I will have more extensive questioning regarding the staffing and the arrangements. In fact, I am changing somewhat from my normal practice, because I want to deal with two specific issues in the next little while. The first issue concerns the situation in the Winnipeg hospital sector presently and over the past several months. The minister has made several statements, and we have discussed it here in committee, concerning plans for some interim action to take place with respect to some of the difficulties that are presently occurring, and the minister has indicated that by the fall there will be in place beds and other programs. I wonder if the minister might outline for me specifically what plans and what is to be put in place by the fall.

Mr. Praznik: First of all, there are a number of areas that I have asked the WHA to take steps on. One of them that I have mentioned is the dialysis program, to take charge of that program for the entire province. Mr. Webster and Dr. Postl may want to speak to that.

Another area, of course, is diagnostics. We had the announcement with Dr. McClarty earlier in the year, and I know the Sun is here with us today. They may be interested in these numbers, but I am advised in an update I received today, and again we will have more on this as this progresses. But, in terms of the length of wait for things like CT scans, I understand at St. Boniface General Hospital this has already been reduced from 16 weeks to eight; at the Health Sciences Centre, from 16 weeks to 10. In the case of Victoria, I believe it is from 14 weeks to three.

* (1600)

If Mr. Brodbeck would like me to reiterate those numbers, I would be more than pleased to for him. A number of our other facilities—Concordia, Grace, Misericordia, and Seven Oaks—are now doing CT scans on an outpatient basis, which they were not doing before.

In terms of ultrasound, we have seen a decline, I think, at Concordia from 24 weeks down to 10, so we are starting to see the kind of reductions in waiting lists already for elective diagnostic procedures. We expect it will continue to improve as we get down to the right number.

A couple of the issues surrounding this, just to give the member a sense of what the committee is working through, are that in a number of areas there has been a shortage of technicians to do the work. I know in one particular area there was a graduating class of eight that will be available in August. We are waiting for that again to be completed. There are some issues around scheduling within collective agreements where Dr. McClarty indicated that it was, I think, 10 or 16 weeks—six weeks, pardon me, that had to be provided for change and notice doing scheduling to accommodate more procedures. So the kind of long-term planning of getting the system operating on a system-wide basis to deliver service is already starting to see improvements.

Now this is just the update I received today. There is a lot more work, and I would expect by the fall that we will see this on a regular, ongoing basis of improved waiting lists for elective diagnostics. Emergency diagnostics, and urgent, are provided for.

There are some issues around the MRI that I think we will get into and discuss at some point in these Estimates that the member has raised, but, again, these are happening. Another area is elective surgery, to bring down our waiting lists in elective surgery. So, if we can see improvements in waiting lists for elective surgery, for elective diagnostics, improvements in the dialysis program, those are three, for example, that I have flagged, where we have asked the WHA to prioritize and move towards. Now Mr. Webster may want to expand on that. The member may want to have Mr. Webster go into detail, but I flagged that with him.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I noticed the minister was reading from a document. I wonder if the minister would be willing to table the document with respect to the list of decreases that he referred to.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chairman, I am not in a position to table that today. That was a very preliminary document that was provided to me for briefing me on the status of diagnostic waiting lists. One of the things I have asked the WHA to do is to be able to develop a standardized format for regular updates on these kinds of issues, because we have not had that in the past. We as a system have not been able to follow on a system-wide basis the kind of indicators of how our system is

operating, the number of weeks for elective diagnostics, or elective surgery or other things, so we hope to be able to develop a format that can be made available. I will endeavour to provide that to the member at some point as that develops, but today that is just preliminary information and I am not in a position to table that document. It is not complete either or in a form that I would want to be tabling.

Mr. Chomiak: The numbers that the minister referred to did not include, for example, the reference to the MRI, nor did it include the reference to the CT scanners at other locations other than some of the locations the minister referred to. So I am having trouble getting a handle in terms of the specifics when they are only referred to in terms of some programs.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, my intention today was just to give members a very brief update of a change that is in process, and Mr. Webster may want to comment on it as well. But just for those numbers, and I know the Winnipeg Sun is interested in those numbers, as of April 20, the waiting list for CT scanning: at St. Boniface, it used to be 16 weeks; it is now eight. At Health Sciences Centre, it used to be 16; it is now 10. At Victoria, it used to be 14; it is now three. Now, at Seven Oaks, Misericordia, Grace, and Concordia, we are now doing CT scanning for outpatients, which was not done before, and the waiting lists at those hospitals are three weeks at Concordia, six weeks at Grace, seven weeks at Misericordia and six weeks at Seven Oaks.

So, as the member can see that where we were looking at 16-, 16-, and 14-week waiting lists before, we are now looking at anywhere from three to 10 depending on the facility. Again, a work in progress, but the kind of improvements in delivery service that we can get from running on a system-wide basis are starting to be demonstrated already. I think that, by the fall, people will really start to notice the change in a more significant way.

One matter that the member flagged was MRIs—by the way, for ultrasound, again those numbers: at Concordia, the waiting period was 24 weeks; it is now 10. At Seven Oaks, I still think it remains at seven. There is more work going on in that area. This is just to give him a sense.

With respect to the MRI, within a very short period of time, I think we will have in place in Manitoba three MRI machines, two at St. Boniface and one at the Health Sciences Centre, all of which will be state-of-the-art machines, which will give us the ability to, I think, have a reasonable, very reasonable waiting list for MRI. There are some issues that the member raised around emergency MRIs, and the way in which those facilities were serviced and the emergency function needs some improvement. We are still looking into that case on the detail.

I understand that the young boy is on the road to recovery, the latest information I have had, but it did raise some questions. One of the beautiful things about running on a system-wide basis is to better have in place an operator on an emergency basis, on an on-call basis for all those facilities. It becomes far more economical if you are running it as a system and have one person who is on call on weekends or holidays, and you can use that person at any one of the three machines or two sites depending on where it is needed. So I think that, with MRI, again we will see some very significant improvements, and I am expecting that there will be a formal announcement, a ribbon cutting later on this spring.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, how much of the \$1.3 million, I think, of that figure has been expended? [interjection] \$1.5 million has been expended; and will these decreased lists, even though there are still lists of waiting lists, be on a permanent basis?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, in the discussions that I have had as minister and our department has had with the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, we have indicated to them that they should plan to get the waiting lists down to acceptable levels for elective diagnostics and to build their planning around maintaining that level on an ongoing basis and to provide us with the financial requests that they will need to do so.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, can the minister indicate what the waiting list is for bone density scanners presently?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I understand that the list has gone back up again, because there are some issues around the protocol being in place. I have asked

associate deputy minister, Sue Hicks, to be figuring out with the WHA the resources we need to put in place to be able to get that back and maintain it on a regular basis. That in fact may even involve funding a bone density unit in Brandon, for example. That is part of the planning that is going on right now.

* (1610)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the bone density scanner issue does illustrate the difficulty, because there was a major announcement in the fall about reducing the waiting list from two years on the bone density scanner, and some minor funding was put in to do so. As I understand it, that funding has run out and the list has gone back up.

So we are looking for a commitment from the government that not only on the bone density scanner but on CAT scan, ultrasound, MRI and related services, that the waiting list, that the solution will be of a permanent nature and will not be allowed to grow again as it has done in the past.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, the program last year was to take 1,200 off the waiting list very quickly, which the program accomplished. There was some provision to develop our protocols around youth which were not in place, which I understand are just getting into place now. They are done and now operative, so that we are having the proper use of those machines. I am advised that some additional resources are moving in, so we are doing more of them now and gearing up. The member is quite right. In each of these cases, it is only of a short-term use to bring down a waiting list if it goes back up again.

So part of that mandate of the WHA—and in speaking with Mr. Webster and Dr. McClarty who have briefed me on this—their mandate is to determine what is needed to properly get our list down and maintain them at that level in the long run. Dr. McClarty identified a need for \$1.5 million to bring the list down, and he is preparing now for us the financial needs that will be there to maintain that system on an ongoing basis. We have certainly indicated to him that he should continue to operate his system on the basis of having the dollars in place to be able to maintain the lists once he has

gotten them down, and we expect that we will be resourcing it accordingly.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the minister has indicated there is going to be an announcement pending with respect to the MRIs or additional MRIs. Between now and then and the operation of MRIs, what is the department going to do to ensure that the waiting lists for MRIs can be dealt with until those other machines are up, running, protocols are in place, and related details are dealt with, because the minister has as many letters on file as I am sure I do, probably more, with respect to major difficulties as it relates to MRIs?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I just want to point out to the member—so many details here—that we have approved a funding level of an additional \$84,500 to St. Boniface General Hospital through the WHA effective March 1, 1998, which will allow for an additional 3,000 bone density tests to be done. So I want to make sure Mr. Brodbeck has that, that is \$84,000 as of March 1 for bone density which will allow an additional 3,000 tests to be done. So that is in place. Again, bringing these waiting lists down and maintaining them at an acceptable level is there, and the resources are there to do that. Mr. Webster will provide information on the MRI situation.

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, the second MRI is being installed at the Health Sciences Centre. In fact, I was informed this morning that the magnet is being lowered into the space tomorrow, and that that machine should be up and running by the middle of June.

Mr. Chomiak: Can I get indications as to when and if and how much utilization that MRI will be in terms of nonpaying Manitoba residents? Those are exclusive of research purposes, Workers Compensation, out-of-province residents, and MPIC? In other words, how much will that second machine be utilized by Manitoba residents requiring magnetic resonance imaging?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am going to let Mr. Webster give some more detail, but my understanding, of course, is that every Manitoba resident who legitimately requires an MRI, that that is the appropriate diagnostic tool, it is our intention to be able to provide it to that individual in a reasonably timely fashion. That is the

policy mandate. Mr. Webster may want to comment further.

If I may also, before he does, indulge the member, may we take about a two-minute recess? There is a matter I just want to share with the member for Kildonan before we proceed with this.

The committee recessed at 4:14 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:15 p.m.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, again, by way of policy that MRI is used by a number of people who obtain hospital services in the province from outside of the province, and I am prepared to provide that information to the member. We do not have that today, but again the policy rule is that we want to be where Manitobans who need an MRI are going to be able to get it in the province. I am also advised that the three new machines we will have here are state-of-the-art pieces of equipment, and there is an irony here, of course, that they will be better than whatever Grafton has to offer in their program. Mr. Webster may want to comment further.

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, it is our understanding that the new machine going into Health Sciences Centre will be available for nonresearch activities 50 percent of the time. So it will be available to us 50 percent of the time.

Mr. Chomiak: Another commitment made by the minister was that there would be beds in place by the fall with respect to some of the difficulties in terms of the acute care facilities. I wonder if the minister is prepared now to outline for me where those beds will be and when they will be in place.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, Mr. Webster may want to comment. We will certainly want to comment on this further, but part of the plan with the Misericordia is that by taking existing long-term care transitional beds, people who are holding acute care medical beds in our hospitals, being able to bunch them together in one site

obviously gives us better acute care coverage at those hospitals. We are also developing some plans now, and I can say this because there is provincial capital funding involved for adding additional acute care beds in the system, both short and long term. Mr. Webster may want to provide some more detail.

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, we have just been asked to work with Manitoba's health facilities, a branch of Manitoba Health, and identify open space within the hospitals where new beds could be constructed and be available for the fall and winter season next year. That project just started this morning.

Mr. Chomiak: Just to comment on the minister's previous comment, of course, we have been through this before with respect to the Misericordia beds. I mean the 175 or so acute care beds that are presently in existence, or are ultimately going to be used for the long-term care beds, but that does not give us any necessarily expanded capacity in the system, in terms of net. But the issue then is that Mr. Webster has indicated as of this morning a project has started to identify open space at the seven acute care facilities where extra beds could go. Do I understand that correctly?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, a week or so ago the member for Kildonan asked me the question about space at St. Boniface Hospital that had a very high capital cost to it. I know in the crisis last winter, there was some talk about Seven Oaks and some potential space there, or perhaps some other places where some additional beds could be added. We have beds at Deer Lodge that will be open for next year's season, 40 additional beds that we will have available to us within the system, and if there is other space. Because as the member correctly identified, there will be another winter season before we have all of the new personal care home beds coming onto line. It is very important, as the member has rightly pointed out, that if we have the ability to bring some additional space in our hospitals into operation in a reasonable fashion, we should be gearing up to do that now.

So in our meeting with Mr. Webster today I certainly asked him to look at that and to do what needs to be done to ensure we have our maximum bed capacity, reasonable bed capacity. The problem at the St.

Boniface unit is it was flagged by us as they do not have the plumbing and washroom capability. There is space at Seven Oaks, for example, where the oxygen equipment and piping, et cetera, is already in place. That is a potential to look at. So we are looking at that.

There is another project, a little more of a long-term nature of converting some beds in hospital back to acute that are not used for that function now. We are negotiating through the WHA with that particular facility, because there is more involved with it. So I am not at liberty yet to detail, but it would add another 60 beds, I believe, to the acute care system within the existing hospitals.

Mr. Chomiak: Is there any number that the minister can attach to the number of additional beds that are anticipated to be in place by next fall, that is, acute care beds?

* (1620)

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, we do know we can get 10 more acute care beds out of this system by opening the 10 remaining beds at Riverview that are just being completed and are ready to be opened in the newest part. We can get those patients out of the hospital system and the 40 beds, very definitely, at Deer Lodge.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, just to add to Mr. Webster's comment; the 10 beds at Riverview—because I have asked the same question of him—why we could not get those beds opened earlier. That is a very specialized unit, 10 beds for a very intensive care, not intensive care in the medical term, but patients who have behavioural and other issues and require a very specialized unit in which to be housed. So it takes some time in which to fill those beds and to make that work, and that is underway. So those will free up 10 beds somewhere in the system. When they are filled, there are the 40 at Deer Lodge, and we are looking now for adding additional space within the system for next winter, if that is possible, because we still have a tough winter ahead of us until the new construction comes into operation.

Mr. Chomiak: Do we have any figures as to the present capacity in the City of Winnipeg as well as to

what extent that capacity is occupied by patients who should be filling long-term care beds or personal care home beds? Do we have those statistics?

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, I do not know the number today.

Ms. Sue Hicks (Associate Deputy, External Programs and Operations Division): Mr. Chairperson, we have about 180 people in hospital right now, and another 184, I think, in the community.

Mr. Praznik: If one remembers, during the height of the crisis this winter or the situation this winter, we had about 280 panelled individuals waiting for personal care home beds occupying our medical beds in our system. Now we are down to 180, and those extra 100 beds make a big difference in the operation of the system. So today I think, as Ms. Hicks has indicated, we have 180 people awaiting long-term care facilities who are taking up medical beds in the system, as opposed to 280 at the height of the situation this winter.

Mr. Chomiak: Is the minister saying that today we have 180 people who are in the acute care beds who are termed long-term care, and that during the winter, early spring, there were 280? Is that what the minister is saying?

Mr. Praznik: Yes. They may not, of course, be the same people because there is a flow in and out as people get into the homes of their choice, but in terms of beds occupied by people waiting for personal care home placement, I am advised it was about 280 at the height of the situation this winter and is now about 180.

