



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.
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DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
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EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
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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.
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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.
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SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
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TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
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VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
Vacant	Charleswood	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 23, 1998

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Jacqueline Alexander, Theresa Skrzypczau, Michael Pauk and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to consider immediately cancelling the hospital food proposal and concentrate on delivering quality health care instead of using health dollars to provide contracts for private firms.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Yvonne Ferrand, Gerry Ferrand, Susanne Kerelluke and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospitals food services.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of D.T. LeGros, S. Cartman, W. Cooper and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospitals food services.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): I beg to present the petition of Nancy Brooks, Agnes Champagne, A. Fuentes and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospitals food services.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I beg to present the petition of Mary Ellen Hall, Marilyn Barthelette, Semelka Anther and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to

put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospitals food services.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT 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 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)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): I would like to table for the House the interim report of the Manitoba Water Commission.

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister charged with the administration of The Workers Compensation Act): I have three reports to table: the Annual Report of the Workers Compensation Board for 1997; the Appeal Commission Annual Report for the Workers Compensation 1997; and copies of the Five-Year Plan for Workers Compensation.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Winpak Ltd.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): I have a statement for the House. I have copies.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to congratulate the board of directors of Winnipeg's Winpak Ltd. for their decision yesterday to invest \$25 million for a new production facility in Winnipeg to manufacture and distribute biaxially oriented polyamide film. Winpak and Nichimen Corporation have signed a memorandum of understanding to form a joint venture for this initiative which will create 50 new full-time positions. This announcement follows on the heels of Winpak's \$34-million expansion of their Winnipeg plant which will add another 80 full-time positions to their current workforce of 300 employees. Together, these developments will create a minimum of 130 new full-time jobs and a \$59-million investment in our province. This clearly establishes Winnipeg as the core of Winpak's North American operations.

Madam Speaker, this announcement reiterates the belief of business people, government and Manitobans as a whole that the provincial economy is booming. More Manitobans are working today than at any other time in the history of our province. Manitoba is the only province that is positioned to have its seventh consecutive year of growth in the private sector capital investment.

In conclusion, I would like to again commend the board of directors, management, particularly Winpak Ltd.'s president and CEO, Mr. Bob Lavery, and, most importantly, the Winpak employees for making this exciting announcement possible. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): I am pleased to join with the honourable minister opposite in congratulating Winpak, a company that began its life I believe when the NDP was in government, which has gone on to expand and to develop a niche for itself as one of the pre-eminent packaging firms in North America—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Sale: As I said, the company has gone on to develop a strong niche in a very large and competitive market in North America and has done very well. I had the opportunity coincidentally to travel with a member of their staff recently and to hear first-hand from him about the exciting developments in the company, both here in Winnipeg and in its Toronto offices and plant.

Madam Speaker, I think this is a very good development for Manitoba in the addition of good, long-term, permanent and stable jobs in this company. I would just note, however, that the last paragraph on the first page of the announcement speaks about the booming economy. Indeed, in many ways, from an economic perspective, that is true. Unfortunately, we continue to see a disconnect between the economy and the needs of ordinary people whose needs continue not to be met very well as their wages fall and as over 6,000 of them found it necessary to leave our province in the last year to seek opportunities in Saskatchewan and in other provinces.

So we welcome the development of these full-time jobs and wish this exemplary company well in its continued development in our province and in its future. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1340)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 203—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (2)

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), that leave be given to introduce Bill 203, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (2) (Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative).

Madam Speaker, this is a bill we have introduced in previous sessions, and our motto on this is, if at first you do not succeed, try, try again. It is a bill that would introduce an elected Speaker into this Legislature. I would say that we wish nothing more than to bring ourselves into the kind of parliamentary reform that we have seen in other provinces, including our national Parliament. I say to the people of Manitoba, through you, and to the government, which is the one that will decide on this matter, now is the time to be bringing in real parliamentary reform in this Legislature and having an elected Speaker. This bill will accomplish that.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon twenty-four Grade 5 students from Christ The King School under the direction of Mrs. Shirley Gendron. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render).

We also have 13 English as a Second Language students from the Applied Linguistic Centre under the direction of Ms. Greta Gibson.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Winnipeg Floodway Operation Protocol

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): A few minutes ago we received the interim report that the government had received three weeks ago on the review of the Red River flood. I want to ask a number of questions pursuant to that report.

On April 24, I asked the Premier (Mr. Filmon) a number of questions about the flow of water through the floodway and he responded that opening up the floodway beyond 59,000 would have impacts both downstream and upstream and that they would have to use human judgment in the application of the floodway, obviously a point he made in this Legislature. This report indicates that the operation of the floodway—the protocol was not followed during the flood of 1997. I would like to ask the Premier: who made that decision not to follow the protocol, and what was its impact on residents in the Red River Valley?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, we have always acknowledged that the operation of the floodway was at 24.5. In reviewing the implications of that, the department has indicated that for a number of years 24.5 was the operational median which they looked to, but that policy was not written and appropriately conveyed to everyone, including the media and members of this House. But that was not operating any differently than the gates have been operated for a significant period of time.

The second part of the question, in terms of what are the known or what would be the estimated impacts of anything that would have occurred as a result of the operation of the gate, that is still pending, given the results of some studies and some modelling being done on behalf of the commission. That information will be shared as soon as we have it.

Flood Forecast Grande Pointe

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I did not get the answer to the question of who made that decision in government.

A second question: on May 5, 1997, I asked a number of questions about the flooding at Grande Pointe. The report indicates that the forecasts were eight feet off initially at Grande Pointe, and the timing was off for those 150 families, the majority of which were ultimately flooded. The report goes on to say that the people were ill prepared based on those predictions that were made.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister: have any of the layoffs and firings and reductions of staff in the Department of Natural Resources, have any of those decisions made by the government and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) led to the inaccurate predictions on flooding at the Grande Pointe area?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, the short answer is no, but I want to make it very clear that there is known difficulty in providing modelling, and direct information flowing from the modelling, when the water begins to flow at the extreme distances that it did across and overland and coming in from sometimes unpredictable areas.

The issue that the opposition consistently raised had more to do with monitoring than anything else and the question of whether or not there was adequate information coming from the monitoring to go into the modelling that we have been using. The fact is that budget was enhanced by the province over the last couple of years, but we know that we need to have a better computer-driven modelling for the entire valley, which is part of the IJC recommendation and certainly is recognized and recommended in this report as well.

* (1345)

Premier's Comments Apology Request

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Subsequent to my questions about the flooding in

Grande Pointe, the Premier stated in this Chamber and then in the hallway and to all flood victims in Manitoba that people living on a flood plain must accept responsibility for where they have chosen to live.

In light of the fact that the government has not followed the protocol on the floodway and in light of the fact the minister has acknowledged deficiencies in forecasting in the direct Grande Pointe area, will the Premier today do what we asked him to do in November of 1997 and apologize to those flood victims for his statements that showed a lack of heart, a lack of compassion and a lack of community in terms of the flood victims here in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I think it is unfortunate that the member opposite only sees a tragedy like the worst civil disaster ever experienced in the province's history as an opportunity to have some cheap political gain on his part. I think that he ought to be much more concerned about ensuring that there is accuracy in what he says.

In terms of the protocol and the floodway, what has been well publicized and well reported is the fact that the protocol that had been in place for two decades was followed, and everybody, including the operators and the advisory committee to the operations of the floodway, assumed that that was the protocol. They did not realize that it had not been changed in writing back for three decades, even though they had been operating under that protocol for more than two decades. So it was not a change in protocol for this year. It was a protocol change that had occurred more than two decades ago that had never been reduced to writing, so in fact they were following the protocol as it was understood by the operators and by the advisory committee.

Number two, Madam Speaker, as the minister has indicated with respect to the Grande Pointe area, there is a limit, a limit to the ability to forecast things that are going to happen as a result of all sorts of man-made and other construction activities that have occurred with each successive flood that have changed the river hydrology to some degree. The placement of, for instance, rail lines and the construction of new major culvert systems, the placement of roadbeds and all sorts of things over the decades have made it impossible to

predict what will happen at times of flows and circumstances that were unprecedented.

So it is a matter of predicting the future, and just as the member opposite cannot tell us what might happen in the future, so too can engineers not predict what will happen when water levels reach levels that they have not in the history of this century. So to try and suggest that the engineers were the cause of the problem because of their inability to predict is absolutely shameful on the part of the member for Concordia and his colleagues in their efforts, in their extreme efforts to try and create some cheap politics on their behalf.

Madam Speaker, I want to conclude by suggesting to the member opposite that at no time did I suggest that it was the fault of people who located where they did, but I said that all of us have to take responsibility for the decisions and judgments we make, including knowing the fact that we are locating in an area that does not allow us to get insurance coverage, and that has to be some indication of the fact that people have to know and understand what they are doing when they make those decisions.

Flood Compensation Responsibility

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I think the cheapest shot we have ever heard in the public, that I have ever heard from any member of the Legislature from any party was the cheap shot this Premier took at the flood victims when he said, regrettably, you choose to live on a flood plain, you have to take responsibility.

All I have asked the Premier to do, and we all made mistakes before—I have made mistakes before; he has made mistakes before—is act like a member of our community, take the leadership role and apologize for his statements. Take responsibility. I give him another opportunity today. If he chooses not to take it, that is his decision.

Madam Speaker, the International Joint Commission, the Ernst & Young report and now this report from the Water Commission have all stated that in dealing with compensation and allowing people to rebuild their lives, there has been despair and anger in the frustration

of red tape and confusion between departments administered by this Premier and this government. Does the Premier take responsibility for three reports now that have identified the frustration, the anger, the confusion? Does he take responsibility for the programs he put in place to deal with this flood in terms of our flood victims?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Absolutely. This is the administration that has commissioned each of those reports, because we believe that no government ever is perfect and cannot possibly be expected in unprecedented circumstances to do everything right. So we take the position that we want to learn from experience, not for the purposes of cheap politics but for the purposes of putting in place better systems so that we can have improved responses in the future. We believe that it is important to learn from history, learn from experience and that is precisely what we are doing.

* (1350)

Emergency Measures Organization Amalgamation—Disaster Assistance Board

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, of course we discussed the issue of compensation last year when we proposed the cap be changed because of federal guidelines being changed in other provinces. We suggested a number of other positive changes. But another matter that we had raised in the House is the whole issue of the Premier's decision to combine the Disaster Assistance Board with the Emergency Measures Organization. In the Ernst & Young report they raise the concern of the dual responsibilities during a disaster, and this interim report also talks about the pressures that are placed on staff to deal with both preventing a disaster, which of course EMO is equipped to do, and dealing with the compensation issues and recovery issues that formerly were dealt with by the Disaster Assistance Board.

In light of the two reports the government has received, did the government make an error in combining the two branches, and will the government be reviewing the decision of the Premier and the head of Treasury Board, Mr. Benson, to combine those two bodies? Does it look like it should be, Madam Speaker,

where we have the capacity to fight a disaster and we also have an office dealing with the compensation for victims? Should we go back to the former system?

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): I think that the decision to amalgamate EMO and DFA was the right decision because we did have the ability to take some very quick changes, make rapid changes to the program to try and address the concerns that were out in the flood plain area. As far as for the future, having this combined force together, the two organizations together are going to enable us to be able to put a disaster financial assistance program and an emergency preparedness program in place that will last and be sustainable for the long term in the future.

Flooding Impact of Road Cuts

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I would ask the government to read both the Ernst & Young report—and rapid response, in our view, is to put in writing the conditions that people are facing today in Ste. Agathe, as we have suggested all week.

I have raised questions about the concerns that the impact of the Brunkild dike, the cutting of the Avonlea Road and Road 301 had on the flooding of Ste. Agathe and the flooding of Grande Pointe. Can the government today indicate: does it have an evaluation of the impact of those decisions that the government made—and I have always supported the government in building the Brunkild dike. We thought it was obviously the right move to make in terms of the overall victims. Has it evaluated the impact of that on flood victims in the Red River Valley?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Yes, one of the recommendations in the Water Commission report is that we work with the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation to put a precise number to the number of days where some delayed crop seeding occurred. We know that most of that information is assembled. It is a matter of getting an independent body to give it some further consideration.

We also are in the process today of making sure and installing, in fact, screw gates on the culverts that go through, the drains that go through the Z-dike. More

importantly, and something that was a very important issue during the post-flood examination was whether or not there were any impacts from road cuts and efforts that were made to deal with the flooding in order to protect, in this case, the infrastructure, being the Z-dike itself that was under some danger of crumbling if some roads had not been removed. The modelling that is being done on behalf of the Water Commission is going to look at that and the operation of the gates and give us some precise modelling—what would have happened with and what would have happened without various pieces of infrastructure. That modelling that is being developed should give us some very precise information as to whether or not there were any known impacts.

Mining Reserve Fund Withdrawal—General Revenue

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, Manitoba's mining sector is in a state of difficulty based in large part on the low metal prices, base metals and low gold prices. This has resulted, unfortunately, in the closure of the Bissett mine, a lifespan announcement of five years for Leaf Rapids, 14 for Flin Flon, hundreds of mining jobs being lost in the Thompson area because of difficulties at Inco.

The Mining Reserve Fund was created for just these times, and I quote from the act. The fund is to be used for the welfare and employment of persons residing in a mining community which may be adversely affected by the total or partial suspension, closing down of a mining operation, attributable to the depletion of ore deposits.

My question to the Minister of Mines: will he confirm to this House, what he has said already in Estimates, that he and his government have withdrawn \$6 million from the Mining Reserve Fund, from those mining communities, and withdrawn them for general revenues?

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines): Madam Speaker, the act in question provides for a minimum of \$5 million to be kept in the fund. The fund had in excess of \$15 million in it, approaching \$20 million, and \$6 million was moved through the bookkeeping process into general revenue

for the purpose of investing in the Manitoba Mineral Exploration Assistance Program which has the effect of investing in exploration in areas which hopefully can result in the development of a new mine. What better solution to a community that has lost or has mining operations suspended.

* (1355)

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, will the minister confirm that this is the first time ever in the history of this fund's creation that money has been withdrawn and moved into general revenue and that this is a betrayal of the miners, their families, and the families and the communities that have been affected by the closure or pending closure of mines?

Mr. Newman: Madam Speaker, less than \$2 million of that \$6 million has been spent up to this point, but that very worthwhile investment in the future of mining in the province for the benefit of those communities will continue. There is also legislation before the House which has the result, when passed, of increasing the minimum amount of the reserve to \$10 million. I have also indicated to the members of this House, including members of the official opposition and other opposition members, that the provision allowing encroachment on the fund for exploration purposes is something that I would take under advisement depending on the views of the community and the views of the opposition members.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Mines if he will make a commitment to the mining communities and those workers that are being faced with possible disasters and layoffs to appeal to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and his government and reinstate the money into the Mining Reserve Fund, where it belongs, for those workers and those families in the North.

Mr. Newman: Madam Speaker, I am confident that the people of the North very much appreciate the investment of these monies in mining exploration. The best hope for mining and communities in the North is to find more mines and to have the activity generated by the exploration stimulated by the MEAP program.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Prior to recognizing the honourable member for Flin Flon, with the indulgence of the House, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have this afternoon members of a Russian delegation representing regional Legislatures from the northwest region of Russia led by Mr. Vitaliy Klimov.

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

Manitoba Mineral Resources Assets—General Revenue

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): My questions are also for the Minister of Energy and Mines. Would the minister confirm that over \$30 million from the assets of Manitoba Mineral Resources was placed in general revenue by this administration, money that came from northern Manitoba.

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines): Madam Speaker, the memory that we have on this side of the House of that particular corporation is not a positive one. The fact is that we are investing in MEAP and trying to restore good will in doing business and investing in mining in this province because of the legacy left by the likes of that particular Crown corporation which did nothing but discourage investment in this province, caused mining companies and explorations to fear expropriation, to fear undue government interference in doing business in this province. We are still to this day trying to recover our reputation in the world community because of the NDP's very, very unfortunate approach to the mining industry in this province.

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

Mr. Jennissen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Leaf Rapids would not exist if it were not for this side of the House.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Flin Flon, to pose his question, please.

Mr. Jennissen: How does this minister justify taking more than \$36 million from northern Manitoba mining communities when some of these same communities are at the very edge, fighting for survival, faced with declining ore stocks and mine closures over the next five years?

Mr. Newman: Madam Speaker, the future of the North and northern communities, as has been discussed in Estimates over the last few days, including with the honourable member for Flin Flon, rests in those communities themselves and having alternatives to mining and to have a vision for the future which can include mining but seeing mining as something that does not last forever in direct, approximate geographic location to any particular community.

That is the message that should be sent out to those particular communities and, in fact, that is the message they are embracing. Through the Mining Reserve Fund, we are investing in those kinds of economic development visioning processes, including most recently a major investment in an economic development officer in Lynn Lake which the honourable member knows about.

* (1400)

Mineral Exploration Government Initiatives

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): What answer does this minister have for concerned families in Lynn Lake and Leaf Rapids who are wondering why this government is quite willing to take huge amounts of money out of the North but quite unwilling to put significant amounts of money towards mineral exploration in the northwest region?

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines): Madam Speaker, I always welcome the opportunity to remind all Manitobans of the enormous contribution and commitment this government has

placed in the development of the North. What greater commitment than the resolution of treaty land entitlement and the resolution of Northern Flood Agreement, something that the official opposition, through the Hydro developments of the '70s under Premier Schreyer, was responsible for causing the damage and responsible for those victims in the North, that we have now been investing over \$215 million through a comprehensive settlement and the transfer of tens of thousands of acres of land through the Northern Flood Agreement.

We had on the table another \$100 million available to the Cross Lake residents together with acreages of land to resolve that issue. Treaty land entitlement is involved in over a million acres of land being transferred to create healthy, sustainable communities in the North and over \$76 million from the federal government towards that end. What better commitment to the North than to resolve those historic injustices.

Youth Crime Repeat Offenders—Reduction Strategy

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

I was listening to some news, and I understand that in the government of Saskatchewan they actually have a fairly good idea in terms of what is happening with the youth, chronic youth problems, where youth keep on repeating criminal acts in which the government has now allocated out a special fund to do additional tracking of these problem youth. I am sure the government itself would acknowledge that you have repeat young offenders who cause a tremendous amount of problem in today's society.

My question to the Minister of Justice: is the minister prepared to look at an initiative that would in fact see the government of Manitoba have more attention drawn to repeat offenders?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question. I might indicate that the steps that the Saskatchewan government is now taking are steps that we have already implemented for some period of time.

For example, in the corrections area, the intensive support and supervision program has been in existence for some time. The program provides comprehensive management of high-risk young offenders in both pre- and post-custody situations. This program, the ISSP program, in fact intervenes one step before the Saskatchewan program which appeared to deal with addressing the risk of offending youth, whereas what we are trying to do is prevent them from offending.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, can the Minister of Justice indicate that additional government resources are in fact in place so that we can give special attention to the repeat young offenders?

Mr. Toews: Again I thank the member for the question. As he may know, Manitoba is in fact one of the most aggressive jurisdictions in the transfer of repeat violent offenders to adult court, and I think about 40 percent of all transfers in Canada are as a result of an aggressive policy by our Crown attorneys to address that problem.

Furthermore, my colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), in our recent budget—we will be announcing the intensive bail supervision program for young offenders, which will provide similar monitoring and intensive supervision of at-risk youth who are granted judicial release. We believe that we need to intensify those areas of when youth are released by our courts that there is more intensive monitoring of those youth.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is, in essence, what I am looking for.

Will the Minister of Justice then give the assurance that the additional resources will in fact be made available so the tracking of these problem youth is in fact happening?

Mr. Toews: Well, again, I was fairly specific I thought in that respect. Not only is our intensive supervision in respect of releasing offenders one of the leading programs in Canada—and I want to compliment our staff over in the MYC who in fact are supervising that. I know the success of that program has been tremendous, and I have great faith in our correctional officers to deal with the issue of the bail as well. I think that our

jurisdiction, especially in respect of these issues, has been proactive, and we will continue to see more programs that address specific needs as they arise. So I thank my honourable friend for that question.

Household Hazardous Waste Program Status Report

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Environment. Last summer, without any consultation, without any public notice, the government eliminated the Household Hazardous Waste Program, but under pressure, during the Portage by-election, agreed to restore it for one pickup in the fall. My question is to the minister: what happened to that commitment he made last fall for this year?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): It is interesting how honourable members opposite seem to be able to link everything up so conveniently to events of the day.

When the budget for the last fiscal year had been set, it had been the expectation that consultations regarding oil, used oil and containers and filters would have moved the process along further than it had by the fall of last year. So therefore we budgeted accordingly, and as it turned out, the oil regulation had not come forward and so the funding had to be restored, which it was. [interjection] I am trying to figure out, Madam Speaker, what it is that is wrong with the Leader of the Opposition here today. [interjection] But all is well that ends well.

The other thing about it is that we are recovering so much more household hazardous waste with the program that we have been running—well, Miller Environmental has been running, with assistance from the government. It is really tremendous to review the amount of household hazardous waste that is no longer finding its way to the wrong places.

* (1410)

Mr. Dewar: Madam Speaker, I do not think he answered the question. I am not entirely sure what he answered. The question is: is there a program this year? The program last year collected over 200,000

kilograms from over 30 communities in this province. Is there a program this year?

Mr. McCrae: Well, so pleased we are with the outcome of this type of programming in Manitoba, all of which has been brought in in the past 10 years with the present administration. Previous to that, virtually nothing had been put in place to look after our environment and set the path for a sustainable future for our children and grandchildren. I am very proud to be part of that record and proud to be a part of the continuation of the program that will take proper care of household hazardous waste materials.

I look forward, with great anticipation, to getting the Estimates of the Department of Environment before the committee so that the honourable member and I can swap statistics and enjoy, revel in the glory of the improvements that have been seen in the last 10 years under this administration, unfortunately improvements in environmental stewardship that we never saw before that.

Mr. Dewar: It appeared that the program is not on, Madam Speaker, and that is regrettable.

Madam Speaker, my last question to the Minister of Environment is: how much household hazardous waste, paints, oils, solvents, antifreeze and so on, ended up or will end up in landfills by a bad decision from this minister?

Mr. McCrae: None, Madam Speaker, because those depoted days were indeed scheduled and it all happened.

An Honourable Member: Cancelled.

Mr. McCrae: No, they were not cancelled. They happened.

The important thing is that waste stream articles like oil, containers, filters, tires and all of those things covered by the Manitoba Product Stewardship program, Madam Speaker, all of those things are taking huge chunks of garbage out of the waste stream and they are now being recycled, which in the past were leaving the wrong kind of message not only for ourselves but for future generations.

When we talk about sustainable development in our economy, we mean business. Unfortunately the previous government in this province never displayed any inclination towards that but somebody had to make that happen, and we did, Madam Speaker.

Carberry Health Action Committee Project Proposal

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I have a question for the Minister of Health. The Carberry-North Cypress Health Action Committee and many good people in the community of Carberry recognize that the current hospital is totally inadequate. It is over 50 years old, the roof is leaking, the plumbing is inadequate. The local health action committee recognizes that not only do they need a new facility but a new approach where they are going to emphasize wellness instead of illness, and they are proposing a new integrated health care facility.

My question to the minister: can he indicate today whether the government is prepared to respond favourably to this proposal from the good people of Carberry?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for that question. The member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan), who represents Carberry in this Legislature, has been working with me very closely over the last while on this particular project. The community of Carberry I think has come to appreciate, as the member has indicated, that integrating their acute care services with their personal care home allows for delivering those services and continuing services in the community, where if one just had to replace the hospital it really would not be feasible. That is the Shoal Lake integrated facility that we have talked about and we have approved for Shoal Lake.

I will be attending a meeting in Carberry within the next couple of weeks. I know it is on my schedule, and I am looking forward to meeting with the community. I can tell the member, like in all of these projects, there is a lot of work that has to be done between the community, the regional health authority and the ministry in getting down to exactly what that community needs in its services as opposed to what it

may want or desire. But those are exactly the types of projects that we are entertaining and approving, and I would expect when the project has worked through the detail it will receive approval, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Leonard Evans: I thank the minister for his answer, and indeed I was going to ask him if he would meet with the delegation from the community, and this is very good.

I wonder if the minister is knowledgeable and aware that the Marquette Regional Health Authority fully supports this proposal, recognizing that it is a growing community and does have legitimate needs.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I have attended many meetings with the Marquette Regional Health Authority as they work at reorganizing health care in that particular area on a regional basis. They were there when we developed with them the principle of the integrated facility in Shoal Lake. We will be working with them.

I can tell the member that the real issue around Carberry now is being able to work through exactly what kind of services work and can be supported in a community like Carberry. That is going to take a fair bit of detailed work by the RHA, by the Ministry of Health with that community. So that is really the issue; we want to get down to it. I will be in Carberry with the member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan) at a public meeting to discuss these issues. There is a lot of detailed work to do, but the principle is certainly supported. In fact, it is exactly the kind of thing that regional health authorities and we are encouraging in the redesign of rural health delivery.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

* (1420)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Health Auxiliaries

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, throughout history, Manitoba's health auxiliaries have played an important role in our communities. They

raise funds to help purchase valuable medical supplies such as stretchers and oxygen equipment and to support handivan services. They visit with patients in hospitals and nursing homes, offer their support and brighten their days. Health auxiliaries also raise funds to provide bursaries and scholarships for students studying in the medical field.

I want to congratulate today Marge Friesen of Altona and the countless other volunteers responsible for writing a history of the Manitoba Health Auxiliaries Association 1946—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing great difficulty hearing the honourable member for Emerson, and members' statements are a very important part of routine proceedings. Could I please ask those members having meetings to do so quietly in the loge or outside the Chamber.

Mr. Penner: —to 1996, which recently rolled off the presses at Friesens Yearbook Division in Altona. The provincial health auxiliary association was first organized in 1946 as the Manitoba Association of Women's Hospital Aides.

With the group's 50th anniversary approaching in 1996, it was decided a history book would be a fitting tribute to the organization's years of community service. The organization's history was compiled under the direction of Marge Friesen, herself an auxiliary volunteer and past president of the provincial hospitals auxiliary executive. Marj Heinrichs of Rosenort wrote the history. It was typeset by Ruth Kroeker of Altona and edited by Anne Kroeker of Altona.

Currently, Manitoba has 64 health auxiliaries, made up of some 5,000 volunteers who donate thousands of hours of their time annually to this valuable organization. Volunteers are an integral part of Manitoba society. These people undertake the projects, large and small, that make an important difference in people's lives. I commend all those who have worked tirelessly for Manitoba's hospital auxiliaries and those dedicated to the efforts to promote health and wellness within our communities.

Health Care System—Northern Manitoba

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): The shortsighted cuts to health care by this provincial government have been documented in a recent report released by Manitoba nurses. In every category except one the worst problems existed in northern Manitoba. Eighty-five percent of northern nurses reported that their time on patient care had decreased while their time on paperwork had increased. Ninety percent of northern nurses reported that their workload had increased since 1995, while continuity of care had decreased as had the number of nurses providing direct patient care.

The shortages of nurses, doctors and other medical staff in northern Manitoba are well documented. I am pleased that we were able to work out a solution to the doctor situation at Snow Lake, but for many other communities, such as Leaf Rapids, Lynn Lake, Flin Flon and Pukatawagan, the situation remains serious.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) chose to duck two recent public forums. The constant attempts by the Filmon government to pretend that their cuts and their broken promises have nothing to do with problems in health care fool no one, certainly no one in northern Manitoba. The cuts to northern health care have ignored the greater acuity of cases in the North. Serious diseases such as diabetes are at epidemic levels in many communities. It is deeply disturbing that diseases that Canadians thought they had eradicated decades ago, such as tuberculosis, are making a big comeback at the Black Sturgeon and Pukatawagan Bands.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing difficulty hearing the honourable member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Jennissen: Urgent action is required to deal with this situation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Organ Tissue Donations

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I rise today to make note to all members of this Assembly, as well as to all Manitobans, of an important issue, that being organ donation. Organ tissue donation is a very

important issue, not only to myself but all those Canadians in Canada who are awaiting organ transplant. Currently, more than 2,800 Canadians are in a life-threatening position and may indeed not survive to the time that they have for receipt of their organ transplant.

Yesterday many members of this Assembly wore green ribbons in recognition of National Organ Donation Discussion Day. The meaning behind discussion day is one that is very simple, that being to encourage all Manitobans, indeed all Canadians, to take a moment to discuss with their family members the important issue of organ and tissue donation. Family members need to talk about what they would like in their passing. It is important that their death may be the life for others. Having this brief discussion could save families the anxiety of making an on-the-spot decision. Furthermore, comfort comes from the knowledge that something positive may come of their death, and through their family's wishes this could take place. While many of us have taken the time to sign the backs of our drivers' licences, many more opportunities must take place for those who do not have a driver's licence to discuss this most important issue. Time is critically important to those on the waiting list for these surgical procedures. I encourage all Manitobans to take that time to discuss the issue of organ and tissue donation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity.

Holocaust Awareness Week

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, this is Holocaust Awareness Week around the world. The holocaust was the planned destruction of an entire people, and for this reason it is important to remember and mourn the six million Jews who were killed as a result of this. In common with Jews and all people around the world, our Jewish community will be mourning and honouring the memory of these more than six million Jewish men, women and children who perished in ghettos, concentration camps, and gas chambers in those days of the Nazi nightmare. A total of 11 million innocent noncombatant civilians were killed by the Nazis, but the largest group by far was comprised of the six million Jewish victims who were directly targeted because they were Jewish and

represented fully a third of the Jewish population of the world.