Mr. Chomiak: In the response given by Ms. Hicks previous to the minister's answer, she said 180 and 100. I wonder what the reference was to the other beds, the beds in the community. I do not understand what that figure was.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, we have about another 180-some individuals who are in the community today with other supports like home care who have been panelled and are waiting for personal care home beds. So they are not in hospitals taking up acute care beds. That was her reference to the other 180.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister give us figures as to how many people are presently panelled and waiting for personal care home beds? Total figures.

Mr. Praznik: In Winnipeg?

Mr. Chomiak: Winnipeg and Manitoba, if you have them both.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am advised it would be around 360 in Winnipeg, and I do not have the rural numbers. That would have to come out of each regional health authority. We can endeavour through Ms. Wilgosh to get that for the member.

Mr. Chomiak: Can we have the number of acute care beds in the city of Winnipeg as well as the number of beds in Winnipeg? There is a divergence as to how one constitutes those, how one calculates and determines those numbers.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am going to ask Mr. Webster to reply or endeavour to get you those numbers, but one wish that I have is that some day all of us, media and politicians alike, will be able to get a straightforward answer to that question out of the Winnipeg hospitals.

Mr. Chair, I am advised by Ms. Hicks that each year at the beginning of the fiscal year we provide a number of setup beds as of March 31, 1998, by region, acute, other, personal care home and the total. I am prepared to provide this to the member. I think it is the same format every year. I have not been doing it for many years.

Mr. Chomiak: The figures given for the setup acute care beds as of March 31, 1998, for Winnipeg are at 2,315. Does that jibe with the figure that the Winnipeg Health Authority has?

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, I cannot confirm that number exactly, but it is certainly in that range. I can get the breakdown before Thursday morning, and the breakdown of those beds by bed category as well.

Mr. Chomiak: Just for further clarification, for the 180 beds that the minister referred to that were occupied in terms of long-term capacity, can I,

therefore, assume that of the 2,315 acute care beds in Winnipeg, 180 are occupied by patients awaiting panelling, so the total number of acute cases, effectively, people occupying acute care beds in Winnipeg are the 2,315 minus 180, which is something like 2,150, or something in that range?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, yes, I am advised you can, except in terms of terminology. Those are patients who have been panelled. They are not waiting panelling. They have been panelled for personal care homes. They are awaiting a bed in a personal care home.

Mr. Chomiak: Where does the figure of 700 acute care beds that I hear referred to by various officials come from? What is that referenced to?

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, those refer to the beds that are designated as medical beds within the system as opposed to, say, pediatric or surgery or whatever other medical service is provided. So that the beds designated within the system for medical patients are 700 beds.

Mr. Chomiak: Does the department keep a running total of what the line-up figure is with respect to city hospitals and people waiting to get beds at the various hospitals in terms of the emergency wards?

Mr. Webster: We have that on a day-to-day basis. I do not have today's numbers, but we do know the number of patients waiting admittance in each of the hospitals in Winnipeg on a daily basis. It is part of our city-wide bed management program. Although I will admit that, hopefully, with our new information systems, we will be able to do a better job of identifying the types of beds that are available and the number of patients that are waiting to get into them.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, so I take it that there is a daily total. Is it possible to get a breakdown on the daily totals for the past several months?

* (1630)

Mr. Praznik: I will endeavour to find out what is available and in what format that we are able to provide it. I will speak to Mr. Webster about it, because, again, this is part of what we are just putting in place as a Winnipeg Hospital Authority.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, so I take it there is now a project to identify space for additional beds for this fall in the interim period until additional beds can take the strain off the system opening up next year. Do we have any figure as to the number of the beds and/or the location or range?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, now that we are sort of through the worst of the winter season, I think people are having an opportunity to sort of catch their breath and do their planning for next year, knowing that our personal care home construction will not be opening prior to that period. I have asked the WHA to then canvass across their system to see if there is additional bed capacity that can be opened, to locate it, put a cost to it. I mean, is it practical? Is it feasible?

Obviously, the situation at St. Boniface with not having the plumbing in place is probably not feasible, but to look at other places that may be, because we do know that we still have one more winter of some potential difficulty, if we can plan for it, so much the better. So that is what I have asked them to do. I would expect that they will take some time to canvass their system and be able to give us a report. Today, they do not of course have that, but, if we do manage to do that, we will have to find the resources.

I have been looking at some ways to resource this now. If we can add some additional capacity in advance of this—I know we have already got the 40 additional beds at Deer Lodge that we will have available next year. If we can find some additional capacity, it just gives us a better ability to manage a severe flu season, if that in fact is what we have.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the minister earlier identified—and I could be wrong slightly with the numbers—a number of individuals, 180 or something in that capacity, who were in their own homes awaiting placement in personal care homes. Are these individuals who are moved out of the hospital in order to, because I do not know why we have—I wonder if the minister might outline who in fact those people are.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am advised by Ms. Hicks that they are not people who have been moved out of the hospital. There may be some who have, whose position may have improved that they can be managed

at home, but the total of people who, I understand, are panelled in the system waiting for placement in personal care home facilities. So they would be from a variety of places and they are all currently on home care receiving support.

As the member knows from his own experience as an MLA, people get panelled. It is decided that it is now their best care option and they usually have some wait until a bed becomes available, so we put that number in so we have 180 or so who are in hospital beds today waiting for personal care homes and we have 180 or so who are in their own homes with home care waiting. That gives you a sense of the number of people waiting for placement, about 360.

Mr. Chomiak: It seems to me that given those numbers and given the option that is available to the department, we are going to have a major problem in the fall, because we are talking about 300-plus people that are going and that are in the system. It is true, we always have people in the system, but we are not having any additional beds, there are not any additional beds other than the 40 opening up that are supposedly going to be used to take some of those out of the acute care beds. We are going to need considerable beds, it seems to me, in the fall and going into next year if we want to avoid the situation that we are facing this year. We are talking about more than 10 or 20 beds. We are talking about considerably more beds.

Mr. Praznik: First of all, you have to be able to build the beds, and the facilities do not get built overnight. We cannot make that work faster. We are trying to make that happen as quickly as possible.

Secondly, there is a turnover in PCHs. One of the things that put a great stress on our system this year was that we had a major flu epidemic, and we had a lot of people requiring hospitalization because of the flu. That put a strain on a system that has operated very close to the wire over the years. It was an additional strain, a greater strain than we would normally anticipate. We are looking at how we can make more beds available, also how we schedule the use of our surgery programs, elective surgery programs, et cetera, to be able to manage that. I know Mr. Webster and Dr. Postl have been doing work on that area.

There are seasonal fluctuations in the use of beds, which is an interesting concept that I am learning from my briefings from Mr. Webster and Dr. Postl, that there are periods of the year where certain beds are used far more than others. If one can manage your various programs to sort of maximize your use in off-season for other beds, then you can make more beds available for other purposes during their maximum periods. If you are managing a whole system, as opposed to having nine hospitals manage their individual bed loads, you can do more things to sort of spread your demand over the year, and perhaps Mr. Webster would like to illustrate this somewhat, some of his thinking.

Mr. Chomiak: I would like to come back to that, but I want to get in a couple other different—the minister talked about the flu. Do we have statistics in terms of the effect and the effect on the beds as a result of the flu, because we have the epidemiology charting? I am sure we must have some kind of stats that demonstrate the effect that the flus had this year as opposed to a flu that seasonally afflicts us other years.

Mr. Praznik: We will have Dr. Postl and the WHA get more detailed information on that and come back to committee with it.

Mr. Chomiak: I want to pursue this line of questioning, but I want to get in another topic while I have the opportunity, so I am going to change direction a little bit because I want to understand how this works because I think it is illustrative. The minister will be aware that on Friday I wrote him a letter about a child at the Children's Hospital requiring surgery, surgery having been cancelled last week for lack of bed and purportedly rescheduled for May. Now I wrote to the minister, there was a newspaper article, and I do not know what other press, whether or not there was press. The point being that this child, while it might not be termed life threatening, required surgery that certainly is on a very delicate time line because of the nature, the age of the child and the growth of the skull.

Now the minister will be aware that there was another instance of another child in somewhat similar circumstances that occurred a month or two earlier when surgery was required and was also cancelled. Now I talked with doctors at Children's Hospital, and I talked with staff at Children's Hospital, and I talked

with numerous officials concerning this. It is fairly clear—and there has been newspaper articles about it, so it is nothing new—that there is a major problem at Children's Hospital with respect to ICU beds. There has been talk about putting in step-down units and related facilities. There is also a long-term plan for the renovation that has been part of the whole capital project. I remember asking the minister in the capital portion several weeks ago whether or not they had received a request for capital with respect to doing something at the ICU, and this was prehearing about this issue.

This is not a new issue. This is one of these lingering issues that is of real importance and concern because the doctors I talked to—and I have talked to more than one doctor most of whom do not want to go public—expressed real reservations and concerns about their ability to provide services to children at Children's Hospital. There is a major problem, and I guess my question is, having raised the issue of this child—and none of us will deny this child needs the surgery relatively quickly and knowing that down the road there is going to be some expansion at Children's Hospital—what can be done in a short term. Because I should tell you that when I initially approached this a month ago at Children's Hospital, I was told that this was going to be in crisis until at least May, and there were talks of transferring kids out of province. That is what I was told. I am wondering what can be put in place to ensure that parents do not have to go through what these parents have gone through.

I should tell you, they just did not contact the opposition immediately, they actually did contact the minister's office. So that is my concern. I am looking for a response as to how this issue is going to be dealt with now and in the future.

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, I would agree that this is a serious issue, and it is so significant that I would really like Dr. Postl, who was the chief of pediatrics at Children's Hospital, to comment on that Thursday morning if you would not mind waiting till then for our response.

* (1640)

Mr. Chomiak: No, I do not have a problem with waiting to talk to Dr. Postl. I actually mentioned it to

him when I had occasion to speak with him prior to the debate on Thursday. That is not a problem, but I do want to pursue this. This is not a political issue, but I really do want to understand why—okay, enough said on this issue.

Mr. Praznik: If I may just comment on that. I know I appreciate the member raising it because I, as Minister of Health, get into more and more of these details, and the beauty at least of this new system is I have people like Mr. Webster and Dr. Postl, particularly Dr. Postl, who runs the programs. There is so much better advice and communication to the government in terms of what their needs are when you are running things on a system basis. I will tell you a frustration as a minister before the creation of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority was that the information that I got comes through the department, comes from individual hospitals, and try to sort out that need and work through all of the small “p” politics of health care institutions and large administrations—all, perhaps, putting their own issues and their own priorities within a system—really makes you wonder sometimes about how we run our health care system. It is the argument that I have made over and over again that this is not the way to run a system.

So, with the WHA, I feel, as a minister, I get a much better and closer to the frontline reporting where the needs are in the system. Now that is going to take some time to translate into improved service and resources flowing back and forth from government to the RHA, but I have a greater comfort level. The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), I think, is raising an area that is of great concern. Dr. Postl, within the authority of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority—I mean, they set priorities and they advise us of where we need additional resources and where those priorities are. So I appreciate the member's comments.

Dr. Postl will be here; this we will have raised with him, to respond on those plans, because it is really the detail of how you fix the problem that is of concern to Manitobans, not whether you fix it or not, because we have to fix it, but it is the detail. Dr. Postl, the advice that he will bring here and his comments here are exactly what he will provide to me as minister, so it is important he come to the committee, and I appreciate the member's question and his concern and the way in which he has framed it as well. It is very constructive.

Mr. Chomiak: Do we have an actual budget cost? What will be the budget for the WHA for this fiscal year?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, we are finalizing that now. I think Mr. Webster can probably give you a sense of the dollar figure that he inherits on the existing budget. One of the challenges that we face in this year is that this is the first year in which they actually are in operation, and it is only when you get in operation that you start to get a better sense of where dollars are flowing and where you should be readjusting for priorities.

So I expect that there will be many adjustments to that budget over the next year, both internal within the WHA and certainly externally in terms of areas that we have identified that need resources.

So Mr. Webster may want to give you a sense of this situation, but I do want to just point out that it is a bit of work in progress and will be over the next few years as the WHA gets a better handle. Even today they are negotiating their operating agreements with individual hospitals, and within those hospitals it is going to take some years to, I think, really appreciate where all dollars are spent, how they are spent, what priorities are there and have a comfort level that we are getting accurate information and able to make choices on firm ground.

Mr. Webster will likely comment.

Mr. Webster: For clarification, are we looking for the costs of operating the central core management group of the WHA or the total Winnipeg hospital system?

Mr. Chomiak: Actually, Mr. Chairperson, both, because I was going to ask both questions.

Mr. Webster: The latest number I got from Manitoba Health based on what last year's expenditures were will be in the range of \$675 million to \$680 million for the Winnipeg hospital system in total. The budget that has been submitted to Manitoba Health but for which we have not yet received approval for the core operating budget for the Winnipeg Hospital Authority--

Mr. Praznik: Because that is, in fact, a matter of negotiation, discussion has not been approved, as I

indicated this morning or earlier today with the Winnipeg Community Authority. We will be prepared to provide that when those are done. Mr. Webster is flagging the budget they submitted. We still have some work to do before that, in fact, is approved.

Mr. Chomiak: I wonder if we might have an update, specifically, as to what the status is with respect to the organizational structure vis-a-vis the acute care facilities in the Winnipeg Health Authority. In other words, have negotiations been concluded or all on the side? What is the status specifically today?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, Mr. Webster may want to elaborate on some of the details of the negotiating on operating agreements with the facilities. You know, we have to just put this in perspective for a moment. We have always said that there is a changed role for the existing hospital boards, but we were not creating a system where individual hospitals would be the providers of health care and the WHA would simply be another funding agency, that it is government's expectation that the Winnipeg Hospital Authority will be responsible for the delivery of programs.

They will fund their programs on envelopes and know where those dollars are. They will provide their services in either host hospitals, who basically provide the facility for the delivery of programming. Some programs may be delivered by contract. Some facilities may, in fact, evolve into the WHA and be run directly by them. That is the way that we have, in fact, envisioned this. In fairness to Mr. Webster, there are still some of those boards who are of a somewhat different view; they believe that they should be the providers of service and do it under contract.

Well, if one sits down and studies the whole purpose of regionalization, you realize very quickly that that would be probably a disaster in my opinion, because it would not allow the WHA to easily achieve the things that it must do to improve patient care in the city of Winnipeg. In context, let us not forget that probably 99-plus percent of the budgets of every one of those independent hospitals--and probably the vast majority of the capital that has gone into the current infrastructure of those hospitals--has been provided by the taxpayers of Manitoba.

Although one appreciates volunteer boards and one appreciates their commitment to fundraising, developing programs for their communities, and bringing community interests to the table, let us not forget—and I say this regularly—that this is public money entrusted to the Legislature of this province to provide health care.

So, are all the hospital boards onside today? I would say it depends on onside for what. Yes, everyone is onside with improving patient care and, yes, they are all onside in wanting to be co-operative, but there are still some, and it varies from issue to issue, that have taken a view that they want to be the providers of service under contract for all services. Well, quite frankly, at the end of the day that is not there, and I think they are coming to realize what this is really all about in regionalization.

I say this very kindly to everyone who has been involved in this process. It takes some time to appreciate what regionalization is all about and what has to happen in order to get the best results. As minister, I can tell you—I do not expect Mr. Webster to comment on this—but the board of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, many of whose members were nominated by those existing boards—it is very interesting to see the transformation in thinking—and I can say this as the appointer of those members; that many of those members who came out of those existing community boards who believed that, oh, yes, there was a role, we will have to carry on in full role, that we have to manage our hospitals, we will just do contracts with the WHA to provide service—have come full circle to where they see the benefits of operating on a regional basis and understand now what this process is fully about.

So, if you ask me today, are all the boards onside? With everything that is needed, no, they are not. Does that mean that it is going to stop the system from moving forward? Absolutely not. Within the framework of The Regional Health Authorities Act and the changes that were made by this Legislature, I believe the powers and authorities are in place to ultimately deliver what the people of this province and the city of Winnipeg want, expect, and should expect, which is a modern delivery mechanism for health care.

* (1650)

Particularly when they are paying virtually 99-point-something percent of the bill, they should expect that kind of involvement. Mr. Webster may want to provide some detail on the status of the operating agreements.

Mr. Webster: There are really, I guess, three areas that we are working with the individual hospital boards on, and it is being done through the Council of Chairs which has been established by the WHA board chair to work with the individual hospitals. Currently, they are meeting every two weeks to deal with these issues. One is the operating agreement which outlines the responsibilities of the WHA and the responsibilities of the individual hospitals. It also outlines the areas where we have to work in collaboration with each other. It explains how clinical program management is going to function and how the reporting lines, both within the hospital and across the system, are going to work.

It has a section on the funding relationships that will exist between the hospitals and the WHA so that the individual hospitals will feel a little more comfortable in the future that the funding they are going to receive is going to be tied into the programs, the specific programs that they are being asked to provide.

It also gets into areas of reporting, both between the hospitals and the WHA, and the WHA and Manitoba Health. That operating agreement is currently being worked on by a working group that was established on our side, comprised of myself and Neil Fast as our board chair; the hospital board chairs selected a hospital board chair and a hospital CEO to work with us so that the four of us were given the responsibility of developing an operating agreement. That has to be completed this week to go the hospital board chairs and CEOs next week.

The second component is the development of system-wide medical staff by-laws which were drafted by the presidents, the medical staff, and the senior vice-president of medicine of each of the hospitals in conjunction with hospital and WHA representatives. Those by-laws have now received approval from the college and, subject to one of minor amendment, will receive approval from the MMA. They received

approval by the hospital board chairs last evening, and they will be going to our board for approval next week.

The third agreement that we are working on is a new affiliation agreement with the university with respect to research and teaching so that the university will have access to all nine hospitals for teaching programs and with Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface being two of the primary sites, of course. But it gives the university access for teaching in all faculties, not just medicine, but nursing and social work and so forth, to try and cut down the communication between hospitals around teaching. Those are the three agreements we are currently working on, along with the hospitals.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank you for that information. The minister indicated there would be no contracting out. Did I understand him correctly that there will be no contracting out with respect to the WHA and various hospitals?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I hesitate to answer around that term "contracting out." What I am saying—and I put it in perspective again—is there is still some in the old system who believe that the purpose of the WHA should be to contract with each of the nine existing hospitals to deliver a bundle of services, and the WHA, in essence, becomes similar to the Universities Grants Commission or some other intermediary body who passes on money from the ministry to the providers, i.e., the independent hospitals. It was never our intention, nor is it our intention, nor do I believe that that system is going to work.

The WHA's responsibility is to deliver programming, and that means that they will be responsible for programming. That was the whole principle of what regionalization was about, and even under the faith-based agreement, the four faith hospitals accepted the principle of single program, single leader, multisite. That is, in fact, what we are building, and as part of the budget for that, those programs will eventually have envelope funding, so the funding for obstetrics will be to the one obstetrics program, delivered currently in three sites, with a budget for that particular area.

So, in essence, the existing hospital boards and hospital organizations, some may choose to evolve into the RHA, and it is my advice to their board to accept

that those who do, so the WHA may operate directly some of those hospitals over the next few years, or come to operate them, and those who wish to maintain a board and a presence can do so, but they are in essence the host for the WHA programming. They provide the space; they provide some of the staff; and, in some cases, they may actually deliver a program under contract for the WHA.

There may be a facility today who has a program that is very specialized, that is doing an excellent job. Instead of the WHA taking them over, they may just say here to whatever organization: you continue to deliver that program, and here is our contract. We will give you so much money; here are the deliverables we expect. So there is flexibility in doing that, but I wanted to indicate that there is that whole range of options. I really have to put on the record, because I know I get it from time to time, that those who still argue that the system should contain nine independent operators, each of whom has a contract and the WHA simply funds a bundle of services, if we stuck with that model, we would condemn our system, in my opinion, not to work, because the specialization and subspecialization of medicine has dictated that you have to bring large areas together to develop programming in order to have enough patients to have a well-practised team, and the technology of flowing information through the system now exists where you can move information throughout the system.

The paper system, obviously, restricted you to a building, and those two factors allow us to be able to deliver better care than we ever had before. I know Mr. Webster may want to add to that.

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, I think it is important to recognize the WHA can take credit for developing the concept of clinical program management across the system. That came up through the Urban Planning Partnership in 1995, which was an initiative led by the CEOs of the nine Winnipeg hospitals, and they unanimously brought forward the recommendation that we should convert to a clinical program management model within the Winnipeg hospital system.

Mr. Chairperson: A very short one, we have about a minute left.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, is it still the minister's intention that all of the employees and all of the individuals will be employees of the WHA as opposed to the individual institutions?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, just to update on that issue, first of all, what is the objective? The objective is to be able to, when necessary, move people around the system with their programs, their equipment, whatever they are delivering, so that we do not have to lay people off in one facility to move their job to another and have them reapply for it. That is silly, it is cruel, and no other large organization in our province does that when the dollars that support the program all come from the province.

I have indicated that we want either a common employer or a multiemployer certificate through the Labour Board. The chair is dealing with the hospitals now. If they can negotiate those kinds of arrangements amongst themselves and with their unions, that is great. If they cannot, I expect them to go to the Labour Board to ask for a multiemployer certificate. If that does not happen, this minister is prepared to appoint the commission, which has the power to do so because, ultimately, we are doing it to be able to treat our employees better.

If you look at the change at Misericordia, some 250 acute care staff, there is no way I am seeing those people laid off when we need them in other places in the system. They should be able to move with their salary, their benefits and their seniority into other places. It is the same hospital system, it is funded by the same taxpayer, and they should expect nothing less of us.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The time being five o'clock, it is time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Will 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. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time. We are on Resolution 16.1 Administration

and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Chairman, the answer to this question is that it is not so much a matter of cost as it is administrative time. We would like to have the committee take a look at this a little more deeply in terms of how much time would be required, what are the logistics to keep records in this way, and so that was the reason that it was not dealt with last year, that there are administrative records that need to be kept, et cetera, et cetera. We will ask them to take a further look at what is implied in terms of this particular question. Is it as simple as it appears, or could it become quite logistically complicated?

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Who would normally undertake that study? There are ex officio members of the minister's department on this committee. Would they undertake it, or is it the group itself that would undertake to do that and presumably report back?

Mrs. McIntosh: The group itself.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us how often the group meets?

* (1450)

Mrs. McIntosh: At this time of the year they would be meeting about every two weeks. They survey the school divisions asking for input. Their meetings tend to cluster together at one point of the year, but overall in the course of a year it is probably six to 10 times, depending upon their own needs. They do not have prescribed meetings where it is like the second Tuesday of every month, that type of thing.

Ms. Friesen: In the beginning I asked about the distribution of this report, and the minister said that she distributed it, I think, to school divisions and obviously to the people who were part of the committee. I wondered if the minister put a copy of this report in the Legislative Library.

Mrs. McIntosh: I think we did. You know, I have not checked, but we could check and find out if it is there. I think we did.

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to ask about some further recommendations of this committee. One, of course, is the technology in schools where the committee has recommended a new initiative in support of introduction and utilization of learning technologies, and the initiative, of course, suggests a much greater amount of money than the government has allocated this time. I wondered what the government's response had been to this.

I understand there is also an additional report from the Learning Technologies council which recommends even larger amounts to be spent on technology. The government has made extra money available this year for technology, and I wonder how the minister has responded to this committee on the difference between what they recommend and what the government has allocated.

Mrs. McIntosh: As the member indicates, the committee had recommended \$5 million for capital projects and \$10 million for operating expenditures. We have provided, this year, \$1.8 million for technology over and above the grant, that comes to about \$10 per eligible pupil. This \$1.8 million can be used for computer hardware, software, school-building rewiring and cabling to facilitate computer and computer network installation or Internet linkages or curriculum-based technology requirements. That \$1.8 million is over and above the school funding that flows to schools which does have a component for technology in it already.

As well, of course, we have provided the grants to particular schools who submit proposals for technology, up to \$40,000 per school. Some 25 schools per year obtained funding from that for science and technology projects in their schools. So we recognize that the two bodies have asked for more money than has been provided this year, and our goal would be to ultimately see those technologies in, either through their own efforts or through our efforts or through efforts of the two of us and partnering with industry or other levels of government.

We have the Computers for Schools Program which is a federal-provincial initiative, which to date has seen across Canada 50,000 computers go into the schools,

but in Manitoba, many thousands. While these are computers that are used computers, they are nonetheless extremely good for all kinds of learning purposes in schools. That is never referred to as part of the work that we have been doing to get technology into the schools, but when I visit schools, it is frequently mentioned as a real plus and a real bonus that is truly appreciated. We would encourage other industries as well as federal and provincial governments and those that are already part of the program to be opting into the Computers for Schools Program because it is making a big difference in helping offset the cost. It is a very high-cost new initiative. It is coming in very quickly into our society. It is very difficult for businesses and schools and governments and all those who use computers to keep up with the rapid increase in technology.

But at any rate, may I, while I have the microphone, provide an answer that the member had asked for last week, Mr. Chairman, or yesterday rather? The member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) yesterday had asked to itemize how property taxation has changed. I do have some charts and graphs that might be of interest to her. The first chart substantiates the 2.3 percent increase in reliance on taxation since 1988, which she had asked to have verified, and the second graph is a different look, because it shows the same 2.3 percent since 1988, but it goes back to 1982. Yes, I have three copies. It shows that between 1982 and 1988, which happened to be years that her party was in government, there was a similar increase of 2 percent on reliance on property taxation. So the record is almost identical during their tenure and our tenure. So I provide these three copies of each of these for the member's information and give them to the page. Thank you for just letting me insert that before I forgot.

* (1500)

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, what I am concerned about is that there is quite a large discrepancy between what the government has added to technology this year, even if we include the other initiatives that the minister mentions, which I assume were also considered in the recommendation that the committee hear. The minister's Advisory Committee on Education Finance as well as the Learning Technologies committee, I am sure that they also included that too in their

consideration. They clearly felt that a great deal more needed to be done.

Without getting caught up in the actual numbers—5 million, 10 million, 40 million—there is still a large discrepancy. I wondered if either the committee or the minister or the minister's department had looked at some kind of standard. Had they looked at standards across the country? By standard, I do not mean the standard of the standards test. I am looking at some measure of equivalency. For example, some schools have argued that students need so many minutes on the computer per week. Some divisions and provinces have argued that there should be so many computers per child, and that might differ according to whether one has an elementary school classroom or a high school classroom. Has the department looked at those measures, which may be able to give us some sense of equity across the province?

Mrs. McIntosh: We have had and we have been responding to requests from stakeholders for a provincial plan for the implementation of learning technologies in Manitoba. Some provinces have already developed such a plan. We are in the throes of developing one here in Manitoba, and our plan will be able to be used at all levels of planning and implementing learning technologies in a co-ordinated fashion.

We had asked the Council on Learning Technologies to develop a strategic plan for us, which they have done. That draft strategic planning framework is out with divisions now seeking their feedback to it, and we are pleased to be in the throes of this initiative. We look forward to hearing what the field has to say about the draft strategic plan and to its eventual implementation or modification if it requires it prior to implementation, depending upon what the field says. We have also asked for responses from groups outside the schools such as the Council on Post-Secondary Education, the K to Senior 4 part of the department. We will have all that feedback reviewed by the council and recommendations from that for future use developed accordingly.

I want to indicate that the actual school expenditures in this area for '96-97 were \$16.8 million, so the member should be aware that \$16.8 million was funded

last year via our regular funding into the schools so that when we talk about the top-up, the extra money we have put in, being that \$1.8 million in the technologies, she should be aware that she is not talking about the only money that goes for technology but rather the extra money that is going for technology. I think that is important to underscore.

We have the Computers for Schools and Libraries update that is available. The CFSL program year-end above, the program year-end shows that targets were exceeded. We got 2,100 computers distributed provincially alone; 75 percent of computers now going out are 486 or better, and this ratio is expected to continue or improve in the year to come. The upgraded units were mostly 166 MMX Pentiums in this last year, well, the year that we are finishing, '97-98. The targets for next year are 2,000 computers—this is just provincially—with 1,500 at 486 levels or better. The upgraded units will be 200 MMX Pentiums if they are desktop management computers. If we get desktop management computers coming to the program, then the numbers should increase rather dramatically over that, with an additional 6,000 to 7,000 computers processed over the next 18 months. These also are expected to go out at 75 percent with 486 or better. The CFSL management has decided that to line up with government policy, its mandate will be assumed to cover all K to S4 programming for all ages. So when we start July 1, literacy programs will be deemed eligible to receive computers. Applications are available at the program website, and credit is certainly due to the staff and committee for the program's accomplishments. I would like to note that for the record. They do deserve a lot of credit because that is quite a really remarkable achievement. Again, thanks to all those who donated the computers, because that has really help offset the cost incredibly.

Ms. Friesen: I am interested in the draft report that the minister said has been sent out to divisions and to people outside the divisions as well. She mentioned the Council on Post-Secondary Education and others. Could the minister table a copy of that report, please?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, we can. We do not have one here, but we can obtain one and be pleased to table it.

* (1510)

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to ask the minister about the distribution of technology. It seems to me that is one of the areas that is leading to the concerns and to the kinds of recommendations that are reflected here in the committee's recommendations to the minister. I got the sense from the way in which the minister is discussing the annual increase in the number of computers, that there might be statistics or numbers which are kept on the outgo of these computers. Are there also numbers available on where they are going to and what the actual distribution is of computers across the province at the secondary and at the elementary level?

Mrs. McIntosh: The school boards are the ones who gather that type of data, so we do not in the department.

Ms. Friesen: Is that the kind of information that would be reported to the minister in the divisional action plans?

Mrs. McIntosh: The action plans that are submitted to the department, school plans, we have asked that they outline how they intend to address technology in their schools, what action they will be taking in terms of technology programs for the students there. But we have not asked them to submit specific requests for equipment or that type of thing. Again, that will be done by the school division, just as we do not keep an inventory here of how many desks a school division might have. School divisions do that. Similarly, we do not, ourselves, keep track of how many computers any individual division might have. We fund money to divisions and from that, they purchase the equipment they need.

From time to time, as we did this year, we will provide additional money like last year. As I said, they spent \$16.8 million on this area. We topped it up this year with an additional \$1.8 million but, again, how they spend it is up to them because they are the local elected authorities and the people in their divisions choose them to make decisions for the local community. It is the local autonomy aspect which is very highly regarded and which we respect.

Ms. Friesen: Would it not also be the responsibility of the department to look at equity issues, to look at whether there are large inequities? I do not mean three more computers in this division compared to that

division, but are there, for example, large scale inequities, are there any inequities between the abilities and the choices that have been made in schools along the lines of providing technology?