Madam Speaker, as has been quoted before in this House by many members, including the Premier (Mr. Filmon), the renowned author and Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel points out not all victims of the holocaust were Jews but all Jews were victims. Many of us will attend the ceremonies tomorrow at the holocaust memorial at the Legislature and many of us participate in the activities. Some of us had the opportunity to participate in the ceremony last week with the renaming of the street, which is an annual event, and we had the opportunity to again hear of another terrible facet of the holocaust which was the kinder transports that took place. We had the opportunity this week to view a film and to hear a speaker talk about that previously unrecognized chapter of the holocaust history.

We need never forget; we should remember every day, particularly this year, the 50th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel, and I urge all members who, I am sure, do acknowledge and recognize and never forget that it is fitting that we all recognize the history of the holocaust and never forget. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1430)

Water Commission—Interim Report

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I just wanted to take this opportunity to comment very briefly on the interim report that was released today from the Manitoba Water Commission. It is almost a year ago today where the flood—and I am quoting right from the commission's report—where it in essence turned the Red River Valley into a lake covering 1,000 square miles of water or 640,000 square acres. Winnipeg was indeed somewhat fortunate. It is estimated that the floodway saved the city residents and taxpayers and so forth somewhere between \$3.5 billion to \$4 billion.

But there were a couple of points which I just very briefly wished to make comment on. One of them is the recommendation in terms of this report where it talks about the need to have a dedicated or additional

dedicated staff for the forecasting, should we be put into a situation of a similar nature. It also makes the recommendation that we should work more co-operatively and consider even having a staffperson. Again, given a particular situation, a staffperson would then go down stateside to participate in their forecasting in hopes that we would then be better prepared.

I make reference to the monies that were saved as a result of the floodway. One of the things that I would like to see, and the report makes reference to it, is that there needs to be more of a sense of fairness in the sense of other municipalities, individuals that live just down river to the floodway in having some sort of input as to when the gates should be raised, the levels and so forth.

With those few words, I appreciate the opportunity, Madam Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Madam Speaker: As previously agreed, the House will resume in Committee of Supply.

* (1440)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

ENERGY AND MINES

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

When the committee last, it had been considering item 23.2 Energy and Mineral Resources (b) Petroleum and Energy (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 47 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): I asked the indulgence of the committee as I indicated when I had to leave, and I thank the patience and the good will of the committee that we, in fact, return back to our order

and that would be under 23.2.(a) Marketing. We had not completed that section, and I had to leave.

Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Chairperson: What is the will of the committee? Is there unanimous consent to revert to Section 23.2.(a)(1)? Okay. Agreed?

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines): There was one question left hanging, and if you want to have sort of a continuous record of the MLA for Dauphin's (Mr. Struthers) question in the previous section, I could answer that and maybe that will complete his segment. But there was a question he posed and then time was up. So I am prepared to answer that question if you want.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister, to proceed.

Mr. Newman: The answer to the question about energy efficiency and alternate energy indicators is as follows. We have a number of indicators that we use to gauge the state of energy efficiency and use of alternative energy. These are contained in "Energy in Manitoba," and are based on information obtained from Stats Canada. The first is energy intensity which is measured in terms of energy use per unit of gross domestic product. This indicator has declined from approximately 15 megajoules/real dollars of GDP in 1980, to 11.27 mj/GDP dollars in 1996. That is the latest year for which we have statistics. It is anticipated this indicator will continue to decline to a forecast level of 10.29 megajoules/dollars GDP by 2001. This indicator reflects the overall energy efficiency of our economy.

The second indicator is the percentage of energy used in Manitoba that consists of imported refined petroleum products or RPPs. This is a measure of our dependence on fossil fuel production from our western neighbours. This indicator has declined from approximately 48.5 percent in 1980 and is stabilized at about 41.3 percent since 1991. It is estimated that the indicator will continue to decline slowly to about 70.7 percent by 2001. This indicator is adversely affected by the buoyant economy, primarily additional use of

diesel for the trucking industry and the popularity of less efficient sport utility vehicles.

A third indicator is the percentage of energy used in Manitoba that is renewable, predominantly hydro. This indicator has increased from approximately 17 percent in 1979 to approximately 22.5 percent in 1996. It is forecast that this indicator will further increase to about 24.1 percent, largely due to the conversion of the TransCanada PipeLines compressor station at Iles des Chenes from a gas turbine driver to an electric motor driver.

A fourth indicator is the residential energy use per household. This is a measure of energy efficiency in the residential sector. The indicator has declined from approximately .133 terajoules per household in 1978 to approximately .111 in 1996. This factor is expected to be stable over the next few years.

With respect to alternate energy use, Statistics Canada does not report a nonhydro renewable energy use. This is primarily because the original capital cost to the facility, the energy costs of wind, solar energy, et cetera, are generally free, making monitoring of its use difficult or impossible. Examples of alternative energy installation in the province is a demonstration ground source heat pump at Fort Whyte Centre and installations in a number of rural residences and a couple of arenas.

In general, ground source heat pumps are expensive to install and difficult to maintain. A number of small horizontal wind turbines used by individual households to supplement electric energy consumption are in operation. There are two vertical wind turbines we are aware of in Churchill and Birds Hill, but we believe neither one is operational. There are a large number of small photo voltaic systems, that is solar energy, throughout the province that provide heat in off-grid situations, example, remote cottages, lodges, et cetera, and provide water heating for swimming pool operations.

Lipsett Hall on Kenaston Boulevard has a solar system. However, we do not know how much it is used. Ford New Holland and Canadian Bronze have solar walls used to heat make-up air for their facilities.

Ms. Mihychuk: Since I missed the whole preamble to all of that, I am sure it was very informative, but I do want to thank my colleague from Dauphin for asking those questions, and I would now like to suggest that we move back to the Marketing section, please.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for St. James, to proceed.

Ms. Mihychuk: It seems to me where we had left off I had indicated to the minister that there were indeed two exploration companies exploring in resource management areas and that this was causing a certain amount of hard feeling by the local First Nations community.

Perhaps the minister could indicate whether either one of those two companies has received provincial monies in terms of an exploration grant, a MEAP grant.

Mr. Newman: We do not want to be guessing as to who these companies might be. We have identified that there is one possible company that might be in the area, but we are not sure, so I cannot answer the question.

Ms. Mihychuk: It is my understanding that one of these companies is indeed receiving a MEAP, received a MEAP last year, and its receiving has been approved for a MEAP for this year. Without giving the name, I guess as a policy question, given that we are providing provincial money for this exploration program and given the minister's stated objectives of working cooperatively with First Nations, does he feel that it is appropriate to give out a MEAP to a company which has not apparently or, let us say, theoretically, would it be within what he would perceive as a policy to give out an exploration grant to a company that would be exploring in a mineral resource area?

* (1450)

Mr. Newman: I am inclined to ask, Mr. Chair, what is your point of view on this issue, but at the moment there is no policy that makes MEAP grants conditional on whether or not they are within or near or of any particular relationship to a resource area.

Ms. Mihychuk: In fact, it is true, is it not, that the resource management area has no jurisdiction in terms

of limiting prospecting or the issuance of a disposition of any kind.

Mr. Newman: This, I guess, may illustrate a difference in philosophy between the party you represent and the government that I am part of. We do not interfere in the judgments that are made freely by these companies in terms of where their invested dollars, with a proportion of taxpayers' dollars attached to them, are going to result in exploration being done. The rules of the game, in terms of locations where they are prohibited, where investing puts at some risk the certainty of a positive relationship, is in the hands of the company to pursue in mutual self-interest kinds of ways.

I have every confidence that that kind of approach will be more constructive and will be more respectful of aboriginal people and of the companies' best efforts to make the best business judgments and the best socially responsible judgments in the interests of mining exploration and development in the province of Manitoba.

Ms. Mihychuk: What measures did the department take to instruct these companies that there was, in fact, a resource management area identified and that their activities may infringe on that area? What actions were taken? What recommendations did the department give those mining exploration companies?

Mr. Newman: First of all, I do not know again of what company you are speaking, but in terms of general policy it is up to the companies to ask the questions and get the answers and to determine those sorts of issues themselves. If they do not have the capacity to do that better than us feeding them something that may not be responsive to their needs and may not even be reliable—we might be going beyond our mandate. We leave that up to the companies to determine, but they know by virtue of the kind of speech I gave in Toronto, if they heard it, and through other communications, what sort of culture I believe is present in the North, which they are either going to respect and embrace or take the risk of not being as welcome as they would be with knowledge and sensitivity and understanding of the particular environment, culture and local economies.

Ms. Mihychuk: It seems truly incredible that this is the same minister who talks about respecting First Nations and aboriginal people and is talking about the need to do joint ventures and an aboriginal mining initiative, yet it is his own department, from what I understand, which has not sat on the committee for two years. It is his own department which his government has expanded to encourage, promote, lure, give out exploration grants to bring in more mining companies and actively pursue their interests in terms of bringing in exploration.

It seems to me that given his philosophical position when we first started Estimates, that there was a relationship between Northern Affairs and mining, and we had to work in harmony and that this was an advantage, that the minister would clearly see how the department appears to have provided the information, perhaps lured these companies here, attracted them, and has actually facilitated their ability to do exploration in an area that is sensitive to a First Nations community.

Now, is the minister suggesting that the department has a role by providing civil servants and the funding to go out there and market but does not also have a responsibility in terms of respecting First Nations, ensuring that there are joint partnership meetings and ensuring that there is respect for those First Nations?

Mr. Newman: It might help if we made sure what kinds of areas we are talking about. I am operating under the assumption that we are not talking about what are called community interest zones under the Northern Flood Agreement. I am operating under the assumption that we are not talking about hold areas under the Northern Flood Agreement.

To the extent we are talking about those, and I thought we went through the exercise this morning so that we are not talking about those, that with respect to those particular defined areas, the first being in relation to the treaty land entitlement, the second, the hold areas, being in relation to the Northern Flood Agreement, an information sheet was sent out to all mining companies in the province and exploration companies, and it was generally made available December 5, 1997, an information sheet explaining what the expectations were of the department in relation to those particular areas.

If you are simply talking, as I have assumed you were, about what the aboriginal people would call traditional lands but are not within those kinds of areas, then there is not either a co-management agreement in existence, nor is there a protocol pursuant to the treaty land entitlement agreement in relation to community interest zones.

* (1500)

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Chairman, I am speaking about resource management areas. When the discussion came up, we, I thought, had established that this is a land use zone established by the community and the resource sectors and a great deal of time is spent on forestry management, but presumably it also includes the mineral sector in a resource management area.

This is something different than community interest zones, Northern Flood and treaty land entitlement. It is specifically called resource management areas, and that is the particular land designation or zone that I am speaking about. Is the minister familiar with this land designation?

Mr. Newman: There is, for example, a board called the Nelson House resource management board, but that is pursuant to the Northern Flood Agreement. I think the only way I can address this is to determine what specific resource area you are talking about, and then we can maybe address her intelligence to it in ways that ensure that we are both focusing on the same geographic area.

Ms. Mihychuk: I will provide the information to the minister because it is in a very sensitive area and is causing, I know, the government, in general, difficulties because of the relationships that have occurred in that area, so I do not want to go into specifics but, in general, I will continue my line of questioning.

Would the Marketing branch identify all of the various land management areas in legal or, I guess, in good will to exploration companies in terms of their buddying? It is my understanding that the Marketing branch does a one-to-one with exploration companies. They sort of help them through the process of getting permits and encouraging them to go ahead and do business here in Manitoba. Is it the policy of the

government to also make them aware of the sensitivities of the areas in question, including land tenure issues and the need to consult with the people, the First Nations communities in those areas?

Mr. Newman: With respect to the fact sheet I referred to in advising about Northern Flood Agreement areas where there is a co-management area and agreement, the statement is made in response to the question as follows: what steps must be taken to acquire a mineral disposition in a co-management area? The acquisition of mineral dispositions is not affected by the co-management areas. However, we again encourage active dialogue with First Nation communities to inform them of exploration activities in the area and especially those activities that may affect hunting and trapping.

With respect to treaty land entitlement implications to land tenure, there is an admonition to mining and exploration companies as follows: mining and exploration companies should be aware that land selections must be consistent with the land selection criteria as outlined in the framework agreement and will be, for the most part, in the vicinity of existing reserves. All land selection must be approved by the federal and the provincial governments to be made within three to five years of the ratification of the agreement. It is expected that much of the lands selection will consist of unencumbered Crown land within community interest zones. A CIZ consists of an area of 30 kilometres from the exterior boundary of the main reserve of each entitlement First Nation. Notification of any changes to land disposition, excluding mineral claims and leases within the CIZs, must be made to the appropriate entitlement First Nation. CIZs are not hold areas and do not limit any rights of a mining or exploration company to stake or develop mineral claims or obtain mineral leases.

That is what was agreed to. It is in the agreement. However exploration permits must be reviewed by the affected EFN. The purpose of this overview is to preclude large amounts of land within the CIZs from becoming encumbered and not available for land selection. It should be noted that any land purchases made by an EFN under the TLE process must be made on a willing-buyer and willing-seller basis.

Ms. Mihychuk: I take that as, basically the answer is no. Besides providing the information in writing, the department is aware of the situation and does have inspectors that are quite aware of activities that are going on in the province, both that are with dispositions and not.

It is my understanding that, in fact, the minister has granted MEAPs to companies who have not registered any type of mineral disposition. Is that correct?

Mr. Newman: The simple answer is yes.

Ms. Mihychuk: How does the minister justify giving out money to exploration companies who do not register any type of land tenure in terms of exploration permits or anything else to the department?

Mr. Newman: I am not aware of any constructive persuasive reason why it should not be done the way it is done to maximize the value that their investment brings to the province. When they make their application, they give an indication of a budget as to how they are going to invest the money. It is scrutinized and, to the extent it has geological and other merits that make sense to the best intelligence that we have within our department on the review committee, it is approved or not approved in whole or in part.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister explain why companies need to withdraw to get exploration permits? Then if we wish to encourage exploration, and some companies need it, and some companies do not, what is the difference?

Mr. Newman: The business practice is for exploration companies to take out an exploration permit where they are seeking a larger area within which to do exploration work. When they determine that a certain area is worthy of taking out this position to protect their interests, they would do that and then pay the necessary fees to allow that to happen. It just makes sound business sense.

The treatment of exploration permits and special exploration permits, in accordance with the notice we give to the explorationist community, is that they can be issued in the community interest zone area with the consent of the entitlement First Nation. The entitlement

First Nation can object to the issuance of exploration permits or special exploration permits only if the land applied for, or part of it, is made as a land selection within the specified time lines in the agreement. Those time lines are 60 days to respond to notice of disposition and 180 days from date of notification to formally select the land. The reason these two kinds of permits are dealt with differently is for the simple reason that these permits would encumber large tracts of land in the area, wherein we are encouraging the time lease selection of the treaty land entitlement of the entitlement First Nation.