Have different divisions, for example, made different policy approaches? For example, have some divisions said, well, we will provide so many hours per student? Other divisions might have said we are going to provide so many computers. Is there that kind of difference in levels of policy that are being made across divisions, and are Manitoba students being served equally in terms of their access to the new technologies, and is that not a concern of the department?

Mrs. McIntosh: Of course the department is interested in everything that goes on in schools. It is the future of our province, the future of the children in the schools, it is something that we are keenly interested in and something that we work very hard to address in terms of equity and fairness and so on.

Because we do also honour local autonomy, which has been very much promoted to us by the people of Manitoba, there are lines which we know are there separating the local jurisdiction from the province. When we had our boundaries review and went around the province and talked to many, many people, when we had the review on arbitration for teachers, we went around the province and talked to many, many people. Literally thousands of people said, it is extremely important to us that we be allowed our local autonomy, our local decision making and we retain our ability to levy taxes and make decisions as to how we wish to spend our money for our local people.

Teachers said that overwhelmingly, trustees said it overwhelmingly, parents said it overwhelming, everybody said it overwhelmingly. As a result of that, we did not choose to proceed with forced amalgamations but rather voluntary amalgamations, and we have really made it a matter of respecting local decisions made by local trustees. We have tried very hard not to interfere with that, provided that The Public Schools Act is followed.

In terms of equity, though, of course we provide that through the funding formula. The funding formula is specifically designed to address the issues of equity.

The member may recall discussions we had recently about the impact of assessment and reassessment and how the funding formula, even despite the anomalies that face a division when they have a rapid change in assessment, was still universally upheld by even the divisions that were affected by reassessment as being the right formula because it had the equity in it; it had the equalization factor designed to promote fairness.

This year, in fact, because of assessment problems, an additional \$4 million was added as supplementary funding for equalization to those with particularly low assessments. You know, those kinds of things are there to promote equity in the system. In terms of technology, while we do not keep the statistics, which does not mean that we are not interested but rather that it is up to each division to keep statistics on how much equipment they have, where it is, and how they are using it, we do ask for them to tell us how they plan to teach technology in their schools.

* (1520)

We flow them the money with which they can purchase the amount of equipment they feel is required, and we supply them with the computers for the schools program to help as well flesh out the number of computers. But, I can say that from recent information in Manitoba schools, we do have some recent surveys that indicate, from schools, the current status of Manitoba schools in technology preparedness. We see that in terms of student-computer ratio, all equipment, student-computer, it is 6 to 1; six students for every one computer. In terms of student-computer ratio, the multimedia Internet-capable equipment, for every 21 students, there is that capability.

Schools linked to Internet by high-speed means, we have 36 percent of schools in that category. Schools requiring upgrades to wiring or cabling, we still have over 80 percent that need some form of upgrading. All levels have reprioritized to support this particular learning need. Over the past four years, the department initiatives to support technology have increased from \$155.6 million in 1994-95 to \$2,263.1 million. FRAME information shows divisions budgeting over \$11 million for technology costs in '97-98. So there is a lot going on. MERLIN's brokering, the Internet and

training services helped to decrease the cost, and that has saved the sector \$1 million in the '96-97 year.

Now, I do not know if you would go into every school and see that in every school you would see six students for every one computer. In fact, I know you would not, because I have been in close to 200 schools at this point, and in some schools it almost looks like they have got a computer for every student. They are so up on the technologies, where in still other schools, you will see that the computers are centralized in a lab, they are not in the classrooms. That is by choice for a variety of reasons, some of which may have to do with choosing to spend money in other areas that are deemed more important for that particular school division.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister table the surveys that she was reading from?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I was not reading from a survey, but we could get the survey information from the department for her. I was just reading from scribbled notes.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I thank the minister for that. There was one set of numbers in there that I did not understand. It was, I think, total expenditures on learning technologies. In 1994-95, it was \$155.6 million, and I am not clear whether that is departmental spending or whether that is total spending in all divisions, and does it include, for example, corporate donations? I am not sure of the source of that. Then there was a second figure which was given, I believe, for the current year or '97-98. I wonder if the minister could just run those by me again, with a little explanation as to what they cover.

Mrs. McIntosh: The member was wise to ask the question because I am looking at where the decimals are in these figures—and of course it is done in accounting figures. The figure is \$155.6 thousand in '94-95 to \$2.263 million in this coming year. That is over the past four years, and those are department initiatives to support technology, and they have increased that amount over the last four years. [interjection] Pardon? Over \$200 million. Sorry, Mr. Chairman. You know, when I went to school, we just learned thousands had four and hundreds had three and tens had two, but accountants put numbers down

differently on paper. I hope that clarification has been helpful, and I am glad the member asked for it because it gives her a more accurate response.

Ms. Friesen: It does clear up some of it. My other question relating to that was—this is just departmental initiatives, I gather. The minister answered that—what would be the range of other additional monies that we should be looking at if we were to calculate the whole picture for Manitoba education. I do not know if you can work out a percentage or maybe just a list of what else should be added. There would be corporate donations. There would be, presumably, local initiatives. There would be additional material from Canada. Are there international editions that people have been applying for? Is there any way we can get the full picture of what is being spent on learning technologies in Manitoba?

* (1530)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the short answer is no. A bit of detail surrounding that is that we know what school divisions have spent. We know that, for example, last year they spent \$16.8 million in this area in the '96-97 year. We know that the department is at \$2.2 million-and-some for this area, but we do not know the revenue sources necessarily of local school divisions, if they have obtained donations, for example. We know if they have computers from the School Programs, but if they have received donations of computers through endowments or other good corporate citizens, we would not know that, and we do not keep those statistics. We do know how much they spend. We do know their identified needs, but there are local decisions and local autonomy in terms of keeping those kinds of data which we do not have the staff or the wherewithal or the time or the need to do here.

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to get back to my concerns about equity and about some comparability between the provisions that are being made in different divisions across the province. So far we have not established any means of comparability, and the minister's concern is for local autonomy in this. I wondered if in meetings that the minister has had at the national level or meetings that the deputy minister has been to in international situations, whether there are means of

comparison in the provision of computer-technology-assisted learning.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the member asks a good question. We are into an emerging field. It is a new area of education that has not historically been part of our delivery system. All across the nations, in talking to other ministers, we are all at about the same place in terms of the ratio, like, students to computers for example: we are all at about the same place. What we are struggling with, all of us, right across North America is that as the technologies come on stream and we know they are forming an integral part of the education system, as well as everything else we seem to do in society these days, so we have six computers. We have six students for every one computer, and that seems to be on par across the province. What is the quality of the computer? What is the appropriateness of the computer? What are we using the computer for? Those questions are ones that are being sifted through our strategic plan for technology, or the plan that is currently being examined here in Manitoba may help give some clarity around those issues.

We have questions in terms of teacher competency in using the computers, student competency in using the computers as tools for learning, not just as techniques, administration, school records. There is a whole series of things that some schools are more sophisticated at simply and only because the people in them are more sophisticated about them.

You know, where all else might be equal, they have the same number of computers, et cetera, et cetera, but you have personnel in one school that are technologically highly competent, and others who are still getting their feet wet struggling to learn what these machines can do for them.

So we look across North America and know that it is still an emerging field, still in its infancy. People are beginning to question in various jurisdictions, I mean provincial jurisdictions and certain states, you know, have we invested in the right kind of machinery? Have we bought the right model? Have we bought the right speed, the right power? They are asking themselves questions as to, are we becoming too technologically dependent or are we at risk of that? For what should we be using these machines? And more and more they

are becoming tools for learning as opposed to learning a keyboard and learning how to use a computer. The uses to which you can put it are becoming dominant. I think we are on the right track in that regard, but it does presume, once you start emphasizing computers as tools for learning and research, that at an elementary level or some early foundation level students will become computer literate, know how to turn the machine on. They will know how to access certain programs. They know how to use them. In many respects the young children adapting to these items adapt very easily and very swiftly, whereas those instructing them, in some cases struggle with something that was not part of their own education.

* (1540)

So that is all very new. I do not think we have ever had a generation where those who are doing the teaching may in fact, in some instances, lag behind those who are doing the learning. Many divisions are doing some intriguing things to get the teachers up to speed. Some teachers take to it naturally and they gravitate to it, and they are doing splendidly. Others, as I say, struggle. Some divisions are sending the school computers home with teachers during the summer so they can become familiar and comfortable using them. We are encouraging professional development in how to use computers as tools for teaching, because they are marvellous tools for teaching.

But because it is so new, there is not a long track record to go back and examine. Because it is so new, a lot of the early decisions that were made across the nation are beginning to be rethought, are beginning to be challenged, as were these in fact the right decisions. Before we go too much further, should we be going down another avenue? We know that there have been some intriguing things going on that have captured the imagination and the interest of educators, and one of those, of course, is the World Wide Web. There have been significant resources being applied to provide Internet connectivity for every school in the province, because the potential access to unlimited resources in global communications are attractive inducements for educators. The Web is becoming a very powerful developmental tool, a very powerful delivery medium for distance education because of the communications possibilities and the richness of the resources available.

They had a recent definition of virtual schools and it captures the on-line dimension of course delivery. It said: a school that delivers its education program, in whole or in part, through the use of computer-mediated communications, either synchronously or asynchronously, where teachers and students are typically but not necessarily separated by distance. When you think about it, it is an amazing thing. It could never have happened 20 years ago, simply could not have happened.

I can remember being on a school board in the early '80s, bringing in the first computers into our division, and our division was one of the first divisions to bring in computers. There were some others that were doing it at the same time, and it was looked upon more or less as a novelty. That is just a little more than a decade ago. The great concern that students would forget how to read and write because of the computer and all that we have learned about it since then in terms of its ability to assist in increasing literacy was not known a little over a decade ago. So we are looking at it so differently. Students, we know, are taking Distance courses, if for no other reason, just to resolve a timetable conflict or to augment their studies with courses that are not offered in their own buildings.

This enthusiasm for the Web has created a flurry of discussion and activity that ranges almost from an evangelical to a huckster range. But there is a very strong and growing core of knowledgeable practitioners who freely share their experiences and expertise, and as in any emerging and rapidly growing field, the Web has its share of misconceptions, assumptions, misunderstandings, and sometimes that results in things being overstated or false information coming forward.

But there is a lot of interest in this area and a lot of writing about the importance of it. We look for improved access to learning because of the broad range of communication tools, multimedia capabilities, easy access to vast resources, as well as for collaborative learning opportunities that are possible through the use of computer networks to establish learning communities, learning networks. Active learning from participation in a WBC is based on making input, responding to peers, and sharing ideas.

We know that improved learning can result from the visualization and stimulations made possible by Web-

based technologies. We know that student monitoring and feedback can be provided at a much higher level much more rapidly. Assignment submission can be almost instantaneous, and we know that it also facilitates life-long learning.

So we have all of these things that we know, the things that we are learning, the things that have already been rejected as things that should not have been looked at in the first instance, and so we grow and evolve. We grow and evolve very, very rapidly, and it is very difficult to keep up. Everybody everywhere says that about technology. There is a clear need for us provincially, federally and locally to find more tax dollars for technology for schools, for colleges, for universities, and we will do so. Provided our economy continues to grow, no doubt more dollars will become available, but it is imprudent to spend on technology outside of the more important context of the act of planning, teaching and learning. So we are not going to buy a computer just so we can say, there, there is a computer in the school. We have to know why we are buying it, what we are going to do with it, if it is the right model for the purpose we need, and if it is going to be sustainable over time so that equity through the succeeding years can be put in place. We have to establish the competencies that are required to plan, the competencies that are required to teach with technology. But as educators we have to be vigilant to use technology for teaching and learning for the correct educational reasons and not just to say that we have become technological.

Teachers have many skills and traditionally over the centuries have had many tools, but their tools are changing and their skill requirements are changing. They need to know that it is very legitimate to not use technology at some times for many educationally sound reasons, and we must make certain that we do not become so enamoured with the machines that we forget the human element.

Having said all that, in summation I come back to it is a new emerging field. The last five years in particular have shown very rapid change, building upon the previous 10 years where there was kind of a slow introduction and an understanding that we were on our way into this kind of world. The last five years have seen unprecedented growth and even unprecedented

growth in the schools, albeit, not as fast as all might wish. If you compare the introduction of this into the schools compared to other things into the schools, this has been rapid indeed because it is changing the entire way of doing things.

* (1550)

Is there equity school to school to school? There is the possibility of equity school to school to school. I have been in schools where the decision makers in those places have been determined to utilize computer technology. I have been in other schools where the schools have been determined not to use it for a variety of reasons, but the opportunity for equity in the funding is there, the opportunity for equity in being able to access computers in schools programs is there, the encouragement from the department is there, the ability to access proposals for science and technology grants is there, the local decision makers then have to decide how to deal with all these opportunities.

They will soon be forced into, those that are still reluctant, as new curricula comes on stream that has technology as a component of the curricula where teachers have to use certain technological tools to teach the content, those divisions that are still reluctant will be forced into coming on stream with technology, because the mandatory curriculum will include it and that is beginning to happen now.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, the question I had asked was whether there were national or international means of comparison available that would enable us to move towards equity, and I gather the answer to that was no.

I wanted to ask the minister about the phrase that she used "keeping up" in her response. I mean, that is the issue. People, parents and schools and divisions want to know that they are keeping up. How does the department measure "keeping up?"

Mrs. McIntosh: It is a good question and it is one that is being asked, as I say, right across Canada. By the way, I confirm the answer to the earlier was no. She says she assumes the answer is no. It was no.

When we get to the MERLIN line we will be able to have a much more thorough discussion on this topic. I

hope the member will raise it when we get to that line because that is where we are slated to deal with this issue.

I can indicate that we now have the strategic plan out to the field to obtain feedback from them as to their opinions on technology, et cetera. We are more interested in finding a standard that we can set for the competencies, rather than, you know, like we take a look at one computer for every six students, and that is very interesting. That shows that we are on a par with other jurisdictions, but what does it really mean? Does it mean they are competent? Does it mean they can do with a computer those things that are useful for them to be able to do in the workforce upon graduation? So we are more keen on determining what are the competencies that are being learned. Are they things that the students will need when they graduate? Those are things that are still being determined by society, you know, how much technology does the workforce require in certain occupations. Those are still being discovered by the occupations. So as they discover what they need, we need to determine whether or not our students are competent to provide what the world out there is requesting.

So I would be looking for competency-based standards as opposed to equipment. I do not want to be the kind of minister that says we are successful because we have a computer on every desk. That does not tell me that anybody is successful. Or IBM is better than Apple and we have all IBM, or Apple is better than IBM, we have all Apple. We have all Macintoshes, good name, but are they the best? I do not know. And does it matter? I do not know. What I want to know—and this does matter and it is very important—what are the competency levels of the students when they finish their learning? That is the central question. Various places may have different routes of getting there, so those standards are still being developed. They are not developed yet and there are not a lot of places that have standards even that we can borrow and look at as precedents because we are all at about the same place in our evolution in this area.