*(1510)

Ms. Mihychuk: Does this policy about requiring exploration dispositions of some type actually allow companies to explore in areas that are within lands that may be considered by First Nations in coming up to certain decisions without that First Nation knowing about it? Does the minister not feel that those First Nation communities have the right to know that there are mineral interests in those lands and that, in fact, companies are exploring and doing work in those areas?

Mr. Newman: As I have said on several occasions, this you leave up to the good sense and good will, the individual and corporate ethics, the self-interested motivation of the peoples involved, and that is also why we have the ninth point in our strategy which we are going to be workshopping so that we do not come in and impose paternalistically in interfering ways what we think is the best way of doing this. We are going to the people themselves to tell us in a workshopping process which is imminent. This has been in the planning process for some months. We are in the final process of selecting a facilitator, and we are inviting a variety of organizations to nominate two members to send to a workshop to begin the process of learning each other's aspirations, cultures, communication needs and to begin to work on the initial draft of an accord.

The initial workshop is planned for the end of May of this year, and invitations will be sent to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs with the recent, reported in the aboriginal media, severance of the MKO, the MKO as well, the Manitoba Metis Federation, the Northern Association of Community Councils, the Mining

Association of Manitoba, Manitoba Prospectors and Developers Association and the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Prospectors and Developers Association. That is the process to have the representatives of the communities come up with what they believe is the answer you are apparently searching for.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister indicate how many companies have received MEAPs but have not registered exploration permits?

Mr. Newman: We do not have that information at hand but, if you wish, we can undertake to provide you with that information.

Ms. Mihychuk: How does the department know where these companies are working in terms of accountability, inspection, and ensuring the work is being done when exploration permits or some sort of tenure is not registered?

Mr. Newman: The process for inspections is a spot-checking process and, when there is a decision to go and do a spot-check of a particular explorationist, it is ascertained at that point in time where they are and then the inspection is done in that fashion. They have some indication normally in the broad area where they are, which is identified in the initial application, but the specifics are ascertained at the time of the spot audit.

Ms. Mihychuk: Well, surely these spot audits sound like the department sends out an inspector to go onsite to see that the activities are actually going on as presumably are being expressed in their application or their plan. Now, if an inspector is planning to do a random check on the company, surely that sort of surprise visit would be pre-empted by a phone call to the company saying, hey, we are coming up, where are you guys?

We are putting millions of dollars into exploration companies, and I believe that in the most part we have seen positive steps. I believe it should come from Consolidated Revenue. That is another argument, but there needs to be strong accountability. Putting \$4 million into exploration, there have to be clear guidelines. The government must know where the companies are and be able to access that whenever they want to, not at the convenience of the company, it

seems to me. What is the minister's view and how does he have his inspectors go and check on these companies if there is no mineral disposition of any kind?

* (1520)

Mr. Newman: I do not get the impression that we have got unwelcome investors in Manitoba skulking around in a darkness and trying to hide from the scrutiny of the local populations and the world.

What we are talking about here is companies that have seen fit to invest significant amounts of dollars, a fraction of which is supported by a provincial tax dollars contribution. They have 18 months within which to complete the work for which they have received support from the province. The creative tension for those who are not absolutely honourable is to have the potential for a random inspection, audit, of their expenditures.

The practice is, without giving away the total picture which would then be a disservice to the integrity of the process that you are talking about, to go in after they have done enough work to be able to make them accountable and then measure whether the money has been spent, as they had indicated in the application form, in the way it was intended to be spent. So that is the way it has been done, and I welcome comments from you and continued questioning from you that may reveal to us some ways that we can practice our policy of continuous improvement. That is the answer to your last question.

Ms. Mihychuk: So it is my understanding that exploration companies are able to apply to the province, to the department, and receive provincial grants and do work without field observations or checks in areas without registering mineral dispositions. Clearly, this has to raise questions of accountability for the department. It very much concerns me that the minister was not aware that these companies were out there and actually in an area that may impact on other negotiations that are going on.

So I think that there needs to be better communication, but I think that there is a public accountability question here that the minister must address. The minister must be aware that there are

exploration companies in Manitoba's environment that are doing work and do not wish to be recognized or have their work spotted by other companies. I mean, this is part of the exploration business. You go out and you do your business, and you do not leave tracks. I mean, it is not the type of thing that you want to advertise. But if you are going to do that, it would seem to me that you take your chances. You go without a provincial grant. You are out there to make a deal or find a find and that goes on all the time. So am I implying that there are companies out there in Manitoba that are lurking around and people do not know? Well, those are the minister's words. I would say, yes, absolutely. There is exploration going on in Manitoba. We want to encourage it. It is the way business is done, but the government has decided to give public money to companies. When they have decided to do that, then there is an onus on those companies, a responsibility for them to own up, indicate what areas that they are going to be doing business in because it is a matter of accountability. Inspectors must be able to come and check the field site.

Can I ask: have there been inspectors who have done random checks on the field programs of these companies that receive MEAPs? That may be a very broad question because I know that there are numerous companies out there, but in particular, those companies that have not registered mineral dispositions.

Mr. Newman: What specifically did you want to know about the audits? I missed the question.

Ms. Mihychuk: How many inspections have there been in lands identified, presumably to the Marketing branch or whoever runs the MEAP program, on those companies that have received MEAPs but have not registered mineral dispositions?

Mr. Newman: As I indicated, I cannot delineate between those that have registered with the branch, but I can talk about the gross number of audits.

In October of '95, there were 14 active MEAP projects. Nine inspections were scheduled and two were completed. In January '96, there were 34 active projects. The number of inspections scheduled is nine, and three were completed. In May of '96, there were

seven projects active. One inspection was scheduled and it was not completed. In November of '96, there were 43 projects active; five inspections scheduled and four completed. In May of '97, there were 22 projects active, and seven projects were scheduled and two were completed. The last inspections, then, were in May of '97.

Ms. Mihychuk: For clarification, is the minister saying that these inspections were in the field, or are these financial inspections?

Mr. Newman: All of those that I have referred to are site inspections. In addition to that, there were office audits selected.

In January of '96, there were two selected for office audits. One was carried out and there was an internal review of project receipts and invoices in 10 cases. In May of '96, there was one office audit selected. One was carried out and in one there was an internal review of project receipts and invoices to the date. There were internal reviews in November of '96 and May of '97 in the amount of 19 in the former and six in the latter.

Ms. Mihychuk: Are the site inspections conducted by a claims inspector?

Mr. Newman: The audits are conducted in the offices by the MEAP co-ordinator and a staff auditor with the Department of Finance. The field audits or site inspections are done by departmental geologists.

* (1530)

Ms. Mihychuk: How much experience and training do the geologists have in terms of inspecting claims and other types of exploration work?

Mr. Newman: The way you phrased your question causes some difficulty. My advice is that the people who conduct the inspection are people who are professional geologists who are doing inspections of the geology.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister indicate what expertise is required to be a claims inspector?

Mr. Newman: The claims inspector has no relation to the function that we have been describing in doing site audits with respect to MEAP expenditures. The claims inspector is someone who determines whether or not the staking of claims has been done in accordance with regulations.

Ms. Mihychuk: Are the geologists that do these inspections familiar with the criteria required in the MEAP plan and the mineral disposition regulations?

Mr. Newman: The guide for the geologist doing the site inspections is developed by the MEAP co-ordinator and is given to the geologist doing the inspection to ascertain whether the geological work being done is in accordance with the criteria which were the basis for the advance of MEAP support.

Ms. Mihychuk: It seems to me that last year we talked a little bit about accountability and the inspection methods for MEAP projects by departmental geologists and others, and we talked about—I think this was also raised by the Auditor—that the department included visits by field geologists into areas where a company was exploring and had a MEAP. It seemed, at that time, fairly casual and not particularly planned out as necessarily an inspection of that program, although they went for a site visit, and they may see what was going on.

Are there specific geologists assigned by the department now to inspect and ensure that these MEAP projects are complying to their plans and ensuring the financial accountability of our grants to these companies? Who is doing it, and whose branch or department are they assigned to?

Mr. Newman: To geologists.

Ms. Mihychuk: And those two geologists are associated with the MEAP program specifically, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Newman: I meant t-o, not t-w-o geologists.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister clarify that, please, in greater detail?

Mr. Newman: I was not responding in terms of the numbers of geologists. I was responding to the profession, the types of staff that were engaged in the process of site inspections, and they are geologists.

Ms. Mihychuk: Okay. I understand that the inspectors are geologists. My question is are they specifically identified to do this work on the MEAP companies and those projects?

Mr. Newman: Those considered to have the relevant background and experience are the ones who are designated to perform the particular inspections at a particular time.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister identify how many geologists go out and do these inspections? Who are they? How often do they go? Are they identifiable people who go and say I am going to do the following 45 inspections, or are they at random? It just seems I am not getting clear answers as to who is the inspection team for MEAP.

Mr. Newman: We try to be as helpful as we can. If we understand what your earnest desire is, that is to get the names of the people who have done inspections, we are prepared to give you a list of the names of all people who have done site inspections. We just cannot do it right now, but we can undertake to provide that to you, and I so undertake, if that is what you want.

Ms. Mihychuk: I appreciate that. I would also like to understand the process. Is there a planning process identified early on in the year that says that you will be expected to visit the following five companies, or how is it assessed as to who is going to go out and at what time, and how is the link between the Marketing department and the person who handles MEAP and the geologists that go out?

Mr. Newman: The written policy dealing with inspections and audits is as follows. Inspection and audit criteria have been established with advice from an internal auditor with the Department of Finance. An inspection checklist was developed along with guidelines. All inspections will be co-ordinated through the director of Geological Services, Energy and Mines. Site inspections will be based on 30 percent of approved assistance dollars under the

November 1996, May 1997, and future offerings. Company office audits will be conducted on 30 percent of paid assistance dollars paid to the November 1996 offering. Company office audits will be conducted on 20 percent of the paid assistance dollars under the November 1996 and November 1997 offerings. Companies approved prior to the November 1996 offering were not required to submit receipts or invoices for their exploration activities. Site inspections and company office audits are selected randomly unless there is cause for concern, therefore selection of a project or company may be made by the MEAP co-ordinator.

* (1540)

Ms. Mihychuk: My understanding, and if the minister can correct me, is that it is the geologists in the Geological branch that go out and do whatever inspections that the co-ordinator for MEAP assigns. Is that correct?

Mr. Newman: The staff advised that the definition of random means sort of just pick any one of them, and it may very well be that to demonstrate absolute integrity in the system every project should be given a number and thrown into a hat and then you pick one, but if that is the concern of the honourable member for St. James, then maybe you can share that. If you think that is a more objective way of doing it, I am inclined to think it is too, if that is of any concern.

Ms. Mihychuk: Well, I think we have ended up coming into an area where perhaps I am going to request the minister take some time to investigate and ensure that we have steps of clearly defined inspection and accountability established for the people of Manitoba in terms of handing out these grants. It concerns me when I heard numbers like, there were 34 projects; we are going to do nine audits; only three got completed. That is a very small number, and I know that that was in the past. Now I think there are 45 projects, five were identified, and five completed.

Well, we are talking about a very significant amount of money, and we do take considerable effort to promote Manitoba and the program, and so there must be also an onus on the department to do the inspections, do them at random, have somebody identified who is

not the same person that also gives out the money. It needs to be somebody different, in my opinion. So, there have been several questions. I am not very satisfied in understanding the process or how we ensure that accountability, so I look for the minister to perhaps review the situation and ensure clear criteria on accountability for MEAP.

Mr. Newman: You can be assured that the committee that does the selection, any one of those members is not the person that does the audit. That is a matter of policy. But looking at the same numbers that you brought to our attention and being exposed to the detail that I have, you have made me accountable on the record to make sure that I am satisfied that this process does meet the standards expected of taxpayers of Manitoba who contributed part of the investment.

I will, of course, make sure that I am satisfied that that trust is exercised in those checks to ensure that the monies are appropriately spent, is a process that has adequate checks and balances to it. That is why another department auditor was brought in to establish—the internal auditor was brought in from the Department of Finance to give guidance as to how the program should be conducted.

One thing that I will look at in particular is what random means, and the other thing I will look at in particular is why there have not been audits done, according to my record, since—site inspections—May of 1997, and I will provide you with answers not only to both of those but will respond and indicate what the deputy minister has chosen to do to address those two points.

Ms. Mihychuk: I thought that maybe we could move off of it, but the minister's comments raised just one more area that I want clarification on, and that is the MEAP co-ordinator. That individual is a member of the Marketing branch. Is that correct?

Mr. Newman: Yes.

Ms. Mihychuk: This individual is responsible for overall administration. Did I understand the minister to indicate that they also are the ones who do the selection of the site inspection?

Mr. Newman: The MEAP co-ordinator may make and normally would make a recommendation, but the choice of geologist is not made by the MEAP co-ordinator.

Ms. Mihychuk: How does the MEAP co-ordinator provide all the detailed information to the geologist who would do the site inspection?

Mr. Newman: There is a checklist and criteria.

Ms. Mihychuk: So, if I understand, the MEAP co-ordinator may select the companies for the site selection. What I am trying to get at is that it seems to me that the Marketing branch probably has plans or a certain intent identified by the company, and I am wondering about the link.

Is there a clear link between that person who is fairly administrative in their role, I understand, with the people who may be in the field already who are going to be going out to a local project? What types of lines of communication is there between that MEAP co-ordinator and the field inspectors?

* (1550)

Mr. Newman: There is communication between Marketing and geology, and the means of communication is discussion and then, normally, memo.

Ms. Mihychuk: I am going to move off of this line. I think that the minister's exploration into the MEAP accountability sector may establish the fact that there needs to be clearer lines of communication between the Marketing individual and the people who may go out into the field. I think that would be an improvement. The MEAP co-ordinator I do not believe is a geologist with geological experience, and there may need to be some partnering in those two services because we are dealing with the mining industry, and as we talked about, there needs to be a strong sense of accountability.

So I will leave that area and ask what other activities the Marketing branch has been up to and ask them what activities, and that is the first one identified, promotes economic development opportunities for base and

precious metals and industrial minerals. What initiatives has the Marketing branch done to promote industrial minerals?

Mr. Newman: Growing out of a meeting held at the Mining and Minerals Convention in November, a collaborative effort between members of industry and the branch have been working to develop an industrial mineral advisory committee. It will be an advisory body to help the department set priorities and to identify key sectors that should be focused on and promoted. The direction then or recommendations growing out of that will be implemented by the Marketing area to the extent that our resources and capacities permit.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister provide for us a list of conferences and promotional trips that the Marketing branch has undertaken to promote mining in Manitoba?