Ms. Friesen: How does the department measure the competencies then of students in Manitoba in this area?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the council on the new technologies has, as I indicated earlier, in this past

week or so sent out to school divisions its strategic plan for learning in the province and is seeking back from the field information that will provide the framework for the integration of competencies into core curriculum areas in '98-99 and beyond, and we should see out of that the development of an information technology literacy continuum integrated, of course, into the core curriculum.

The department provides guidance to educators and department staff for the integration of information technologies into education, and MERLIN, the Textbook Bureau and the department are negotiating provincial licensing for educational software. MERLIN and the department are also co-operating in developing the improved use of the Internet for support services. For '98-99, some of those additional initiatives include the integration of multimedia into mathematics and English language arts in the K to 8 curricula and the extension of the interdisciplinary middle years multimedia project.

* (1600)

We are hoping that when the council hears back from school divisions, they will provide to the council expectations as to competencies at various levels that can be identified and then looked to, but in the area where they are using computers or technology as tools for learning, it is like another level of saying you can use the radio or the television as a tool for learning and many have. So they use the radio or they use the television as a tool for learning. Is there a competency standard that needs to be met for turning on the radio and using the television? There might be one if the teacher had to program a VCR because a lot of people struggle with that, but those are all technologies. Radio, television, VCRs, those are technologies that most of us are quite comfortable and familiar with using, and these new technologies, in terms of their usage, are simply other tools, better tools, more exciting tools with wider potential and capability that can also be used.

So we will see the competencies itemized. The competencies that are expected should be itemized when we get everything back from the Council on Learning Technologies. The feedback we expect—it has been asked that the feedback will comment on the

completeness of the competencies, of the appropriateness of them, et cetera. But we are still in our—like we are emerging out of a cocoon, we are still in our developmental stages. There has not been a complete metamorphosis take place yet, but it is coming, and everybody just seems to talk about the millennium, and perhaps it is the time. People talk about the millennium and the way the world will change when we enter the 2000s, and one of the things that so many observers say is that as we enter the millennium we will truly become a fully technological society. Well, we still have a few more years to hit the millennium but not very many. At the rate of speed with which this is growing, that prediction was first made a couple of years ago, I think will have a pretty good chance of being a true prediction.

So, in terms of keeping up, those are some of the ways in which we are keeping up. The identification of competencies coming in from the field will certainly assist us in staying on top of this as we continue to grow and develop in this area.

Ms. Friesen: Before we leave this area, I wonder if the minister could give us a timetable for when she expects the council to have received feedback and to develop its next step of proposals?

Mrs. McIntosh: We are going from memory here, so I do not have an exact date, but I can give the member a ballpark time. The chairman of the Council on Learning Technologies is hoping that he will have heard back from the field by the end of this academic year and hopefully should be in a position to provide me with information early in the fall. I always hesitate when I say that, because I get concerned that I am committing someone to a time frame that—he may need a bit of extra time, but that is our expectation right now, and it is a ballpark figure not tied to a specific date.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I want to look at another policy area that the minister's Advisory Committee on Education Finance looked at and to again ask the minister's responses to it. It is obviously a huge area affecting schools well beyond the boundaries of Winnipeg, and that is fetal alcohol syndrome.

The committee made some recommendations, and it also attached an appendix and recommended

specifically that the department include fetal alcohol syndrome and criteria for determining eligibility for Level II and Level III funding. Without necessarily getting into special needs and Level II, Level III funding at this time, I am wondering what the department's overall policy and implementation advice has been to the minister on this?

Mrs. McIntosh: We do not say, for example, that we will fund FAS or FAE or Down's syndrome or that type of thing. We say that we will fund the symptoms or the behaviours that are evident in the child which may be caused by FAS or may be caused by something else. But if a child is showing severe aggressive behaviour, for example, then that would be the thing that is determined to be the need. The cause of the severe aggressive behaviour may be one of 10 different things but the behaviour is still severely aggressive and needs to receive funding. So that is the way in which we do it. We take a look at the child, how the child is evidencing his problem and then we address that evidence through treating the behaviours regardless of the cause, although certainly we would be familiar with whatever the cause was.

I think this is the best way to fund it because, as the member knows, in every range of ailment there are levels of severity and levels of competency that show that not every FAS child automatically has the same characteristics. If they did, if they were all identical in terms of their characteristics, then maybe you could say that they all should be Level II or they all should be Level III, but each child is an individual who evidence characteristics differently, one from the other.

* (1610)

There is no cap on the numbers, so as many FAS children who have the fundable behaviours are eligible to receive that funding. There is no cap on it; it is done for the child. This is similar to what happens in British Columbia, for example, where there is no targeted funding for students with FAS or FAE because again, they may qualify in areas of function or disfunction. Similarly, Alberta has no targeted funding for students with FAS. They may qualify for funding under other categories of behaviour that show the need to address. Saskatchewan has no targeted funding, neither does Ontario nor New Brunswick, et cetera. So we are in

line with what other provinces are doing by treating the behaviours and the symptoms, and not just saying you are FAS, fine, then you must automatically need these kinds of funding, because they may not.

Ms. Friesen: The recommendation from the minister's advisory committee seems to assume, and obviously I am reading between the lines here, and I want to know from the minister whether she sees the same assumption in this and whether it is a correct assumption.

In the interim, this is in the interim of before the special needs review committee finally reports, this committee, the minister's advisory committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training include fetal alcohol syndrome in the criteria used to determine eligibility for Level II and Level III funding. That assumption seems to me to be there that the department does not, that the minister has answered that, yes, symptoms are included, or the behavioural things that proceed from possible FAS diagnosis. So who is right here? Has the committee misunderstood the department's recommendations, and has this been clarified with the committee?

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not think anybody misunderstood anybody, and all were correct. I think it is just the way in which the member has read this particular line. They had recommended from the committee that every child who had fetal alcohol syndrome be eligible for Level II or Level III funding, and our response is that every child who has symptoms that need treating, that may be caused by fetal alcohol syndrome will be eligible for Level II or Level III funding if they require it.

So if they need it, they will get it, and if they need it because they have FAS, they will get it, but it may be that if they are FAE and it is mild, that perhaps they do not qualify. Most would, I would think, because FAS normally exhibits symptoms that see children being eligible for funding, so that would be the case, I think, in many, many, many situations.

But we do fund those FAS students who have needs right now. They were saying fund all of them even if they do not have the needs, and that is when we said, well, that does not make a lot of sense.

So the specific diagnosis of fetal alcohol syndrome has not been included in the criteria, but we know, and it will continue to occur, that a number of FAS students are receiving Level II and Level III support because they meet existing Level II and III criteria based on their programming needs.

For example, Mr. Chairman, Level II support which provides \$8,520 over and above the per-pupil grant for each pupil who is psychotic, autistic or severely deaf or hard of hearing, severely or emotionally behaviour disordered. That is Level II funding. Many FAS students will exhibit those tendencies.

Similarly, at Level III, Level III support is \$18,960 for each pupil, who is profoundly multihandicapped, profoundly hard of hearing, deaf or profoundly emotionally or behaviourally disordered, over and above their regular school grant. Many FAS students will exhibit those characteristics, will meet the criteria, and will be funded. But, they are not being funded because they are FAS; they are being funded because they are severely multihandicapped or one of the other symptoms. I hope that provides clarification.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to ask about two recommendations the committee made on page 11, that dealing with clinician funding and small schools funding. I wonder if the minister could give me her response to each of those.

If we could begin with the clinician funding, where the committee recommended a different funding formula, that support be calculated using lower divisors for smaller school divisions, and that a different formula be used for northern schools who have higher travel costs and difficulty sharing clinician services. I wonder if the minister could give me her response to those recommendations.

* (1620)

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, we accepted those recommendations and we have done those things.

Ms. Friesen: And on the small schools funding, the committee recommended that kindergarten pupils be counted as half time rather than full time, and adult pupils be included on a full-time equivalent basis for the purposes of the grant. Did the department accept both of those recommendations?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, we accepted that recommendation, and we are doing that.

Ms. Friesen: Just for clarification, Mr. Chairman, there were actually two parts to that recommendation. The kindergarten pupils and adult pupils were both aspects of that accepted by the department?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, Mr. Chairman. When I said, yes, I was saying yes to both, because the question included both and the answer included both.

Ms. Friesen: One of the responsibilities in this section of the department is for the deputy minister to represent the department and the minister in local, provincial, national and international education-related matters. I wonder if the minister could table for us, at a different time, a list of the occasions and events at which the deputy minister has represented the minister.

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not believe the deputy has been internationally—the deputy has just informed me that he has not represented me at international or national events. However, he will be next week when he will be travelling to Ottawa on my behalf for an event that I cannot attend, because I am in Estimates and I could not get a pair from the House. So he will have to represent Manitoba at that event. He does a lot of speaking on his own, but not on my behalf recently.

Ms. Friesen: Would the minister table the events at which her deputy has represented her locally and provincially then?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, Mr. Chairman, we do not have that here, of course. But from time to time, the deputy will take my place at local events, if I am already doing something else, just as he will be travelling to the sustainable learning conference next week which I very much regret having to miss, and because it is a national body that works with sustainable development I am there representing the ministers of Canada at the committee's request, and, unfortunately, the opposition refused me a pair to attend that.

It is very regrettable and the committee is most upset about it, but they recognize that sometimes opposition members do not recognize the value for Canadians in sustainable development or learning for sustainable

futures which is being integrated into Canadian curricula. Because I was chosen to be the member and because the committee itself had requested that I be the member, there was no backup minister on that committee. Mr. Cummings had been a member for six years prior to me, and I had become involved with sustainable development, hence the community had specifically requested that I be the Minister of Education sitting on it.

This is our once-a-year meeting that the opposition has denied me the opportunity to attend, and it is regrettable for education; it is regrettable for sustainable development; it is regrettable in terms of the spirit of co-operation that is not shown for national initiatives in education. It is one that I do feel a little resentful about, both in terms of education for the students of this country, for my colleagues across the country and for all those who are interested in sustainable development and the environment of Canada that the opposition sometimes say they support but clearly do not, or they would have allowed me to go.

Hence, my deputy will take my place. I am very grateful to him. He is a knowledgeable man and will attempt to fill that role on behalf of elected people.

Ms. Friesen: Well, the minister is always free to go. I believe there are 31 MLAs on that side of the House, and I believe there are other people who could do that. [interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable members to wait until it is their turn to put their comments on the record, so that we get everything for Hansard.

The honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), to complete her question.

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to ask the minister to give us some background on the recommendation in aboriginal education where the committee—I am back again to the minister's Advisory Committee on Education Finance which emphasizes the urgent need for an effective strategy.

Now, I understand that the department does have a strategy on aboriginal education, and I am curious as to

why the minister's advisory committee seems to think there is an urgent need for an effective strategy. It seems to imply that the one that the department has meets neither of those criteria.

Mrs. McIntosh: First, a response to the comment that while we have 31 MLAs on this side of the House and any one of them could have gone to the sustainable learning futures conference, the member, of course, is aware that in refusing to give the minister a pair, that they absolutely would not give anybody else a pair. If the minister responsible who has been working on it and has the information and the knowledge and has done all the lead-up work for the conference is denied the opportunity to go, they are certainly not going to grant a pair to anybody else on this side of the House.

Pure and simple, the opposition is refusing to pair government ministers unless it is specifically a meeting of other ministers, and that is fine, but that does not take into account that many ministers chair, and they would not even let the current Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) attend when he was the chair of the national committee.

These committees are national and international committees that include as sitting members people from federal and international governments, provincial and state governments, people from European countries who are not ministers of Education or ministers of anything else in Canada, but who are very knowledgeable people in developing curriculum in new areas such as sustainable development for schools around the world. This meeting is the outgrowth of the Rio meeting, and this opposition has denied this government the opportunity to be there, not just to represent Manitoba, but to represent education in Canada.

So please do not tell me, Mr. Chairman—the member should not tell me through you—that somebody else could go. No one else is ready, and they would not give anybody else permission to go either. I think it is just symptomatic of the co-operation we get in trying to make a better Canada, and I am pleased it is on the record because this is not the only thing that we have had to send not the person who is expected by this national and international high-level committees, but a person that is not expected, somebody that has to take

time away from their duties to go and attend. That is the way, I believe, the opposition wants it to be. They do not want to see success in endeavours where we are involved. It does not suit their long-range purpose or motivation.

In answer to this particular question, the committee does its work a year in advance, and at the time the committee developed this, they did not realize that we had an aboriginal program in place. Had they seen it, I am quite sure their response would be much different.

* (1630)

I will just maybe read you—maybe I can table even—some of these pieces of information. Here is the one on learning technologies that I think the member was seeking, right? And so in here, if I could just backtrack to show what was sent out in terms of learning technologies, I now have the material here to submit for the member. Mr. Bill Shafer's covering letter says: Attached please find the draft Strategic Planning Framework for the Integration of Information Technologies into Manitoba's Education and Training System, developed by the Manitoba Council on Learning Technologies, with input from other educational stakeholders. As part of our ongoing consultations, we are seeking your feedback by June 1, 1998, to assist us in completing this document.

This went to the field. Suggested areas for feedback were included in the document, but all comments are welcome, et cetera, et cetera. Where you can send the responses. Because of the changing nature of technology and of education, the council will treat this framework as a living document to be reviewed each January and updated each June.

So we talk about a final report. There never will be a final report on this. It is a living, breathing document that will be constantly changing, just as technologies are constantly changing.

It is the council's hope that the provincial framework will provide a basis for linking planning at a number of levels to the benefit of all learners, and the basis from which activities in Manitoba can be organized and measured. It is also expected to provide a basis for

ongoing discussion on how in an information age we can best meet the needs of our students.

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

That was the covering letter—I am just taking that little note off—and with that then we have the draft Strategic Planning Framework for the Integration of Information Technologies in Manitoba's Education and Training system. I think the member will find in here a lot of very useful information. In terms of competencies, for example, it says that in terms of expected outcomes: simple concrete definitions of the expected technology-related skills of teachers in various grade and subject areas; technological responses which support improvements in students' success; pedagogically appropriate teaching strategies for technology; a high level of collaboration and information sharing amongst teachers, curriculum developers, researchers and a wide range of experts worldwide.

That is an expected outcome under the category of improving and enhancing teaching and learning, and it is just one that I sort of picked at random as an example to read. But there are goals in the action plan framework, the goals of improving access, equity of access to learning opportunities and resources, to provide students with the opportunity to acquire the skills and attitudes needed to use information technology effectively in their lives, to improve and enhance teaching and learning, to improve the planning, decision making and administration of education, to change education in fundamental ways which enable it to better fulfill its responsibilities and expectations.

We have key implementation strategies and assumptions, and under each of those that I have just read are subcategories with expected outcomes identified. So you would have under each of those a listing of expected outcomes which I will not take the time to read because I will table the document for the member, but just so the record gets a sense of what it is I am tabling.

There are questions and comments in here, and, as I say, feedback requested from the field. I have three copies of each that I can table. Actually, I have four copies of each, one for me, and this letter has just gone

out to all the stakeholder groups along with the strategy on technologies.

Back to the aboriginal question—I am sorry to pause while I introduced that—we do have a directorate. We do have a strategy that is in place and not just in education but—[interjection] I am just waiting till she can hear. There is no point in talking if she is not listening.

Well, Mr. Chairman, since the member seems otherwise occupied, I will provide the rest of my answer when she is able to resume listening to what I am saying.

Ms. Friesen: I think the minister might want to recognize that she is speaking to the public record, that this is not a personal issue. It is something that she seems to take quite personally. She should not. She is speaking to the public record, to Hansard, but if she wishes to end her statement there, that is fine.

Mrs. McIntosh: Earlier, yesterday, in fact, I believe, the member had indicated that—I really thought I was speaking to her. If I am not speaking to her and I am speaking to the public, then I believe I will have more latitude to answer on behalf of what I think the public needs to know rather than when the member tries to cut me off and insist that I answer only her specific request, a narrow field for her information only, that I am now at liberty to say, but my critic, honourable critic, I am not just speaking to you so therefore you can no longer limit my answers to just your question because she has just now asked that I speak for the broader public. Is that a correct interpretation? If so, that is wonderful. That is wonderful and I appreciate it.

Mr. Chairperson: I would suggest that we direct all comments to the Chair and that is the process that we use here, and I would ask the honourable minister to continue in completing her answer as she had started on previously.

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you very much, and through you to the people of Manitoba, I think that they should be aware that not only—[interjection] I am having trouble hearing over the comments across the way, Mr. Chairman. I wonder, I am speaking, but I am speaking to a record and I am being interrupted by the member

for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) who has been heckling from his seat and he is continuing to heckle from his seat.

* (1640)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I would encourage all members to—

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): I have a point of order, Mr. Chairperson. The minister was just speaking what I thought was a point of order. She interrupted the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) and I would just like to say that the minister obviously has no idea on how the Estimates committee functions. What I was concerned about her doing and our member was too was answering questions—that is what Estimates is for—on the public record, which is part of what it is for.

It does not mean she can get up and make some bizarre statement of talking through you to the people of Manitoba. My only reference from my seat was that given her propensity to send out memos such as on God Save the Queen and other very important public issues that if she wants to communicate with the people of Manitoba that is how she should do it. But we do have rules in this Chamber. She should follow those rules. You should call her to order and ask her to respond to specific questions related to the Department of Education Estimates. That is what we are here for.

Mr. Chairperson: The member for Thompson does not have a point of order. I would encourage the minister to continue and to complete her answer, please.

* * *

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, that was regrettable, but we will carry on and through you to the people of Manitoba, for the record, as requested by the opposition critic that comments go to the people for the record, not to her. I comply with her request regardless of her government House leader having a different opinion than she seems to have. There are differences in caucuses; a clear example of that was just shown us now.

I think that the people of Manitoba would be interested in knowing that the Native Affairs ministry has also embarked upon an urban aboriginal strategy, which has linkages into education in very strong and dramatic ways. We are most encouraged by the work that is being done with that group through the Minister of Native Affairs (Mr. Newman) and the many people who have given of their time and energy and knowledge to work with him to develop an urban aboriginal strategy which does have impact and considerations for education.

In our aboriginal education directorate we have three goals identified and those goals are a part of our strategy. One is to increase the graduation of aboriginal students; we have been doing a number of things in that regard. Two is to increase the labour market participation rate of aboriginal peoples; again, we have been working there. The third is to strengthen and increase partnerships, and those we feel are goals that the strategy has spelled out and that are underway in Manitoba in addition to the work that is being done in our elementary schools.

In terms of proposed actions on the strategy, we are proposing to establish an operational framework for partnership between the departments and with the aboriginal people in developing and carrying out education initiatives. We proposed to implement a department-wide human resource development plan, which includes training for all levels of department staff to increase sensitivity and operational ability to meet aboriginal needs and programs. We are participating with other government departments to prepare preschool children for success in school. Those initiatives are in the final stages of development.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

We look at the establishment of mechanisms for partnerships, not just with other departments, but with other departments and with agencies to co-ordinate activities relating to social, economic, and health issues for aboriginal people, because we know they all come together. We know the health issues need to be addressed. We see those health issues being addressed, for example, with the great bannock bakeoff that was held last year, where, in recognition of the fact that diabetes has become a serious health problem for aboriginal peoples and that diet can affect diabetes

onset and control diabetes, recipes for bannock and traditional foods that were prepared with a diabetic-prevention or diabetic-control element about them were established in some of the elementary schools where there were high pockets of aboriginal children, to talk to them about how they can use nutrition to effect health.

We know that health, social and economic, and educational issues all do tie together. My assistant deputy minister sits on the diabetes working committee to develop the provincial strategy on that aspect. That is just one, tiny, small segment of the many things that are being done, but I provide it as an example of the types of things that are happening.

We are also creating effective, relevant and high-quality curriculum, learning resources, and a school environment which will ensure the success of the resources and the success then of aboriginal students in schools at all levels. We are establishing a series of transition programs to assist in the development of career information to enable students to move from school to post-secondary education training programs, the workplace.

I mentioned earlier today, Partners for Careers, or was it yesterday, I believe it was. Over 300 aboriginal graduates now successfully placed as a result of that particular initiative, which we did together last year with Industry, Trade and Tourism, so, you know, were interdepartmental initiatives.

We are looking at developing initiatives and providing financial support services to increase the success of aboriginal students in post-secondary institutions and in training programs. Those are goals of the strategy, and as I say, it is not just our department because we do have input from the Native Education Directorate and those other departments.

But in terms of the school, elementary, K to Senior 4 learning experience, already in advance of the strategy, we are already integrating aboriginal perspectives into the provincial curriculum, not just for aboriginal students, but for nonaboriginal students, as well, so that they can have a cross-cultural awareness and an understanding of each other that was never there 10 years ago. In the 1980s, none of these things were

being done. In the '90s, they are being done and they are important. They are being done in advance of our strategy, and they will dovetail nicely with our plans for the future.

We have an aboriginal education curriculum steering committee. It advises and assists the department in the development and integration of aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum.

We have a curriculum framework for aboriginal languages that is currently being development with the western protocol partners: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories and the Yukon, and we expect to have that completed at the end of 1998.

As well, in January of this year, we distributed an annotated bibliography of Manitoba-based aboriginal language resources. We are partnering with the Aboriginal Teachers' Circle and with the University of Manitoba to hold a summer institute on native education. The department, in partnership with the Aboriginal Teachers' Circle, Children of the Earth High School, Manitoba association for multicultural education, has held and will continue to hold an annual aboriginal education conference, usually in October.

Manitoba schools receive over \$4 million for English language enrichment for native students. As well, student-at-risk funding is available to all divisions and districts but concentrated in divisions where there are high numbers of aboriginal students, many of whom are at risk, and money will flow to them. We are participating, Manitoba Education and Training, on the interdepartmental task force on aboriginal self-government, as I said, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy.

You know, I do not want to take up all of Estimates on this, but just those two little examples I gave of the proper nutrition to address diabetes concerns in the schools because we recognize that diabetes is a health problem for many aboriginal people and, you know, those kinds of things are beneficial for all students but do address particular problems in the aboriginal community.

* (1650)

I think if the aboriginal education item on the advisory committee's report had been prepared now instead of a year ago, it would be quite a different request that they were making. They would probably urge us to, if I were anticipating them, implement as swiftly as possible the plans that we have laid down as opposed to saying, lay down plans.

Ms. Friesen: Well, I am puzzled by the minister's response on that, because she has two assistant deputy minister who sit on that committee and who presumably were already sitting on the inter-departmental committees. The minister has also suggested that in advance of the strategy there was, she believes, a great deal that was being done. So presumably, this recommendation of the committee is in response to all of that, and they believe that not enough is being done. Is that the case?

Mrs. McIntosh: The member made a couple of statements prior to her question that I certainly hope were not imputing motives, and I am indicating by my response here that I am assuming that she was not imputing motives, so that if she did intend that, the record will now show that she did not.

Mr. Chairman, indeed there are two members of my department sitting on this committee, but perhaps because the member has not been in government and does not understand the process that government has to go through, the members sitting on the advisory committee were fully aware that there was the strategy plan readied for presentation to the government. They were not at liberty to discuss that because it had not yet been approved as a government initiative, which it now is. So all they were able to do—and if the member reads and I suggest she do that, at the top of page 12, that the School Programs Division of the Department of Education and Training presented a document called—and she goes on about aboriginal education, that the committee noted that the Department of Education and Training has identified aboriginal education as a high priority.

That was all they were able to say at that point, Mr. Chairman, because there are at various stages in the planning of any particular strategy areas of confidentiality.

Now, I recognize that the member may wish that there were no periods of confidentiality in cabinet or in government or in personnel or in tendering or in advice to the minister or in documents prepared to make recommendations to the minister or in privacy provisions for citizens or students or patients, but there are certain things that at certain points in the development of a strategy still remain confidential.

That is what the—[interjection] Mr. Chairman, I believe another member wishes to speak and have the floor. I am quite willing to let him—[interjection] I am quite willing to let the member have the floor if they wish it. No, they do not wish it? They just wish to heckle. Okay, fine.

Point of Order

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): I just heard her say that we did not wish to protect the rights of patients or others to privacy in appropriate fora. I have never heard anybody on this side of the House or for that matter on that side of the House make such a silly argument, so I was asking my colleague if all of the answers had been along this vein or not, and she indicated that many had.

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

* * *

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

Mrs. McIntosh: I am delighted to have that on the record and invite people to read Hansard to see what I did say and then compare what the member thought I said, and then also to point out that many times, Mr. Chairman, many times in this Chamber opposition members have asked us to breach the privacy of citizens in the Chamber, and we have been forced to say that we could not reveal certain information because it was confidential. It was that to which I was alluding before the member walked in and decided to join us for Estimates here and assume that what I was referring to was something else.

But, indeed, the opposition has frequently asked members of this House on the record to reveal privacies that the government was not able to do because they were confidential in nature for a variety of reasons, and as I was saying when the member rose on his point of order, or his alleged point of order, that that was the position in which my staff found itself, unable to say to the finance committee the details of our strategy.

That was not because they were ignorant of it or because of the things the member implied about their abilities. They are competent, capable people, but they are also very conscious of when they can and cannot reveal government initiatives or recommendations about to be made to the minister.

It is not because they are ill informed or ignorant or unable to contribute wisely to a committee at all. I do not want that implication about my staff to be the implication that is interpreted from what the member said in her commentary.

The committee made the recommendation, and from that recommendation we note that they also see it as a high priority. It may be the context arose because the special programs division discussed funding support for aboriginal students, and the SPD urged the committee to make this discussion a high priority. We are making it a high priority. We continue to keep it a high priority, and the department had identified what they were able to, the departmental people on the committee, what they were able to identify at that time, not all of which they knew. I hope the member, my honourable critic, and her colleagues will appreciate that even though an ADM may know a piece of information, they are not always at liberty to reveal that information at certain stages along the way of the development of a new initiative. So, please, it is not because my staff were lacking in capability in any way or were not listening or did not want to contribute. It was because they had constraints of confidentiality placed upon them by oath.

I see the member is otherwise occupied now, but since I am not addressing her and I am addressing the people of Manitoba anyhow, I want the people of Manitoba, through you, to know, Mr. Chairman, that

we appreciate the input received from various aboriginal leaders around the province. It has been most helpful. They have been willing to look at things for us, provide us commentary, and their input no doubt will bear very good fruit for the children in their community for whom they care very deeply. We appreciate their help.

* (1700)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour now being five o'clock, time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Speaker: Order, please. It is 5 p.m. and time for private members' hour.

House Business

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I am sorry that I have not had a chance to talk to the government House leader. However, I believe arrangements have been made and, if not, I am asking for leave to allow Resolution 16 to remain on the Order Paper because the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) is unavoidably absent for personal reasons. So we will proceed extremely briefly with No. 17 and debate No. 18 if there is leave of the House.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to leave Resolution 16 standing at the top of the Order Paper in its current position?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, as the member stated, we have not had a chance to talk to our House leader either. So I do not know whether he has had any other discussion with other sponsors of this Private Members' Business, and I would be interested if we would just take a couple of minutes before we proceed.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to pause for a couple of minutes before clarifying the intent of the members?

Is there leave to permit Resolution 16, in the name of the honourable member for Brandon East, to retain its

position in the Order Paper and move now to Resolution 17, standing in the name of the honourable member for Crescentwood? Leave? [Agreed]

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, thank you. I believe that on the basis of precedence, precedent rulings, this motion may be out of order because the matter has been debated by the House previously this session, and a resolution opposing the MAI and calling on the federal government to hold hearings across the country and in Manitoba and a variety of other actions have been taken by this House unanimously, for which I think all members deserve credit. So I would respectfully ask leave of the House to withdraw this resolution from the Order Paper at this time.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Does the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) have leave to withdraw proposed Resolution 17, based on the premise that it would be ruled out of order because it is an item that has been previously debated, that being specifically Opposition Day that was devoted to that resolution? Is there leave?

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I apologize to the honourable members, and perhaps the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) will join me in that apology. Discussions were held earlier this afternoon between House leaders and, subject to the approval of honourable members, it was decided that the resolution standing in the name of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) would maintain its place on the list, that the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) would likely ask that his resolution be withdrawn, and that we would then proceed with Resolution 18, standing in the name of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar). I agree to the withdrawal of the honourable member's resolution.

Madam Speaker: So leave has been granted for the withdraw of Resolution 17? [agreed]

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: We will now then proceed with Private Members' Business, proposed Resolution 18.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 18—Recycling for Apartment Dwellers

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), that

“WHEREAS the Provincial Government has committed to the provision of recycling services for all Manitobans and the reduction of waste by 50 per cent by the year 2000, based on 1988 figures; and

“WHEREAS the Provincial Government, in conjunction with the City of Winnipeg, has established a recycling program which is woefully inadequate as it neglects and excludes 30 per cent of Winnipeg householders, roughly 90,000 residents, who live in apartment complexes or townhouses, by disallowing them from utilizing the recycling services; and

“WHEREAS the Provincial Government has been and continues to charge a 2 cent environmental levy on all purchases of beverage containers which all consumers are required to pay, and which continues to raise a revenue of over \$400,000 a month for the provincial government; and

“WHEREAS recent indications support the forecast that the projected surplus from the 2 cent beverage container levy will be \$6 million; and

“WHEREAS given that apartment dwellers have contributed to this fund, many of them are angry that they are being forced to pay the environmental levy without being given access to recycling services; and

“WHEREAS all Manitobans who are taxed for a service should have the opportunity to utilize that service without being discriminated against based upon their residence.

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government working in conjunction with the City of Winnipeg, to consider establishing a recycling program which is accessible to all residents of Winnipeg regardless of whether they live in a house, townhouse, or apartment; and

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the provincial government to consider introducing a comprehensive province-wide recycling program, which will be fully accessible to all residents of Manitoba whether or not they reside in urban, rural or northern area.”

Motion presented.

* (1710)

Mr. Dewar: I looked forward to the debate this afternoon on this resolution. It is important that we in this Chamber, as members of this Chamber, debate environmental issues. So I am very pleased to bring this one forward. It is very similar to a resolution that we debated in this House in April 1996, exactly two years ago.

That particular resolution dealt with the exclusion of apartment dwellers in the city of Winnipeg from any recycling programs. We feel that it is important that we re-emphasize our commitment to this very important issue. We find that it is unacceptable that 30 percent of the population in the city of Winnipeg, approximately 90,000 Winnipeggers, do not receive any recycling services.