Mr. Newman: Maybe I could just add to that last response. In addition to the industrial mineral advisory group, a business-developed officer has been dedicated to industrial minerals as a part of the responsibilities of that position.

I am sorry, could you repeat the question which you put just moments ago?

Ms. Mihychuk: My question is if the minister could provide us with an itinerary, I guess, of the Marketing branch, where they went, to what conventions and conferences and other promotional activities they undertook to sell our resources and attract companies here to Manitoba.

Mr. Newman: Excluding potash, the conferences were the Titanium Oxide Conference in Vancouver; the North East Mining Conference in New York, New York; the North West Mining Conference in Spokane, Washington; Western Investment in Mining Conference in San Francisco; the Cordilleran Roundup Pathways '98 in Vancouver; The Prospectors and Developers Association in Toronto; a Mid-Canada Mining Corridor Conference in Thompson; company call-backs; visitations in Vancouver and Toronto; new company visits in Calgary and Vancouver and the Nunavut mining conference in Cambridge Bay.

Ms. Mihychuk: When was the last time the department attended the construction industry's convention or had an association with the construction industry?

Mr. Newman: I know the deputy minister and myself and at least one of our department members and one of my staff attended the Heavy Construction Association meeting where I gave a speech on the quarry rehabilitation program and sustainable development. That was in Winnipeg a couple of weeks ago.

There is a continuous working relationship with the Heavy Construction Association and its members. One of the staff who I had the good fortune to meet and have a lengthy conversation with, and also members of the industry, a chap named Brian Bailey, who is a manager of inspection of the rehabilitation work pursuant to that policy has a regular working relationship with that segment of the industry. I might say I received many positive comments about the quality of the relationship the department has and how generally happy they are with that particular program.

* (1600)

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister indicate the value of base precious minerals in industrial minerals as a follow-up? We were just talking about the construction industry and their needs. Is that included under industrial minerals, or is that separated?

Mr. Newman: The Mines Branch has the most significant involvement and relationship with the aggregate portion of industrial minerals.

Ms. Mihychuk: Does the Marketing department have information as to the value of Manitoba's minerals—base, precious minerals, and industrial minerals?

Mr. Newman: Are we talking values of production?

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for St. James. The honourable member for St. James.

Ms. Mihychuk: Oh, yes, I am, sorry. I snoozed there—I sort of lost it.

Mr. Newman: We do not have that information handy, but to make sure we have accurate information, we will undertake to provide that to you.

Ms. Mihychuk: I see here that this is the branch that also plans and co-ordinates the mining convention and runs the MEAP, as well as provides business liaison individuals. Can the minister identify how many staff are accordingly responsible to those sectors?

Mr. Newman: The convention allotment of staff is one co-ordinator with a planning committee made up of several staff from throughout the department; MEAP, two staff plus a panel; and business development, three staff plus the director, and the time devoted to that aspect by the deputy minister or the assistant deputy minister and myself, the minister.

Ms. Mihychuk: That does not, as far as I can figure, account for the whole staff allocation in the Marketing branch. Perhaps a better question would be—there are 17.5 positions identified in that branch. Can the minister explain for us or outline what those positions are related to?

Mr. Newman: The 17.5 FTAs are the director; the information/business development officer support—do you want the names?—the business development officer; library technician; publications and graphics officer; graphics technician; manager information resources—vacant position—publishing assistant; convention assistant, which position is now part of business development; library website technician; library technician; program co-ordinator, MEAP; administrative secretary; convention co-ordinator; information clerk; business development officer; administrative secretary; and MEAP assistant.

* (1610)

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Mihychuk: This is a branch that deals with the library and publications, and I have a question on that as well. It probably would have been easier for us to just go through that in the beginning because I had forgotten that they also handled library services and the information desk in the front, but I look to the minister for policy guidance here in terms of a vision of reports

and information generation. Geologists go out in the field, collect information and then produce several different types of information sources. Some of it comes out in the mines convention, and then there is a preliminary. That is usually the time of the release of preliminary information, and then later on at some time, if I remember correctly, eventually a report comes out with greater detail.

Now, I know that some reports have taken several years to complete, and there has always been a question of relevance of that information because of its timeliness and how quickly things are changing in the mineral industry. I am wondering if the minister has a thought of the future in terms of providing information to the industry and those interested in that type of information, and what is the vision for the future? Are we going to continue to put out final reports that maybe take years to produce? Are we going to enhance preliminary information? Are we going to go online? What is the vision for disseminating information from the department?

Mr. Newman: As you know, the vision is towards the use of the Internet as the major communications highway or tool, and the digitization process has progressed to a point where the largely paper focus is being replaced by an electronic on-time, ready-access kind of program. There is a data delivery plan which is targeted towards launching operationally at the next Mines and Minerals Convention in November of '98 for testing, as I understand it, at that particular convention, so that there will be some feedback by people that participate in that convention.

Ms. Mihychuk: If I remember correctly, the minister's introductory statements indicated that there were, I believe, eight reports being published or were published this year. Is that correct?

Mr. Newman: The number was nine reports.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister indicate what type of reports these are? Are these all geological reports? Are there petroleum? Are there energy reports included?

Mr. Newman: While I am waiting for the specific answer to that question, it might be timely to respond more fully to the previous question that another focus

or changed focus in the publication approach is to move towards more open-file reports with more raw data and less interpretation, with more detailed reports to follow later so we would avoid, discourage delay for the sake of adding that dimension to the report.

The category of those nine reports, classification of the nine reports is mineral deposit series, open-file reports, report of activities, and one aggregate report.

Ms. Mihychuk: Let me first start with the open-file reports. These are reports that are done on an annual basis from field crews. Is that correct?

Mr. Newman: Generally speaking that is correct, but sometimes it goes back two years with mapping activity.

Ms. Mihychuk: And how many of those reports were open-file reports?

Mr. Newman: Four.

Ms. Mihychuk: What is the average length of time to produce a geological minerals report?

Mr. Newman: I am advised a range of two months to two years.

* (1620)

Ms. Mihychuk: Well, I think then things have really sort of sped up in the department, and that is a very positive component I hear the minister raised since I left the department. I would be glad for him to investigate my publication record and the speed of report writing of myself and, perhaps, compare it to other geologists.

In fact, the report that was just released in my name—I believe that is one of the reports this year—so under this minister a report as a geologist by me has just been published. That was turned over to the department way back I think before I had grey hair, and fully completed in, I believe, 1989, so from the response it sounds like things have definitely improved in terms of production, and that one must have got lost in all of the other reports in production. But I can assure you the author

had the information turned in as she was anxious for the payment.

My questions are because I think that there is need for review of the timeliness and the length of time that we spend producing geological reports. The information is collected in a field season. We can produce them for the meeting with industry, and I know there is follow-up. There has to be analysis of the samples, et cetera, but I would urge the minister to move towards that direction, move towards open file reports. I know this is going to be somewhat controversial. There are many of my former colleagues who view themselves as academics, and they have a role in providing a foundation of information. But I would say that this is kind of a tough world now and we need to crank out the information. That is the primary focus.

We want to get mining companies and industry interested in what we can provide to them and so rapid production of these reports, I would say, should be a priority. Interpretation and geological investigations are very important, but I would argue probably belong in other sectors like the academic sector and perhaps the Geological Survey, and urge the minister to perhaps review the timeliness of some of these reports. For example, you have nine reports. One of them is 10 years old. The others, you have open file reports and I think those are quite speedy, but you have got, then, four geological reports, I believe you have about perhaps—I do not want to guess, but are there 30 geologists in the department? So the number of reports coming out from those professionals is quite low. That is only about 10 percent.

This is another area, I think, that really requires some focus. I am a strong proponent of getting all those professionals out into the bush and into Manitoba doing that good work that I know they can do for the full field season, coming back to produce meaningful, timely reports that are going to be relevant to the users in Manitoba, and I urge the minister to move ahead in this area as quickly as possible.

Mr. Newman: I think your sentiments echo those that my staff have expressed through me here today, and that is their commitment. The number is 32 geologists. The other point is they produce not only reports, but

also maps, and 11 maps were published in addition to the nine reports.

Ms. Mihychuk: I am aware that we produce maps as well, and those are extremely important to the users. How many field personnel, or how many crews, went out last year?

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Okay, just for clarification, we are moving to another section. If we could deal with the one that we have been working at under Marketing, it would certainly be advantageous.

Ms. Mihychuk: I was just trying to establish how many crews went out so that we could get an impression of how many maps were published, and therefore highlight that we have a problem in this area as well. Eleven maps are not a lot of maps, given that we have a significantly larger number of crews going out, and there is, I believe, a fairly large backlog. So I urge the Marketing department to maybe look at a publication strategy so that the information gets out quickly in the sector of databases, maps, and whatever additional information is available.

This is an area I recognize has got again desktop publishing component, and the costs that are associated with that, is that for contracting servicing in the past year?

Mr. Newman: Yes.

Ms. Mihychuk: One of the purposes of this branch is to monitor market trends and interpret their impacts on Manitoba. Has there been a strategic analysis done of the low mineral prices and the trend toward going into a downturn here in Manitoba and the impacts on our mining economy?

Mr. Newman: Yes, the market prices are tracked, and that certainly guides the valuation programs like MEAP and helps in the focus of the Marketing group and their relations to customers and relations to the world at large in terms of how they focus their efforts at marketing opportunities at different conferences and that kind of thing, so certainly it is a guide. It is part of the marketing function, the customer service function.

Ms. Mihychuk: I thank the minister, and I am ready to move on to another section.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Item 23.2.(a) Marketing (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$817,400-pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$434,800-pass.

Moving on to 23.2.(b) Petroleum and Energy (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Ms. Mihychuk: One of the new initiatives I see in this section is something that is quite surprising, quite frankly, to me, the increase of two full-time positions worth \$109,000 related to climate change initiative. Can the minister explain what this climate change initiative is?

Mr. Newman: I really explained that at some length to your colleague the MLA for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) just after you left. Do you want me to repeat it, or do you want to consult him or Hansard?

* (1630)

Ms. Mihychuk: I have numerous questions about climatic change initiative, whether that is actually this title or not and these people are going to go about trying to change our climate—which I think would be publicly very supportable—but I think that there is still large speculation whether there is significant climate change or not, so it leads me to a whole series of questions. It may be better to move on and try and—either you have to repeat it for me, or I would be glad to move on to another section and come back to this.

Mr. Newman: I can give you the essence of the strategy and that might be sufficient for you. The key part of the strategy relates to addressing the challenge of an excessive amount of carbon emissions in accordance with the recent agreement on climate change by focusing on the Manitoba significant advantage in relation to renewable hydroelectric power.

The very imminent effort to get a strategy to be more than just a Manitoba strategy is my attendance tomorrow at an energy and environment ministers' conference in Toronto which is addressing this kind of issue, and our goal is to maximize the amount of support we can get for a national initiative promoting

hydroelectric power and attracting a maximum amount of federal support for that. That is unquestionably the most significant initiative that can make the most significant contribution to the challenge of climate change while, at the same time, promoting economic benefits for Manitobans.

The other thrusts are in relation to ethanol and looking at that as an encouraged means, as a way to address the climate change challenge. The other is the energy efficiency or conservation approach. We discussed everything from the R-2000 program to other innovative kinds of initiatives that can make a contribution towards the very, very demanding goals that have been set for this country.

The two policy program analysts are going to have their efforts focused on doing an inventory of greenhouse gases and forecasting of energy use in Manitoba and will also contribute to the development of that transportation options paper. I mentioned to your colleague that, for example, there would be a review of the pros and cons of substituting alternative fuels in our special operating agency operating our fleet of motor vehicles, looking at natural gas and propane as possible alternatives. All of this would be consistent with an overall approach focusing on energy efficiency and energy sources and transmissions that are economic in their own right and that provide for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Ms. Mihychuk: Is the climate change initiative articulated in a booklet or some sort of public statement as to its goals and its objectives?

We do use the term "climate change," and I am assuming that there is a specific reason for that. I believe that it was this government that actually released numerous energy policy people from the department. I understand that was a real shortfall to the Energy Branch, and I am just trying to understand the purpose here. The policy analysis is important and we look to those goals, but is the climate change definition related specifically to the federal initiative, so that is the purpose of calling this climate change, when it looks like they have a broader mandate? These are policy people. I look to the minister.

Mr. Newman: I think the short answer is that we are just taking it as a given that the federal government has entered into commitments. Without going our own path and attempting to second-guess all of the world-class science that has been applied to this and intelligence, we regard this as a Canadian obligation. We intend to, through our department in co-operation with other departments of our government, contribute to the international obligations that the federal government has committed us to as a country, and we believe that we can make a contribution that can significantly impact not only Canada but North America and maybe beyond.

Ms. Mihychuk: Is this an initiative that other provinces are undertaking under the Energy and Mines departments or is this related to Environment?

Mr. Newman: It is a joint effort, and I will learn a lot more about that tomorrow. I participated at meetings with colleagues who are Energy ministers, and there has been a recent joint meeting of Energy and Environment ministers pre-Kyoto. This is the first post-Kyoto joint meeting of ministers. We do not at this moment have a formal climate-change action plan for the province, but it is in the process of being developed in co-ordination with the Department of Environment and the Sustainable Development Co-ordination Unit and our departments through this particular branch.

* (1640)

Ms. Mihychuk: Has consideration been given to moving the Energy unit to another department?

Mr. Newman: Who by? Certainly not by me. I think it is well positioned where it is now and allows us to relate in very appropriate and effective ways multijurisdictionally.

Ms. Mihychuk: I raise that because there is a –organizationally, the Energy sector is sometimes placed with Mines and other times placed with the Environment. In fact, the minister himself said he was going to a conference on energy and environment.

The unit or the branch has sometimes seemed to have a completely different focus than the rest of the department, and that being Mines which is mineral

sector and natural resources, while the Energy component seemed to be somewhat divergent, doing a lot of energy conservation programs. It actually worked quite closely with Hydro, and that is very understandable, so it is another sort of component of where do we belong. That is always a question that comes up when you are in these different departments. Sometimes they are grouped because of convenience or many sections are related to other departments.

I just raised that because this group has now become so much significantly decreased over the last number of years that their focus has obviously diminished. Some of the stuff that they were doing in terms of energy conservation projects and other initiatives have now moved to other departments. A good example is Manitoba Hydro which is doing a lot of initiatives in businesses and other things in terms of retrofitting and energy conservation. So the question was a matter of administrative policy and whether the minister or the government had looked at perhaps an evaluation whether they are placed in the best places.

Is that the link that is working the best now in today's world? It may be different than 20 years ago when they were merged. I am not even quite sure when it was. I do recall back in the '80s, they were physically separated from the department. It has always kind of been a strange marriage where the two components of the department seem to have quite divergent sorts of perspectives.