I was just speaking, Madam Speaker, with a young man who is relaying to me his story. In fact he lives in an apartment block here in the city of Winnipeg, and he says if he wants to recycle and which he does—he collects all of his recyclables. He feels that he has a responsibility to do so. The only way that he can actually recycle those items is to take them and to put them into a blue box, take them and put them in front of a house in his neighbourhood, so the items will actually be picked up, to have the items actually picked up.

He also tells me that other individuals in his block, who again feel that they have a responsibility to recycle different items, they took some of these—they put them in a box, and they left them out on a curb in front of their apartment. Well, they were not picked up. Lo and behold these items were not picked up, and they were left out there. Of course, they fell victim to the elements. They started, of course, to smell and unfortunately deteriorate. He was finally forced to take

these items and deposit them in a garbage bin, where they unfortunately turned up in a landfill site.

Madam Speaker, this is the same government by the way who licensed BFI to build a landfill site outside of the city of Winnipeg limits in the R.M. of Rosser. We all remember the debate surrounding that particular issue, and that as well is going to cost the City of Winnipeg millions of dollars in tipping fees.

So, Madam Speaker, we find it is unacceptable that a significant portion of our population here in the city of Winnipeg do not have access to recycling programs—and not only here in the city of Winnipeg, also individuals who live in northern or remote communities.

Now, in the annual report of the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation, they state that about 92 percent of municipalities have signed up. Well, that is significant, I do not deny that. But there is still 8 percent of municipalities that have not for various reasons been able to sign up with the program, and that neglects a significant portion of our population that are not able to access recycling programs. This two-cent levy, we all pay it, Madam Speaker, and it applies in the last fiscal year, and I do not have the most recent annual report, but 280 million containers this levy was applied to and it had in terms of revenues close to \$5.5 million.

That was as of 1997, the surplus in that fund was \$5.7 million. Now we have one more fiscal year to add to this, the '97-98 fiscal year, which ended at the end of March, and based upon revenues in past years, that fund could very well be \$7 million to \$8 million. Madam Speaker, that is a lot of money in a fund, and we are concerned what the government members opposite have planned for that fund. We know that they have increased promotion. We have seen a few signs around the city and there are some signs on some buses, I see, and there is a nice, big sign in Selkirk actually as well promoting this program. What that does, of course, it angers individuals who cannot access the program. So we are concerned what the government is planning to do with this seven to eight million dollars that they have in this slush fund—well, I would not say slush fund. Let me take that back—what they have in this recycling fund.

I do want to refer to a concern raised with me by my colleague from The Pas in a letter that he received from the Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae). The northern communities, so far only Thompson, Flin Flon and Churchill have made claims, and they have totalled approximately \$85,000. As well, he goes on to reference in the letter that in fact, based upon the per capita contribution to this program, that the North has contributed close to \$170,000 to the program, but they are only receiving \$85,000 back, approximately around half of what they have contributed.

So we urge the government to look at these areas, to work with the City of Winnipeg, to make the program more generous in rural and northern areas. In fact, yesterday we had a meeting with the Union of Manitoba Municipalities, and they made a point that the government currently has a business plan underway for this program, and the UMM highlight the need to review municipal support payments. Basically they are saying that remote areas of this province, northern areas where freighting costs are higher, they said they would like to see maybe a sliding scale which would facilitate more Manitobans getting access to recycling initiatives in this province, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Getting back to this issue of the seven- to eight-million dollar fund that they have built up so far, we are a little bit concerned what this government is planning to do with that. Do you know what they have done, other levies that they have applied? In particular I want to talk about the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, which is a levy that is applied to liquor bottles, it is applied to diapers. It raises as well several millions of dollars, and it was revealed recently that the government has used this fund for partisan purposes. In fact, it was revealed that 90 percent of these grants have gone to Tory ridings; 90 percent of these grants have gone to ridings represented by the members opposite.

Now, either they have all the serious—

Point of Order

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): I think the member for Selkirk, in

referencing the distribution of those grants, should check that in his own riding 90 percent of the applications were approved.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinson): Order, please.

* * *

Mr. Dewar: I thank the minister for his input there. The reality is the only reason the government is doing this now is because we brought it to light, the fact that 90 percent of these grants have gone to the members opposite. In fact, the Provincial Auditor takes this issue very seriously and is doing an investigation into the distribution of these grants.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, it is a concern that we have on this side of the House, and we will be vigilant. I know my colleagues on this side here, they have been out there seeking these grants and working with their groups and their communities to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of these Sustainable Development Innovations Fund grants.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we urge the government, we urge the members opposite to look at this serious issue. We know that they have made several commitments that they intend on honouring by the year 2000 dealing with endangered spaces. They are also going to double the size of hog production by the year 2000, but they have also made a commitment to reduce the waste generated in this province by the year 2000, 50 percent based upon the figures from 1988. Last time we were able to raise this, they found that they are actually not on target yet. So we urge them to listen to some of the concerns that we are raising today, that if you were to include 90,000 more Manitobans into that program by working with the city of Winnipeg to allow them to recycle their waste, that in fact would take more waste out of the waste stream and would help them reach their target. As well, it would help rural and northern Manitobans who, as we know, contribute twice as much to the program than they are actually getting back into their home communities.

* (1720)

Mr. Acting Speaker, as well, of course the government is making, both this provincial government and the federal government—the levy is taxable, but not only this levy but also the levy on tires, also the most recent levy that was introduced in this province, the Used Oil Stewardship program. There is a tax on that. So the government is collecting tax on that, plus the PST is collected on that as well. The PST and the GST are collected on this levy, on the tire levy, on the diaper levy and on the used-oil levy. So the government is taxing on a tax. But I do recognize that in this case, with the 2-cent levy in the stewardship program, that the PST does come back into the program, but the GST goes to our friends in Ottawa, our Liberal friends in Ottawa.

You know, Canadians as a whole, as a country, we recycle only about 2 percent, compared to the United States, which apparently recycles 10 percent. In Japan it is as high as 50 to 60 percent of all their waste is recycled. Unfortunately, a lot of our waste ends up in landfill sites, and this is why we are bringing forward a resolution such as this to make the government realize that there is a huge segment of our population, both here in Winnipeg and remote and northern communities, that does not have access to recycling initiatives.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we hope the government will review our resolution, look upon it in a serious way as we bring it here in a serious way, and I hope that they will review the comments put forward by myself and other members and that they will, in fact, support this resolution so we can expand recycling in this province to include more recyclables out of the waste stream and get them to be used in a better manner than simply ending up in the garbage dumps, in the trash bins of our society.

With those few comments, I conclude my remarks. Thank you.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): I think, Mr. Acting Speaker, the difference between my contribution this afternoon and that of the honourable member for Selkirk is that mine may not have as much sound and fury as the honourable member for Selkirk's, but I am hoping that it will signify something by the time I am done.

The Province of Manitoba, through its Waste Reduction and Prevention Strategy has made tremendous gains in establishing sustainable systems to support recycling initiatives throughout this great province. Under this approach, recycling opportunities are being made available to all Manitobans, and they are being supported by product distributors and consumers. This strategy is consistent with the solid waste management and minimization substrategy released under the province's Sustainable Development Strategy.

Time is limited in private members' hour, for which we ministers are so grateful to be able to take part. I would like to go on for at least 30 to 40 minutes to extol the virtues of my colleague and predecessor in this job, the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), who has had so much to do with laying a groundwork for this minister to come along and finish some of the work that was begun. The groundwork has been laid for new initiatives as well, and I am extremely grateful.

I suggest that honourable members opposite and all Manitobans could look to the honourable member for Ste. Rose, the honourable Minister of Natural Resources, and probably will do so as history unfolds, and say thanks to that honourable member of the Legislature, we are well served to face the future in a very sustainable way. [interjection] I said I could go on for a long time about that, and indeed I could, but humble and modest minister that he is, he would probably be the first to suggest that I get on with the meat of the matter.

Mr. Acting Speaker, beginning in 1994, plans were being laid for the introduction of the Manitoba Product Stewardship Program, otherwise known as MPSP. This program provides up to 80 percent of the cost of municipal recycling programs.

An Honourable Member: Eighty percent of the cost. Wow.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Acting Speaker, 80 percent. The results of this program over the past three years, since receiving legislative assent in March 1995, have been impressive. Today over 90 percent of Manitoba's population now has access to multimaterial depot or

curbside recycling services. For those who did not hear, 90 percent. Both these accomplishments have exceeded the most optimistic expectations considered possible in 1994.

An Honourable Member: Does the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) know about this?

Mr. McCrae: I dare say, some of this material, some of this information may have been lost on the honourable member for Selkirk, who has more to add to the discussion.

As a result of municipal commitment to waste reduction and recycling and the funding partnership made available through the MPSP, there are now over 144 municipalities participating in the program, with 100 percent of municipalities with a population of 5,000 or more having established multimaterial recycling systems. Municipal recycling programs have recovered over 74,500 tonnes of recyclable materials in the first three years of the program. Municipal recycling programs are now delivering over 32,000 tonnes of material annually. This represents over 40 percent of the available materials in the residential waste stream, and these materials include aluminum, glass, steel, PET No. 1, and the high-density polyethylene No. 2 plastic containers, newspapers, flyers, magazines, boxboard, corrugated cardboard, telephone directories, milk cartons and drink boxes. These materials represent over 85 percent of the available recyclable materials in the residential waste stream.

Since its inception, the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation has paid out over \$9.8 million in recycling support payments to municipalities for recycling collection and processing services.

Through the multisectoral approach to the development of Manitoba's Product Stewardship initiatives, involving representatives of Manitoba business, national industry associations, municipal governments, environment organizations and consumers, a made-in-Manitoba solution to recycling has been developed. The key challenges facing us today are to increase citizen participation and to maximize the diversion of recyclable materials.

You might be interested to know, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the Manitoba solution is one that is garnering interest from across the nation. Manitoba's commitment to the concept of distributor responsibility for product stewardship, established in the 1991 WRAP Strategy Report and given legislative authority in The Waste Reduction and Prevention Act, continues to gain the confidence of the public and of business, small and large, local and international.

Manitoba has demonstrated that successful product stewardship programs can be implemented. A strong foundation has been established for exploring further opportunities for extended producer responsibility in this province. Across the nation, provinces and industry are looking at what Manitoba has achieved. With multimaterial recycling systems facing critical financial difficulties in Ontario and elsewhere, they are looking to Manitoba to see what we have done and what has been accomplished.

It is a pretty good place to be in, our province of Manitoba, and we are proud of our achievements. We are very mindful of the challenges that remain and that which remains to be done. The honourable member's resolution identifies an area where I think that work can be done, and the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation is working towards the types of results the honourable member is looking for. [interjection]

Honourable members have a fixation about money, you know. Mr. Acting Speaker, is it not interesting it is always other people's money that they are interested in. I remember Roland Penner used to sit over there, and as a new member of this Legislature I remember shouting—I sat where the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) sits today, and I remember shouting to Roland Penner, Roland, get your hands out of the pockets of Manitobans, and this incensed him to such an extent that Roland Penner spoke for 40 minutes to explain why he felt it was appropriate that he have his hands in the pockets of his fellow Manitobans. I really had trouble with the concept then, and I still do.

I say, however, let those who are involved in creating pollutants be involved in creating programs that will take care of those pollutants in an appropriate way. Consumers share some responsibility in this area, obviously, and they, too, have a role to play, but I am

always amused by honourable members opposite who always want to know about money. We know where they stand on balanced budgets; they are not in favour of such concepts. To them, that is exactly what they are: concepts. To us, they are a reality four years in a row, and we are proud of that.

At the same time that we are bringing in balanced budgets, we are also cleaning up our environment and doing a good job at it, too, thanks to people like the honourable member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), and to whatever measure I can contribute myself and all of my colleagues.

* (1730)

New initiatives, Mr. Acting Speaker, such as the used oil, oil filters and container stewardship program, which was launched in March of this year, continue to show leadership in the waste management area. Components of the Oil Stewardship program have been harmonized with provincial programs in Saskatchewan and Alberta to maximize the efficiency of interprovincial trade. I am proud of that achievement begun by my predecessor and brought to this point by the Department of Environment and all of our partners under my stewardship. I am very proud of that. It is something I am going to be happy to tell my grandchildren about if my children ever get around to producing any.

While the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation has helped support the tremendous expansion of recycling activity in Manitoba, we must continue to be diligent in ensuring that the program is meeting, and continues to meet, public expectations. The basic fundamentals of the program have proven to be sound and have yielded tremendous progress in recovering materials from the waste stream. A comprehensive public evaluation of the multimaterial stewardship interim measures regulation and the Products Stewardship Program was undertaken in February of this year. This review process showed that stakeholders were satisfied with the regulatory framework and supported the achievements and fundamental components of the stewardship program.

Now, to get to the nub of what was raised today by the honourable member, the pith and substance of what

we are about here today, Mr. Acting Speaker, the issue of the City of Winnipeg recycling program expanding to multifamily residences is one that has been identified for further development by the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation. The program has been designed to allow local governments, including the City of Winnipeg which is a local government, the ability to design recycling systems to meet their specific needs. In the city of Winnipeg, over 22,000 tonnes of recyclable materials are diverted from landfill annually through their recycling system.

Apartment residents have access to recycling opportunities through a city-wide depot system. Expansion of the city recycling program to include improved multifamily services will be discussed as part of the MPSC's revised business plan. So the honourable member, in a sense, his resolution is a welcome one, although some of the language in it is just simply not acceptable, so I cannot really go along with accepting it in the way that it is written.

But in principle the honourable member is on the right track. He wants to see more of all the good things that he has been seeing from this government which makes me wonder what he is doing sitting over there. Why does he not come over to this side of the House where he can make an even more meaningful contribution to his fellow Manitobans and specifically his constituents in Selkirk?

An Honourable Member: We are going to be over there soon enough, Jim, not by changing parties, but by an election.

Mr. McCrae: I have to confess, Mr. Acting Speaker, I made that invitation without consulting individually with my colleagues on this side of the House, so the honourable member might want to check with some of my other colleagues on that as well.

An Honourable Member: You need not ask. We are shoulder to shoulder; we are boulder to boulder. We act like one unit on this side.

Mr. McCrae: Belly to belly and chin to chin. I am just so grateful to have the support of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) on this latest initiative of mine which is to invite the honourable

member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) to come on over and work with us more closely than he has in the past.

The Manitoba government has provided the necessary tools and established the criteria for taking on the challenge of multifamily recycling in the city of Winnipeg, funding and technical support. Honourable members opposite asked about money. Funding and technical support are available for this purpose through the MPSP. The City of Winnipeg is also a member of the MPSC board of directors, and as we go forward the Department of Environment will continue to monitor the situation closely and facilitate the process to the degree possible.

In short, since the clock is going to bring an unhappy end to my contribution today, Mr. Acting Speaker, the honourable member is on the right track. [interjection] Well, again, I am invited to pass this resolution, but if you read through the fine print, there is a certain unfriendly tone apparent in the resolution, and I do not think that that is the spirit that we are all in here today. I thought we were on more friendly terms.

As a matter of fact, when you strip away the unfriendliness and the rhetoric that you find in some of our New Democratic resolutions, there is a little kernel of something in them, and in this particular one there is a little kernel. But the point is the thing is already starting to blossom. In terms of our efforts, it germinated a long time ago, and thanks to efforts of members on this side of the House, we are making progress.