Mr. Newman: I am of the opinion that it is important to have a departmental component which has the capacity to vigilantly monitor independently for the people of Manitoba the kinds of issues that arise in Manitoba Hydro. I think it is important to maintain a capacity to formulate energy policy under the guiding leadership of this particular branch. It is very useful, I think, to have a dedicated energy focus, as distinguished from an environmental focus, so that they interact but each advocating positions that are representative of their reason for being, with a sustainable development kind of balanced resolve emerging out of it.

I must say, when I came in, I wondered how that would work. I am actually very pleased the way it is working, so the extent I have the ultimate decision on

this or a significant influence over the decision, I am very pleased with the status quo, and I am particularly pleased about the enhancement in terms of staffing to this area. There were all the departments, and all Manitobans participated in an effort to try and get into repeated budgetary surpluses and meet the challenge of the discipline of the balanced budget legislation.

Because that is working and because all the other policies of this government are working, we can now focus on the very important challenges that are faced by our energy policies to emerge and by our Department of Environment in ensuring the environment is appropriately protected over the long haul.

Ms. Mihychuk: Are these two positions going to be permanent to the department after this climatic change initiative is completed? Are they hired specifically for this initiative, or are they intended to be permanent positions?

Mr. Newman: Again, within my influence and control and advocacy, the intention would be these would be a permanent component.

* (1650)

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister indicate what Manitoba's oil and gas reserves are? I believe last year we looked at Estimates that indicated about 10 years, but I also know from other announcements and the ministry that there have been some new discoveries. Have reserves been extended in Manitoba?

Mr. Newman: We do not have the 1997 figures yet, but the estimate is that the proved reserved additions are likely to show an increase of 10 percent over the 128,800 cubic metres showing for 1996, and the remaining proved reserves in 1996 were 5,077,700 cubic metres, so it is projected that that will increase so that will be over 5,200,000 cubic metres.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Ms. Mihychuk: I guess my question is: the reserves have increased slightly, but we have been extracting reserves at unprecedented rates. What is the lifetime expectancy of the Manitoba oil and gas deposits?

Mr. Newman: The life index for 1996 was 8.3 years, and it is estimated that that will increase this year.

Ms. Mihychuk: Is the minister concerned about the relatively short number of years that looks like is available for the production of oil and gas in Manitoba?

Mr. Newman: It is something that one should know. I mean, there is not an unlimited identified reserve of crude oil in the province. This is the identified reserve, with a great deal of exploration opportunities that have been made available to companies, which is what is largely an exploration area now has been available since ever—the correct way of expressing that would be the amount of Crown land under disposition is the highest it has ever been in the province's history, so the reason for investing PEAP money, for example, is to have inducements to have Greenfield wells is to expand the proven reserves. So, sure, we have enough understanding of what the future is that we are taking steps to expand investment and exploration in the province.

Ms. Mihychuk: Did the minister suggest that there is a high potential to double our oil reserves? You were mentioning that there is, the future looks quite good. I took from the last statement that we are promoting the exploration and development of our oil fields, so I am wondering if we are anticipating that there is going to be significantly more reserves identified by these exploration projects. Geologically, are we anticipating another find in Manitoba?

Mr. Newman: The realistic and maybe optimistic goal would be to achieve a 20 percent increase in proven reserves which translates, as I am advised, into a 20 percent, roughly, increase in production.

Ms. Mihychuk: If we were successful and found an additional 20 percent of reserves, that would extend the life of our fields for how long, could we say?

Mr. Newman: This helps—there has got to be a clarification. When you talk about the life index of 8.30, my understanding is that involves the division of the amount of production into the remaining proven reserves, so 613,000 into 5,077,000 is the 8.3, but I am advised that we have some existing producing wells in

the province that have a future lifespan of 50 years or that kind of future to it, so this is a very rough way of getting some useful information about the limitations in the resource. But it does not mean that oil production or proven reserves disappear.

I further would add that the typical productive life of an oil pool can range from two to three years to over 100 years, so it is a pretty wide range.

Ms. Mihychuk: The primary objective of this section I would gather is to foster the sustainable development of Manitoba's oil and gas resources. Basically it concerns me a great deal that our reserves, given the present extraction levels, are estimated approximately to amount to eight years, and that this government continues to encourage and promote the rapid extraction of oil and gas in Manitoba. I would ask the minister: what initiatives is he taking in terms of conservation of our resource to extend the lifetime of our oil reserves? We know that the government has taken initiatives in terms of promoting exploration and extraction, but I look also for conservation which he argues is extremely important, and we are bringing on two policy people to look at exactly those types of things. How does the statements about concern about conservation and cutting down, using less, coincide with the government's policy over and over again of rapidly extracting limited finite resources in the oil and gas sector?

Mr. Newman: Are you suggesting that we should, in effect, restrict production or preserve a certain amount of reserves for future generations, perhaps as an energy security kind of approach? That simply is not an approach that at this point is part of our policy. I would be very interested in your thoughts on that. Certainly efficient production and good environmental practices in production and good environmentally friendly rehabilitations and closures of wells are all part of the plan. I know through the industry and discussions that there is potential currently under review in the largest oil field to implement an enhanced oil recovery project that has the potential to add 15 to 20 years on the life of the field.

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

HEALTH

Mr. Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of Committee of Supply, meeting in Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Health. When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 21.1.(b)(1) on page 71 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): I will just wrap up quickly the comments that I was making this morning to put a context around the issue we want to go into fairly thoroughly this afternoon, and that is the future of Misericordia Hospital. To summarize what I said this morning, it is my understanding that WHA did not have a policy role in the decision about the future of Misericordia, as indicated in a letter from the minister to Mr. Musick, the chair of the board, dated February 4, 1998, which lays out the government's role—sorry, the hospital's role as envisioned by the government in point form. I will not take the time to read that into the record because I know the minister is well aware of the letter, and I am sure Mr. Webster is as well.

I want to go really straight to the heart of the question, and that is the outline on page 2 of the new roll: 150 to 175 interim beds for paneled patients; 280 new personal care home beds; the walk-in 24-hour centre—walk-in clinic—the ophthalmology program, although it is not specified what that includes; the Manitoba Breast Screening Program, Winnipeg site, which is the provincial breast screening program and not the hospital program, I think it is important to underline; and the Health Links program. And then, to be more specific, the Misericordia General Hospital would no longer be a site for emergency services; critical care services; inpatient and outpatient surgery, except for ophthalmology inpatient medical services.

The difficulty I see with the decision as it is announced is what is not said. Let us put the context on this. When you have an ophthalmology program, one of the elements in that program is displaced retina, reattaching of retinas. That requires immobilizing the patient for a period of time, and requires some inpatient care in order to do that. So an ophthalmology program

that does not include retinal reattachments is not a complete program. So that is the first question. If there is not to be general anaesthesia administered, and we are not to be able to do detached retinas there which require inpatient beds for at least a short stay, how is the ophthalmology program's integrity to be maintained?

Now let us start with that question, and I have a series of detailed questions about clinical aspects of the proposal.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Mr. Chair, before we deal with that, I would like to deal with the member's comments by way of introduction because he has, I think, wanted to leave the impression on the record that the decisions around certain programming at the WHA or at Misericordia were made, are being made, solely by the Ministry of Health and that changes are solely our responsibility, and that the WHA, if but for us, would recommend other things. As well, I think he wanted to leave the impression that there was only a 24-hour period into which to make decisions, and this was rushed.

Now, granted the member may only operate on the information that is brought to him, and there is probably going to be a whole bunch of information brought to him, so I am prepared to provide him today with some letters that I think he would find most interesting, just to put this in perspective. First of all, Mr. Chair, I would like to provide him with a letter, my letter of November 6, 1997, to the Most Reverend Leonard Wall, Archbishop of Winnipeg, and Sister M.A. Plamondon of the corporate offices of Misericordia General Hospital, these representing the owners of the facility, as well as the acknowledgment from His Grace the Archbishop dated November 7, 1997, which acknowledges, because I know the member may doubt what I say, the fact that this process began actually in a meeting that Mr. Fast, chair of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, and myself had with both on the 15th of October. So I provide that to members of the committee, and I think the member will see—I table that actually for the House and for the committee, so the committee may wish to—I think I have an extra copy for the Chair. I think it makes clear that we met on the 15th of October.

By the way, in planning for this internally within the ministry, this came about not only because of the long history of frustration I think in how the Misericordia fits into the Winnipeg hospital system—and it goes back 20 years over a number of governments, the realization that one did not need three acute care hospitals in essence in the downtown part of the city. The Misericordia had old infrastructure that would need to be upgraded. In fact, I can recall over the years decisions being made, because no one would come to grips with the Misericordia's role as a seventh acute care hospital in essence or one of seven acute care hospitals, that the existing acute care needs within the city of Winnipeg were spread among seven. I remember the argument being made very clearly, in doing that we made the viability of programming in the other six, particularly some of the community hospitals, less viable, less efficient. It removed the ability to develop certain centres of excellence, and that is not to take away from much of the good work that has been done in Misericordia where they have developed excellence, but it was the concept of spreading your acute care services on seven facilities.

Mr. Webster may want to talk about this, and I will ask him at some point to comment. In the preliminary work that he and his organization did after the appointment of Dr. Postl, this view of needing seven acute care facilities in a city the size of Winnipeg was reconfirmed to me by them in the discussions and planning that we had. The realization was there that if the WHA was going to be able to get on with its planning, some of these issues had to be dealt with, including the future role of the Misericordia. My own Capital people were saying we are at a point where we had to invest a million dollars, million and a half dollars in capital just to meet the fire and security upgrades in that facility, and what were we getting out of this. Was this a good use of capital without having the long-term role of the Misericordia moved forward?

In fairness to the Misericordia, I think every time they would argue that they have a long history of promises and commitments being made and not lived up to, and in the meeting I had with them on Tuesday evening with Dr. Postl, Neil Fast and myself, we—in discussing the history here, part of the problem is every time anyone in government even talked about a change in

role for the Misericordia Hospital, Misericordia and its support community organized politically in the small “p” sense of the word to save the Misericordia, the yellow ribbons around the Misericordia, the whole bit, created enough political activity that no government of any stripe would really come to grips with the issue of where the Misericordia should be, even though those involved in the system from an objective point of view recognized that it was a problem, that the change in acute care services, how things were being dealt with across the city, really you had to come to grips with the Misericordia issue.

So people I think in government and in planning were continually met by this view that the Misericordia had to be saved. Of course, okay, people backed down, commitments were made, and in reality those commitments sometimes were very hard to live up to because they often did not make necessary sense. It was done around the reasons of saving the Misericordia in the politics of that part of the city.

*(1440)

Having known that history, learned that history, having talked to our planners both in the ministry and particularly Mr. Webster and his team, it was recognized by the WHA board late last summer, early fall that we had to come to grips with this issue. The WHA had to get on with its planning in the Winnipeg hospital system, and the planning would be better if we knew exactly how many acute care hospitals we were dealing with and that the recommendation, the oral discussions that we had all pointed to a changing role for the Misericordia.

So we put together within the ministry, working with the WHA collaboratively, a plan for a new future for the Misericordia. That plan involved three functions: long-term care with the addition of 280 new beds, the conversion of the existing beds into the transitional unit for people panelled for personal care home beds and waiting for those beds of their choice, secondly, a 24-hour urgency primary care clinic concept to service the Wolseley and downtown area, and also add to the serviceability for the whole city, and thirdly, a role as a host for a number of essentially ambulatory programs where a downtown location would be more convenient for the users.

The Misericordia had a wonderful parkade with a great parking facility for a downtown location, and the bundle of things that would go into that would obviously have to make sense. The primary point I make is that Misericordia would no longer be an acute care hospital in the traditional sense. It would be a long-term care facility with the primary care function and as a host for a number of city and even province-wide ambulatory programs.

So those are the discussions we had with Sister Plamondon and His Grace the Archbishop as owners of the facility on the 15th of October. Both Neil Fast and I met with both of these individuals at the Catholic Centre on Pembina Highway, and they indicated a willingness to explore this. His Grace wanted us to commit into writing our concept that he could take to his board, which we did. By way of my letter of the 6th of November, his response on the 7th indicates it is going to take some time to work through it.

After that particular period, between my deputy who I assigned to this project, the WHA, the concept was explored over a number of months. There was a lot of work done with their board, and it was done on a very confidential basis. The staff were not necessarily brought in by Misericordia. Their board was struggling with the principle and what this would mean. By the end of January or early February, I was able to then write to the chair of the board with really a more firm offer in terms of detail of what we were talking about. That is the letter of February 4, 1998.

There were still discussions that went on during that period and one has to come to the point of, do you fish or do you cut bait, and given the fact that in the budget, and I make no bones about that, we wanted to get on with making our capital announcements. We had to know whether the board of directors and the owners of the Misericordia hospital, who we had started talking with on the 15th of October, were prepared to accept in principle this new direction for the Misericordia Hospital which included a fair capital program. We said we had to know. This could not drag on for months, because if it was a no, too, for them, then the 280 beds—we had other sponsors ready to accept them. We wanted to get on with that, with our capital program and that is not unreasonable, nor is that rushed.

We let it be known to them that they had to come to a decision in principle, which they did. Once they did that at their board meeting, the week of the budget they indicated, which had been a planned meeting, I understand, and they had brought it to a decision at that point. They notified us the next morning, and they indicated that they would have to be advising their staff, because once they had done that we had to get into detailed planning and they wanted their staff to know. That made only good sense and hence that happened. So I wanted to make sure that history is on the record and the correspondence is here as to that history.

With respect to the specific bundle of ambulatory services, in the discussions that were made, I think we have referenced some in each letter, but in our letter or offer of the 4th of February, we indicate—I think there is a listing out of the discussions I have had—what kind of services would no longer be delivered on the site, what would be delivered on the site. Dr. Postl, who will be returning to this committee in a week, as minister, what I said to the WHA and I think Mr. Webster will confirm here today is that in that bundle of services, it had to make sense to the WHA in its planning, and the policy decision, yes, government will take responsibility for it. The policy decision that government made was to convert the Misericordia Hospital from an acute care facility, in the full sense of the word, to a long-term care facility with the primary clinic and with a certain number of ambulatory services for the city. Yes, that was a policy decision of government, and it was made with the advice of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority. I mean, we involved them in that planning. It was oral advice. We had discussion about it, and they indicated to us that made sense from the overall planning. But, yes, I will take responsibility for that.

Now the host of programs within the WHA that would be part of that, I have left to the WHA. In fact, I was lobbied by people on the Misericordia board to direct. I said, no, the WHA, who is responsible for delivering these programs, have to be comfortable with what goes into the Misericordia. If they indicated that this should happen at the Misericordia, then it should; if they indicated it should not, I was not going to overturn that. But the one thing we all agreed on right at the beginning is that the Misericordia Hospital was

not to remain as an acute care hospital. That would defeat the whole purpose of the effort that was being made.

Now I have heard the same—and in fairness to the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale)—comments by certain members of the board, and I have spoken to Dr. Postl. I think the comments were that the WHA were saying their hands were tied to keep the breast program or something in whatever form Misericordia wanted to have it or whatever the story is, and that was different from the minister and there was some disagreement here. I heard those same comments that he has heard, so I know that they are coming from some in that community.

To ensure that there was no misunderstanding and that no one was passing the buck back and forth, Neil Fast, the chair of the WHA, and I convened a meeting with the executive committee or representatives of the board of Misericordia. Mr. Musick was there, as was the Archbishop's representative, Monseigneur Chartrand, as was Sister Plamondon, and both Dr. Postl and I—Dr. Postl was in attendance with Neil Fast—we met this Tuesday in my office, and if they had any sense of a difference of opinion, it was not there when we had that meeting. We were very clear.

Dr. Postl at that meeting explained the logic and planning around the breast program. He explained the issues around ophthalmology, that it was his belief that the ophthalmology program, despite some people who are now saying it cannot stay at Misericordia and should be moved elsewhere, from his work that was done in this planning, believes that that is a good place for the program and it can work. The detail that the member raises, I am going to ask him to defer that to when Dr. Postl is back in this committee, because I think the doctor will offer him the same explanation as he put to the board of Misericordia Hospital.

With respect to the breast program, we today I think have four sort of programs delivered in six different sites, and it is the intention of the WHA to actually make that a subprogram within their block of programming and to be able to have a team for the whole city that will give us a breast program delivered in the whole city. Obviously, there will be different sites for different things and different access points.

Now the member may laugh, but I think when he hears the explanation that Dr. Postl has given and he gave to members of the board of Misericordia, that is not to fracture the program, but I think when you get into the detail—and I will indicate to him. I am not qualified as a physician or a person who is involved in that program to describe it in the detail that I think it deserves to be described. I have to rely on the advice of Dr. Postl and his team in putting this together. But I think in fairness to this debate, they should have the opportunity to offer the same explanation to this committee that they have offered to myself and to members of the Misericordia board of directors.

* (1450)

I think when the member has heard it, as I have, it is a very convincing plan and a very exciting one that will actually lead to an improvement across the city. I think he deserves that opportunity to put his case, and I would invite the member at this committee on the public record to ask his questions of Dr. Postl, because Dr. Postl should be able to defend the proposal that he and his group envision for this program. I also understand that a meeting was convened; another one will be coming up of all of the people involved in the breast program to get on with planning the detail of this program.

So, just to recap, the Misericordia had a great deal of time to consider this concept. A great deal of work was done to flesh out the details of which we were talking. The WHA planners, Dr. Postl and his group, have been intimately involved in the development of this proposal. I as a minister and we as a government, because we are funding capital, accept responsibility for this change in function and focus for the Misericordia Hospital. In fact, I would argue, and many do in the system, that it is long overdue, and I am very pleased to report to this committee that, after our meeting on Tuesday, the board of Misericordia and Monseigneur Chartrand, representing the Archdiocese of Winnipeg, made it very clear to us that they are accepting this proposal and change, and they want to get on with it.

We have a lot of planning work to do, and to be blunt, I think they are very excited overall with this new direction. Because of the planning and work that has gone on, the Misericordia Hospital will have another

century of service in the city of Winnipeg. I think anyone who studied the Misericordia Hospital in great detail would recognize that its capital needs, its changing system of delivery of medicine meant that in the long run its capital needs would dictate a great amount of capital, and to expend that capital on that site to keep up the status quo I think the patients of Winnipeg overall would get much greater value to see those same dollars spent on the other six sites in expanding their services.

So, overall, I think this is going to be a very successful endeavour, one that is probably somewhat overdue. That is not to minimize some of the issues around specific programs that are there. But, if you sacrifice the overall objective for those programs—and again I want to underline that the planners who are working on this, whether it be plastics ophthalmology or the breast care program, believe, and have advised me that they believe, in the work that can be done, overall we will see improvements in those programs for the whole city. That is really what this is about.

I am going to say to the member: when Dr. Postl returns, he will be able to provide a much greater detailed discussion of how that will be done. I would invite members to put their questions to Dr. Postl who is the leading expert in this and is far more aware of the detail than I am and far more qualified than I am to discuss that detail.

Mr. Webster may wish to add something to this.

Mr. Sale: I just might observe, Mr. Chairperson, that in general, the longer the answer, the more defensive the respondent. That is an amazing defence of what in fact happened, and the minister in his defence essentially acknowledged that what in fact happened happened, and that is that the Misericordia Hospital board had not come to the conclusion that the government wished it to come to as of the week of the budget—with the item in the budget.

An Honourable Member: That is not true.

Mr. Sale: It is true; it is absolutely true. And that is why there was a meeting—[interjection] Mr. Chairperson, do I have the floor or does the minister?

Mr. Chairperson: You have been recognized.

Mr. Sale: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. The meeting that was held is obviously one on the record. The evening, I believe it was a Wednesday during budget week, with Mr. Fast and Dr. Postl, Dr. Postl behaved in my view absolutely properly. He indicated that he was conveying a policy decision. He did not indicate agreement or disagreement with that decision. He operated as any civil servant ought to operate in that situation where he has been sent to convey a ministerial message. He conveyed the message accurately and clearly that this was not a matter for debate at this point, it was a matter of information, that the government required an answer. They required it by the next day and that the reason that it was required was that it was going to have to be announced in the budget, and that is why there was the hasty press conference in the minister's office at five o'clock on the day before the budget. This is a matter of public record. It is not a question of debate. It is not a question that can be I think countered, nor did I expect the minister to get into a long emotional defence of it, because it is simply a matter of public record. Not being critical of Dr. Postl, I am simply being critical of the process, and that is what I wanted to get into this afternoon. The minister seems to want to go back over years and years of history, some of it imaginary.

I had asked a question and that was: how is it possible to maintain the integrity of the ophthalmology program and not to be able to do general anesthesia and the immobilization of patients following surgery for some ophthalmological procedures which require immobilization, one of which is the reattaching of detached retinas? So I am just wondering how that is to be carried out in the new setting, wherever it is.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, the reason why I gave a long explanation is because the member implied in his statement earlier, at the end of this morning's session, that this was a 24-hour decision. Well, surely to goodness, any reasonable person saying when you start off with a proposal in principle and discuss it on the 15th of October, you provide it in writing in early November, you have discussions, it is formalized in a letter in February, that ultimately and all through that process Misericordia was aware through discussions with my deputy that at some point they had to make a

decision. When would he have suggested they make a decision? In June, in May, October, whenever they like? At some point they had to say yes, we accept this, or no.

The process in putting that offer started with them on the 15th of October. It was not 24 hours, and that was the implication, perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps he will correct the record that that is not what he said, but that is what I believed he said this morning and I wanted to make sure it was clear, that this was not a walk-in, 24 hours to make a decision. The point of the matter was that Misericordia had a board meeting scheduled for that point in time and we needed an answer. It had gone on a long time, and if Misericordia was not going to accept this in principle, that was fine. We had other sponsors for those facilities and we wanted to get on in making the arrangements to put the personal care home beds in the ground. I could not have one organization hold up the process of building those long-term care beds. So either they had to accept it in principle and know we are marching down that path or not. It is the fish or cut bait, and it was not 24 hours in which they had to do that.

Now the reason why Dr. Postl was there the night before was because they had some questions around the programming and they requested that the WHA be present at that meeting, as I understand it, to answer those program questions, and that is what Dr. Postl did.

I also want to indicate that the decision around an acute care hospital or not was not made in isolation in my office or in the Ministry of Health. It was made in consultation with the WHA, of which Dr. Postl was a part. I will tell you, there was no happier person after our meeting on Tuesday in my office than Dr. Postl, because he has worked long and hard on this. Dr. Postl has, I think, the best interests of the patients in Manitoba and Winnipeg at heart. I use his advice regularly on planning. He is very good at what he does, and he has a lot of very good people working with him.

* (1500)

Now, with respect to the specific question the member has asked, I am going to defer that question to when Dr. Postl arrives, when he is next with us because, quite frankly, he is able to offer that

explanation in great detail around the programming recommendations. In fact, the ability to keep ophthalmology at that particular hospital was a recommendation of the WHA to me as minister. That is why it was in fact included in our letter of the 4th of February. The reason, as I said very clearly, that the bundle of ambulatory programs that would remain at Misericordia, and of course they wanted to have a sense of what would those programs include. I indicated that would be in the purview of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority. If they recommended something would work, then I would stand by that. If they said it would not work, I would stand by that. At one point, it was somewhat suggested that I should just overturn that, and I would not because I have asked them to plan and develop the system for the city of Winnipeg. So I think it is regrettable that we were not able to have Dr. Postl here with us this afternoon. I understand he is with patients—no, he is in other meetings and planning work that he has to do. He will be back. We are scheduling another time, and Mr. Webster will take this question back and ensure that he can answer it. I have heard the explanation to this a couple of occasions about how that program works, including last Tuesday when he explained it to the board of Misericordia—or a member of the board who had the same question. He is most able to answer it, and I look forward to having him here to answer that question.

Mr. Sale: It is interesting, Mr. Chairperson, that the minister has great difficulty just simply saying, as he alluded to but did not finally say, it was time to make the decision; we needed the decision by the next day. They had been talking about it for some time, but: we needed the decision by the next day. In fact, it was not 24 hours; it was actually 12 hours, because the meeting was in the evening and they needed the letter the next day. In fact, they got the letter the next day. So, when the government describes what has happened in other provinces, they have no difficulty saying B.C. closed Shaughnessy Hospital. They have no difficulty accusing Saskatchewan of closing hospitals which were converted, in fact, as this one is being converted, but they have no difficulty using the closure word when it is to describe other governments' actions. Somehow there is a great need to share the load here, and to say Dr. Postl is happy with this and I presume Mr. Webster is happy with us—in fact, to listen to the minister, lots of people are happy with this decision and he is just going

along with the community joy of the closing of a hospital.

So I am simply asking him to do what he wants all of us to do when tough decisions are made elsewhere, to take responsibility for saying: I am closing this hospital as a government decision, with whatever advice. Governments rarely in my experience act independently of the advice they get, although sometimes they do. Of course they get advice, and of course he would ask Mr. Webster and Mr. Fast and Dr. Postl what their views on this were, but ultimately the decision was his and he has made it. He has made it with advice and probably against other advice, but he has nevertheless made the decision. All we are saying is, at the end of the day, as the minister himself described, he needed a decision and he needed it because they had put it in their budget. He did not want to have the embarrassment of a budget that had an item in it which was not in fact concluded, so he said, through his spokesperson, fish or cut bait, folks, because we have a budget coming up on Friday and we need your decision and we need it by tomorrow. That, in fact, was 12 hours after the meeting in the evening before.

Now that is what happened. It is a matter of record; it is not a matter of debate over the facts. The meeting was held. As the minister says, it was a scheduled meeting. The persons noted were in attendance. The decision that was required was made, and finally, as of Tuesday of this week, the minister was saying, with Sister Plamondon and others: the decision has now been confirmed. The problem is that Misericordia Hospital, following the mandate that it had been given by this government, not by some third party out in the woods somewhere but by this government—it was given a mandate to develop certain programs. It undertook, with knowledge of the government, to develop other programs. It has, for example, according to its own records, the most effective hip replacement program with the shortest stay and one of the highest volumes, if not the highest volume in the city of hip replacements. It has five surgeons, by far the largest breast surgery program in the city, five people assembled with great care over the past four years by Dr. Virginia Fraser to provide comprehensive one-centre care from the diagnostic, through confirmation, to surgery, to reconstruction, to physiotherapy, and if necessary, through other forms of oncology care. It

boggles the mind that the government was prepared to say we are closing this hospital as an acute care hospital, but we have not the foggiest idea how we are going to maintain the integrity of programs which have developed a reputation for excellence and which are very specialized surgery and which could be maintained in fact with a very few short-term stay beds and the current surgical units that are there.

Seven of 11 plastic surgeons do most of their practice out of this hospital. Most of the routine local anaesthesia plastic surgery in the city is done out of Misericordia now, a great deal of carpal tunnel syndrome, a great deal of breast reconstruction, so this hospital—following what the government said it wanted to have happen which was the development of centres of excellence, focused programs of care, comprehensive care, high productivity I guess was one of the things Connie Curran was real keen on, very high productivity, short stays, low readmission rates—went to the trouble and in some cases to its own expense to put these programs in place. Now some of them were put in place at the government's urging, others with the government's agreement.

It seems to us that when the government makes a decision to close a hospital, it has some responsibility to be able to say at the time what is going to happen to the very good programs that are there and not to say, oh, well, there will be several sites around the city and women will once again get the privilege of going here for diagnosis, here for surgery, here for reconstruction, here for physiotherapy. The minister says it is not true. The minister does not know whether it is true or not because at the time of the meeting Dr. Postl and others have said there is no plan. We do not have a plan today to deal with the breast care question. We do not have a plan today to deal with reconstructive surgery. We do not know what we are going to do with the hip surgery program that has in fact helped to deal with one of the waiting list problems that this government had.

So you have taken something in the order of 200 acute care beds, 225 acute care beds. You are taking them out of the system. You are dispersing four programs for which the hospital had developed a national reputation of competence and excellence. You are dispersing the one cancer care program that gives people immediate access to surgery after diagnosis

which is not the case in other centres, the one place where there is not a waiting list in Manitoba. You are saying, well, wait, we will come up with a plan some time before we actually move you. I do not know whether it seems as strange to the minister or does it seem just strange to us that four excellent programs are to be dispersed when in fact, if you talk to the surgeons, they could be maintained in that hospital with a very small number of short-stay beds with the surgery that is there without any additional significant amounts of capital expenditure, with the teams, with the support of the community that has developed that comprehensive breast care program.

* (1510)

Has anybody asked whether it is possible or desirable to maintain this program, these programs in conjunction perhaps with the panelled beds that you are talking about? What canvassing of alternatives has actually been done involving the staff that are there now doing the surgeries now? Has anybody ever sat down with them and explored the feasibility of maintaining the integrity of those programs, or did you just say we will close the hospital, we will turn it into a long-term stay program, and when we get around to it, we will tell you what will happen to those four very good programs that were developed largely following the model that the minister's predecessor and pre-predecessor said. Let us develop integrated focus centres of excellence, let us mandate those and let us have them work for the benefit of all Manitobans.

This hospital did that, and now it is convenient because the minister screwed up in the 1995 election, the minister's predecessor, and announced a program that they had no intention of following through on, got themselves in the hole on personal care homes and desperately needed out. So they got out by closing a hospital and forcing an announcement without the foggiest idea of what they were going to do with what is in that hospital now.