We acknowledge that more progress needs to be made. The Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation knows that, realizes that and keeps on working with its partners to bring about even more reduction of articles in our waste stream and, in the process, creating opportunities for environmental industries. Business people are finding out more and more that good environment practices are better and better business all the time, and that is what sustainable development is also about. So I am very pleased to participate in the discussion today. We will ask the honourable member next time to come and talk to us. We will get a resolution like this one, and we will get it passed in this House too.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I would just want to say, I always enjoy following the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae), and I can assure him that the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) will be sitting on that side, probably within about a year, year and a half, along with the rest of our caucus when we form government. So I appreciate he is recognizing the times they are a-changing.

I also want to say to the minister as well that, you know, in terms of kernels of wisdom here, if he wishes to suggest an amendment that would make the passage of this resolution possible, I would be more than willing. I know our critic would be. In fact, if he has problems and I assume it is not with any of the RESOLVEDs, it is the WHEREASes, I would suggest we could delete probably a number of the WHEREASes. I mean, they are, I think, fairly accurate statements, but I just remind the minister, the operative portion of this is a very positive suggestion put forward by the Environment critic for the New Democratic Party, the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

I want to say as well, this is something I am hearing directly from my constituents. I appreciated, by the way, the trip down memory lane that the member for Brandon West took us on, talking about Roland Penner. I actually just saw him about half an hour ago, quite frankly, and it is interesting because he talked about hands in people's pockets. Well, right now one of the concerns that Manitobans have about the 2-cent levy, particularly in my constituency, is not that it is not being paid; they know it is coming every time they get a can of Coke or a two-litre bottle of Coke or any kind of—well, I see the former Minister of Environment has just paid his 2 cents.

You know, the fact is—and we are talking about our two cents worth here, Mr. Acting Speaker—that money is being taken out of many communities and is not being returned to the degree it should in the way of recycling.

Now, I want to give you an example of northern Manitoba, and the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) has raised this issue. This is an issue of concern to people in my constituency. I know it is a concern in the Flin Flon constituency as well, because essentially there have only been three communities able to access the

Product Stewardship Corporation, and that is Thompson, Flin Flon and Churchill.

In Thompson, we have had difficulty in maintaining a curbside recycling program, and I appreciate—I had some discussions with the previous Minister of Environment on that, and I thought he had some very productive suggestions. By the way, they are attempting to get it going again, which is very positive.

But, just to put it in perspective, according to the Minister of Environment's (Mr. McCrae) own letter, signed January 6, 1998, northern Manitoba, about \$170,000 is collected from northern communities on a per capita basis. They are putting back a total of \$84,000. There is a distinct difference between the amount of money that is coming out of the North and being returned. It is the same thing, I know, I am sure in the Interlake. Many communities do not have access to recycling. I am not sure what the situation is in Selkirk, but there are a lot of people out there paying this 2-cent levy and are not having the opportunity to have direct access to recycling.

It is fine to talk about having recycling depots. We have depots in my own community, but I can tell you that, if you want to maximize the amount of recycling, you have to have it curbside. You also have to have it curbside for another reason. If you are concerned about the environment, think of the fossil fuels that are consumed, the gasoline that is consumed driving to these depots.

I have heard people suggest—I mean, you have to be careful, you know, to be cognizant, not only of the costs financially, but of the environment costs of going and accessing facilities that are some distance away from your own home.

* (1740)

I want to go one step further because I know I discussed this with the previous minister, member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), about the apartments. Apartment recycling is a concern in Thompson. We looked in our community trying to get our volumes up; we have a significant number of apartments in our community and a number of high-rise apartments which, I think, are prime targets for recycling pickup, curbside recycling.

By the way, I want to say to the current Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae) that the former Minister of Environment is very open-minded on that and actually had suggested that perhaps what needs to be looked at are some pilot projects that look at that. I want to put on the record, I would suggest that we consider that for Thompson, a smaller community, fairly definable in terms of areas where you have a significant number of apartments. I want to say to the current Minister of Environment, if he wants a positive suggestion, let us have a pilot project for the community of Thompson for apartment recycling, something I know the previous minister was very interested in.

I could tell you—well, I do not want to give away private conversations, but I am trying to give the previous minister credit, and I say to the Minister of Environment, let us live up to the spirit of this resolution. Let us adopt a pilot project. We can prove it will work. I say the money is there. The 2-cent levy is coming in. I say to the minister, why do we not even extend it? Why do we not pick Thompson, how about Brandon and Winnipeg? Let us pick three—now I think I have got the minister's interest. It is funny how you mention Brandon, and the Minister of the Environment sort of gets interested in things. I do not say that as a criticism, but I would suggest that we look at this, this 2-cent levy that we are putting in, and be far more creative in the way that we dealt with it.

I would also suggest another series of differences in the way we approach this, Mr. Acting Speaker. I think one of the things we have to do in this province is have a vision, an environmental vision. I think we have to adopt that not only as a province but at each municipal level.

I have seen examples, and I know the member for Selkirk will be aware of this, of many communities that have declared themselves green communities. And they have accepted it is not just a good idea, for example, to have recycling; it is a matter of public policy that as municipalities they will do absolutely everything possible to increase the degree of recycling and environmental consciousness in their community.

I want to suggest that because, you know, one of the problems we had in my own community with recycling was what? The problem was when you went out and

you just sort of said, well, if you are interested, we could put blue boxes out. You know what? People had to pay a deposit for it. I suggested instead of having to pay to recycle, you should be encouraging people. Let us learn from the market system a bit here. Give them a bit of an incentive. The people that recycle in my community do not fill up the landfill; the people that do not, do.

Why not give some incentives and why not go one step further? I have also suggested in my community, and we should do this, I think, on a local basis. You want to get things happening in my community, I can tell—you go to the Rotary Club, you go the Lions, you go to the Kinsmen, you go to the Legion, you go to community service organizations. And if you went to them and got them involved as part of the process and said, we want to get our entire community involved in recycling because it is good for the community, you know what, I think they would accept that challenge.

That is one suggestion that I would make, by the way. We build up quite a revenue pool here from the minister's department. We have a bit of a bureaucracy in place, and they are doing their job. I am not criticizing then, but you know the best way to get things involved is when government works with community. I suggest to members opposite: Why not start on recycling? Why not go beyond saying, you know, we have this fund here? Why not let us go to each community and say are you interested in a green vision and an environmentally conscious community, and if you are, let us get everybody involved; get the service clubs.

For example, you want to go one step further in how this could happen, why are we not giving, say, an incentive to service clubs in communities to go and sign up more people on the blue boxes? I will tell you right now, the higher the percentage of people who are recycling, the higher the percentage of intake, the more feasible and viable the system is. You know, why not go to each community and say any one of the communities who are interested in recycling? I look at Thompson, any communities in the Interlake, why not say to any service club that is interested: we will pay the service club \$5 for every person that signs up for recycling. You know, I tell you that would be enough of an incentive. I see service organizations, sports

clubs, whoever, out there trying to raise funds, they are selling this, they are involved with that and the rest of it. Why not perhaps take a leaf of what works in communities?

We all know what works in our communities whether it be in the city or in other areas. [interjection] Or Elks, I am sorry, I forgot the Elks, must not forget the Elks, very active part of many communities, but you know they have built many of our seniors facilities in co-operation with government. They have built many other types of facilities. They offer many community service projects and I hope the member is of the Elks Club, not other kinds of elk, by the way, because I do not want to hit any sensitive elements over there—

An Honourable Member: Not captured though.

Mr. Ashton: Not captured though. You are a real Elk, well, figuratively speaking.

In communities, I think, we can start that process, and I would suggest to the minister and I commend the minister by the way. I mean I remember when the minister was a Minister of Health, he came to Thompson when I have invited him up to meet with people concerned about the conditions in our hospitals due to government cuts. I give him credit. I know the minister has been willing to do that in the past, and I think that is very appropriate.

I say this bit of advice to another Minister of Health at the current time, you do not duck meeting with the public. You face the public, because you can run but you cannot hide from them because eventually you run into an election. If you keep trying to hide from them, you do not get re-elected. It is a simple political truth.

I know there are members opposite that subscribe to that, too. I am sure there are many members opposite who privately would agree that it was a major mistake to duck facing the people on health issues. I am only referencing this, Mr. Acting Speaker, because the Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae), when he was Minister of Health, I saw him at a meeting on the privatization of home care with 500 angry Winnipeggers who told him a piece of their mind. What it has got to do with the environment is he should follow what he has practised in previous portfolios.

I suggest right now—and I will put this out as an open invitation. I would like to invite the Minister of Environment to come to Thompson to discuss the environmental concerns of Thompson and to put in place—I would like to put on the record that I would like to see Thompson be the model of recycling in this province. We could start with a pilot project on apartment recycling. I think it is possible. We have got the community spirit. We can get the will.

So I get back to this resolution, Mr. Acting Speaker. If the government wants, we will, I think, accept as a friendly amendment taking out all the WHEREASes. We will take out all the WHEREASes which would leave us with what? Be it resolved that—just checking to make sure we have not taken too much out here, but therefore be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government working in conjunction with the City of Winnipeg to consider establishing a recycling program which is accessible to all residents of Winnipeg regardless of whether they live in a house, townhouse or apartment, and be it further resolved this Assembly urge the provincial government to consider introducing a comprehensive province-wide recycling program which will be fully accessible to all residents of Manitoba whether or not they reside in an urban, rural or northern area.

There is nothing in that resolution, in the RESOLVED, that could not be adopted by all members of the House, and I would like to suggest right now, Mr. Acting Speaker, we are willing to accept as a friendly amendment, following the spirit of the Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae), taking out all the rest of the resolution and then unanimously adopting the RESOLVED portion.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to pick up on the spirit of the discussion this afternoon. I mean, it is true that this is a very unique program in Canada and one that is, in fact, being watched very closely by a number of jurisdictions as a better way of getting recyclables out of the waste stream.

When the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) makes his impassioned plea to have Thompson seen as a pilot, or Thompson along with a number of communities as a pilot, I am not going to dispute the validity of his concerns. But let us be very clear in

something that has not really been put on the record this afternoon. This program, whether you agree with the principle or not, but one of the founding tenets of this program was that the collection of waste products from household waste, in particular, was a municipal responsibility, so this fund was set up to support the municipalities in their recycling efforts and not have the Province of Manitoba or any other provincial organization who might choose to mimic this be the responsible body for running the recycling program. The return-to-deposit programs are mandated by provinces, but they do not necessarily run the programs. They are run by designated authorities and/or agencies within the jurisdiction.

* (1750)

So let us go back to that basic tenet, and it is true that the MPSP is now developing a fairly significant reserve. That is also by design, Mr. Acting Speaker, because the known volatility of the recyclable materials is so wide, the range is so wide, that the MPSP organization has to have the ability to respond to the price swings.

That may well be one of the problems that is facing recyclers as a whole across the province right now, and that is the downswing on some of the more valuable products that they have been putting into the marketplace. At \$118—I believe it is—to \$152 a tonne across the province depending on the location, 152 was the dollars that were put out by the MPSP. Then a subsequent bid came in directly to the City of Winnipeg, which was for something less than the amount that was available.

The numbers are not entirely the nub of this argument this afternoon. The real important part of the question is whether or not we can have a multimaterial recycling program funded by the consumer who buys the product. This is not tax dollars. This is a levy that goes specifically into the MPSP, which is an arm's-length organization which is outside of government. Government does not even keep the additional PST that may be attracted where the levy is on the containers. All of that money as well is granted to the MPSP, so that that money can go to recycling.

But, in developing the fund, the MPSP now has the onus to make sure that those dollars are returned to the

system to make the system as viable and as aggressive as possible. So the problem that we face with the development of recycling for apartment blocks is whether or not the responsible municipal jurisdiction is prepared to develop a system within their boundaries that allows and, in fact, encourages the collection of those recyclables.

I want to tie that back to the uniqueness of this program, whereby we are not talking about just the collection of beverage containers. We are talking about the newspaper collection. We are talking about the metal waste from our kitchens and from our household, so we reduce our household waste by a much more significant margin than we would with a simple return-for-deposit program.

I would like to put on the record in support of comments made from both sides of the House, that we need to work with the MPSP and we need to encourage the municipalities where they are floundering, in some cases, in developing their municipal recycling collection program. They are floundering inasmuch as they have not been able to appreciate in some cases the fact that the amount of money that they are saving by diverting volumes from their landfill is also money that may in fact need to be paid to the recyclers. In other words, this was an 80/20 program; 80 percent from the MPSP fund, 20 percent from the municipality, the balance of the revenue coming from the sale of the recyclable products.

That formula may well need to be re-examined. I know the MPSP board is constantly doing this, but we need to make sure that we keep that in balance and that we keep it within the mandate of MPSP so that the municipalities continue to accept the responsibility. Specifically speaking of the City of Winnipeg, I know that they are interested in getting into this aspect of recycling within their city. I know that they were afraid of tying into a pilot project that would have lingering and ongoing expensive problems for them, but I do not intend to stand here and condemn any municipality, but to encourage them and to say what this government has always said: We are willing to work with the MPSP and the municipalities to make this one of the most comprehensive recycling programs in Canada, if not in North America, when we consider the opportunities that are associated with this program.

I would like now to let my colleague from River Heights close with a couple of comments.

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I would like to take this opportunity to put a few humble words on the record with regard to this issue as well. I think my honourable colleague the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), who just spoke before us, really put his finger on the nub of the problem. I think colleagues opposite are confusing the laudatory aims of this concept with the application, and in fact I think it was the Honourable John Crosbie who was here in Winnipeg recently, who said that socialism brings suffering to a new height and, in fact, members opposite have that difficulty because what they want to do is they want to take over every single activity, every single enterprise. They want a hands-on control of everything, and their motion today just reflects this. Rather than having an independent body, the product steward committee administering this program, or at least giving the municipalities the discretion to have an ambit of activity themselves, but not so. Members opposite want to impose their will and their view of rightness on everybody, and therefore—[interjection]

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think if we encourage municipalities, if we encourage our citizens to follow recycling—[interjection] Absolutely, the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) says use the carrot and not the stick. Members opposite are too quick to pick up the stick and to force their way into things; instead, there should be education. I can tell members opposite if you drive up and down the streets of River Heights on any given day, you know what you see on the boulevards or in the back lanes of River Heights? Blue boxes, because—[interjection] That is right, there are blue boxes in River Heights.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think one of the most important concepts that should be woven into this program is individual self-reliance, and we are told that there are six depots here in the city of Winnipeg where apartment dwellers can take their refuse. I happen to be one individual who actually is not only involved in recycling, but I am a firm and vigorous component of composting. I would assure members opposite that you can reduce household waste down to about 10 percent of the volume. If you recycle and if you

compost—[interjection] Oh, yes, composting is a very important feature. In fact, the tipping grounds in—[interjection] Oh, no. I have been composting for a significant length of time, and this reduces the waste that any household produces.

Mr. Acting Speaker, you do not need big government to go out and spend a fortune on this sort of program. This should be something that is done household by household, person by person, compost bin by compost bin, and the same thing with recycling—[interjection] The honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) is trying to cast imprecations upon the humble member on

this side of the House here. The thing is there has been an independent process created in our province, and we are financing it, and as the honourable member before me said—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinson): Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs will have 11 minutes remaining.

The time being six o'clock, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned till 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 21, 1998

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