There was no plan. Those are the words of your staff, the words of your senior people. The only plan is convert. There is no plan to deal with what is in there now, and there is not today. There was not at the time, and the minister must be horribly embarrassed by that.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, the only interesting or I guess pleasurable part of the member's diatribe on this particular matter is that if we had done all the planning and all the detail today and then made the announcement, he would have probably accused us of not consulting with all of the people in the programs. So whatever we would have done would not have been acceptable to the member.

Now let us just look realistically at how these decisions happen. The Misericordia owners and their board of directors had to make a decision as to what they wanted their future to be. We gave them an option for their future. Now they could have gone and talked to all their staff. They chose not to, because once you do that then everything is out there and discussed in a public way without all the information detail. That was a choice they made, because we made them the offer and they asked us to keep it confidential while they considered it in principle. That is a choice the board made.

Now that makes eminently good sense, because before you involve everybody in detailed planning about how things can happen and work and move, you ultimately want to know is that where I want to go. So their board of directors wanted to make a decision on the principle before they told their staff, before they told the doctors who worked in that facility, before they got into the detailed planning. So that is what happened.

Is that a good process? You bet it is, because now in all of the planning that can go on for the transition they will be involved. That is part of the work that Dr. Postl has undertaken. I think one of the first meetings was held with respect to the breast program for the city. There is another one coming up. So that planning work will go on, and it will involve people in there. In fact, if anything I would rather have it done by the people who are involved in those programs than planners in the Ministry of Health where we announce something a fait accompli with every question answered, as the member proposes.

The member talks about could we have saved the Misericordia. Here we come again, 20 years. Could we save the Misericordia as an acute care hospital? You know—

Point of Order

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

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, nowhere in the record will the minister find the words "save the Misericordia Hospital," nor will he find in any of my remarks that as the goal. Comments have been on the issue of what he is planning to do with the acute care elements of that program and with the process of making a decision to close the hospital. He will not find those words, and I would appreciate it if he would not put incorrect information on the record.

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

* * *

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, then what the member is saying, I gather, is save those four programs at the Misericordia but not the Misericordia as an acute care hospital. So if that is what he is saying, that is fine. I will recognize that point that he is not arguing to save the Misericordia as an acute care hospital, that he recognizes the need for that conversion to take place. I will accept that.

Now with respect to those programs, here is the great dilemma in health care reform, and I know the New Democratic Party is struggling with it. I see it in their questions every day in the House from different members and from different statements. Fundamentally, are we going to continue the delivery of health care in the city of Winnipeg on the basis of individual programs operating out of their own facilities with independent facilities and boards making decisions and the Ministry of Health or its agent basically funding here or there or each other and doing it on the basis of contract, or are we going to have a centralized system of delivering programing for the 650,000 people in the city of Winnipeg and for the hundreds of thousands who use this facility in the rest of our province for many of their more critical care? That is a very fundamental issue. Once you accept the principle that you are going to operate on the basis of a system, that you are going to have that central planning direction

control administration budgeting for programing across your system, then every program has to be looked at in the context of the whole.

I have listened to the member talk a great deal about the beauty of those programs at Misericordia. The bricks and mortar and where they operate is not what makes those programs what they are; it is the people who are part of them. It is the support that they get in the community. It is all of those things. The bricks and mortar is not what makes a plastics program; it is the plastic surgeon. It is the nurses who work with them. It is the support around that program that makes the program what it is. The Winnipeg Hospital Authority, that is not lost on the Winnipeg Hospital Authority. They are not there to destroy programs that work well. It is a matter of moving those programs into the larger system, in fact, taking the good things about those programs that you learn from how those programs are operating and making that the dominant theme of the whole program across the city. So it is not the bricks and mortar; it is the people.

What is absolutely critical, and I will accept this from the member—I mean the concern over those programs—what is absolutely critical to those programs is how we transition them into the larger area to make sure we preserve the good things about those programs and extend them across the city. That is what makes sense. That is what this is about.

When we talked about the planning for these things, Dr. Postl, the people he is working with—and the member criticizes we do not have a plan. Of course, we do not have a detailed plan today of how everything will work, nor could we because you want to involve the people who are in those programs. I know in the case of the plastic surgeons and the discussions that they have had with the WHA that have been reported to me, there is a group now saying, okay, which site do we want to go to. They are debating that amongst themselves, and they want input into that.

If you are going to get into decision making in a public forum, I think you have to sort of set out the parameters of what you are looking for and then you have to involve people in that. If you do the planning involving everyone at the beginning, you get such a public debate raging and interests and everyone getting

into it you will never plan or be able to do anything, so you have to make some fundamental decisions about where you are going, what is it you are trying to achieve. In the case of Winnipeg, we made a fundamental decision that we want to operate on a regional basis. We want our programs to be centrally managed, determined, operated, planned for.

Once you make that decision, you put the people in place to then go and do the detailed planning about how you make that work and that, of course, once you have made the decision it is public. People know what the parameters are, what direction you have given, and then you can get into the detailed planning, I think, in an open and public way.

My experience in public life has been such that if you are going to have debate around every issue—and we did have, by the way, a great deal of debate publicly about the concept of centralization some time ago. We made that decision and part of that is a rationalization of services. The board at the Misericordia Hospital, when we met with it, I remember the Archbishop was very clear to me. He wanted to keep this as a confidential matter until the board can make a decision on the principle and as owners we respected that. So if the member is going to be critical of me about the debate around the Misericordia as a whole should have been public, then appreciate that that criticism should also be with the Archbishop and their board who made that choice.

Now if we are talking about the programs, I am going to ask Mr. Webster to respond about the thinking of the WHA in those programs. I am going to indicate to the member, when Dr. Postl next joins us, and it is regrettable that we were not able to sit a few minutes longer for Dr. Postl to make some comment on this area, but I would invite the member to be here next when Dr. Postl is back at this committee to put these same detailed questions to him, because he is highly qualified to answer them and I think will allay many of the fears that the member has. I would ask Mr. Webster to address the WHA perspective of how they see these programs working and being managed within the overall system and the benefits that were attained by staff and teams at the Misericordia kept within the overall Winnipeg hospital system.

Mr. Gordon Webster (Chief Executive Officer, Winnipeg Hospital Authority): Mr. Chairman, I obviously am not qualified and will not try and touch on some of the clinical issues, but as far as the process that we have put in place to plan the transition—and I guess our time frame for a transition is not going to impact patient care, is likely somewhere in the range of a year and a half. Shortly after the announcement was made for the change in role of Misericordia, I along with Ted Bartman, who is the CEO of the hospital, sat down and put together a transition plan that could be released to the staff as soon as the board had authorized that. The transition team will be led by a steering committee which will be chaired by Ted Bartman as the CEO of Misericordia. It will involve myself, Marion Suski, the CEO of the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority, and also Frank DeCock as the representative for Manitoba Health.

* (1520)

The six teams that we have assembled under that—the first team will have responsibility for dealing with human resource issues and to ensure that, as programs move, the very qualified staff within the facility can move with those programs. The second team has a responsibility for all the financial aspects of the transition. All of these teams have a representative from the WHA, Manitoba Health and the hospital on them. The third team will be responsible for looking at the programs that are there now and how they can transition out of that facility into other locations over, as I indicated, probably a year-and-a-half to two-year period. The fourth team will have representatives again from the hospital and the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority in developing the programs that will be moving in there. The fifth team will have responsibility for both internal and external communications, and the final team will have responsibility for the capital aspects of the transition, namely the redevelopment of the site.

As soon as the Misericordia board has authorized Ted Bartman to proceed with those transition plans, we are all ready to go.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if the minister and Mr. Webster are in possession of a letter dated March 20 from Dr. Kenneth Murray. I do not see cc's

to anyone outside the hospital. Dr. Murray copied Dr. Lipson and Dr. Fraser, Dr. Waters, Dr. Crowson and sent the original to Mr. Musick. It is a detailed letter asking, I think, very important questions, many of which I am not competent to have any input on, but they are very critical questions about the proposal to try and maintain elements of the breast care program, the issue of the walk-in clinic, et cetera.

I am wondering whether the minister is aware of this letter or not.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am not aware that we have a copy of that particular letter.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I do not have another copy, but I will ask the clerk if they could provide copies. The letter, to summarize, sets out what I think might be talked about as the dilemma of partial pregnancy, that it is extremely difficult to be partially pregnant or for a light bulb to work a little bit. It either works or it does not work. The issues raised by Dr. Murray are that, in short, you cannot maintain any significant volume of day surgery without anesthesia. People who are anesthetists, anesthesiologists, are reluctant to stay in a facility where they are not challenged by anything other than the most routine performance of their duties, particularly when they are mostly local anesthetics and very rarely a general. You cannot do any general procedures if you do not have some acute care backup, because while surgery is a relatively low-risk event, it is not a no-risk event, and there needs to be the kind of ability to resuscitate and to deal with adverse reactions which cannot be predicted.

He makes the point, as Dr. Fraser has made to me, that it is highly unlikely that cancer care specialists would want to have their offices in a facility in which they cannot do surgery. So the notion of maintaining a breast program for which there is no surgical treatment and no oncological treatment, other than out-patient kinds of treatment, in the view of Dr. Fraser, Dr. Murray, Dr. Lipson and others is simply not feasible. It may be in the short run possible to do it, but it will not be feasible to maintain it because, in particular, anesthetists will not choose to be there, and they are a fairly scarce commodity as it is. We do not generally have an excess of competent anesthesiologists.

So what I am suggesting to the minister, I am not suggesting he should be able to read this letter and respond to it now, but I am suggesting that if this letter is not already in Dr. Postl's possession, he should examine carefully the arguments made by I presume a competent clinician and four other very competent clinicians with qualifications not unlike Dr. Postl's who are questioning seriously the possibility of maintaining what is being promised at that centre. They are by implication saying to the minister that you really should "fish or cut bait," in his own words, and tell the people at Misericordia and the women of Manitoba that this is going to be a personal care home with some transition beds, and whether or not there is a walk-in clinic Dr. Murray also questions, because he points out that there are no family practitioners currently at that hospital. So is somebody going to form a clinic and hire some new physicians?

The minister talks about duplication. Klinik with a K is two short blocks away—well, two long blocks away from Misericordia Hospital and has been short staffed, understaffed, asking for more resources for years. So would we set up a free-standing walk-in clinic at a hospital which is not going to have the diagnostic resources that it has now? It is going to have walk-in clinic level resources when the government has argued, this minister and others, against walk-in clinics for years on the basis that they are inefficient.

So Dr. Murray's letter, I think, is a very cogent, thoughtful, carefully argued letter, but it raises fundamentally the feasibility of doing what the government is doing or is planning to do just to maintain some services which the surgeons and doctors involved in are saying we do not think you can do this because we are not going to have our offices in one place, do our surgery in another and our reconstructive work in a third. It simply does not make sense from the point of view of how we use our time. So why not admit the obvious, or at least agree today that you will meet with Dr. Murray and his colleagues and have the serious discussion which his letter implies, and that is, this is a personal care home? That is what it is. Why do you not just say so and acknowledge that what you are proposing is probably, at least in the view of the physicians currently involved, not feasible?

* (1530)

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, before Mr. Webster responds, I just want to say to the member I have not had a chance to digest the letter, but in the bundle of services for Misericordia Hospital we indicated that the WHA would have to make sense with an overall planning. There are a lot of issues at play here with services from programs around the whole system, not just Misericordia, and the physicians would be involved in meetings with the WHA planning teams. Mr. Webster, I would like him to address that as well, so there is lots of opportunity to discuss these issues. I know some of the questions the member has raised were put in our meeting last Tuesday with Dr. Postl, and I think he was very articulate in expressing disagreement with some of these claims that were made and that is why I look forward to him coming here to put his case to the member, because ultimately these have to work within the WHA.

The other surprising comment with respect to the primary health centre is that I know Associate Deputy Ms. Hicks said we have had discussions with Klinik, and one thinks that they will complement each other, but in the meeting that I had with Misericordia, Mr. Bartman, their CEO, and their board seemed very excited about the primary clinic, urgency clinic. They thought it would serve a need and they saw great potential to develop that particular resource and argued in fact very strongly for it, so perhaps there is a disagreement going on within the Misericordia. But the sense I have from their board of directors and from their administration is that this is one of the things they feel very strongly about and believe services their community and believe will be highly successful.

So I am hearing today the New Democrats saying we should not have a primary care clinic in Wolseley in the Misericordia. I do not know. I do not know what they are saying. I know one doctor has raised some issues around it but I think the Misericordia people feel very strongly about that being a needed service in the area, and we believe that they have made some very strong argument about how they will make it work. That is why it became part of the role in the offer to the Misericordia about their new function. So perhaps the member might have to have a debate with Mr. Bartman about it, but Mr. Bartman believes very strongly in that

particular clinic and has never expressed anything but great, I will not say support, he has been a great promoter of it, so I am a little perplexed. Mr. Webster, I would like him to respond on some more of the detail around these issues, because it is certainly within his bailiwick.

Mr. Webster: Mr Chairperson, I obviously cannot comment on some of the clinical issues in here, but I would like to pass this letter on to Dr. Postl, if I may. Following this letter though, and I have heard discussion around a lot of these issues, because on the evening of April 7, Neil Fast, our board chair, myself and Dr. Postl did meet with the surgeons at Misericordia Hospital and a number of these issues were raised. They got into areas that, I must admit, I had difficulty understanding, but they have agreed that as surgical components they are going to meet with Dr. Postl and his clinical services team to review them in detail. The first meeting was held last evening of physicians within the city involved in cancer care to look at how we should be going from having four breast programs in the city with surgery carried out at seven sites to probably one program with surgery performed at no more than three sites.

I know that Dr. Postl has also arranged to meet with the plastic surgeons early next week to talk about the consolidation of plastics around the city following a letter that we received last fall from the plastic surgeons indicating that they would like to operate out of no more than one community site. This is not just the surgeons, plastic surgeons operating at Misericordia. This is all of them have indicated they would like to operate out of one community site. As I recall, some of these issues here were discussed but I must admit I would not try and comment on the clinical issues of them.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I appreciate Mr. Webster's answer on this. I am glad that they are into those kinds of discussions. I just want to say in response to the minister, we obviously are in a political dialogue here to some extent, but it is not correct to say that I am suggesting that there should not be a critical care centre there or that there should be. I am questioning the feasibility and raising questions which I think need to be raised and obviously Mr. Webster agrees they need to be raised and I am glad they are being raised. The

hospital would prefer, of course, to have an emergency care centre, as would the community, because there are so many people in that community that do not have cars, that do walk in at all hours of the day and night with varying levels of need and, in particular, as the minister well knows, mental health needs in that community are very acute, so the notion of having 24-hour availability of services is obviously attractive. The question that was being raised was the question being raised by Dr. Murray, and I am raising it on his behalf because I think it betrays the fact that there are many discussions that need to happen, and I am very pleased to hear that some of those discussions have started. I am also aware from Klinik that resources there need to be expanded, and if we are talking about 24-hour walk-in services within reasonable walking distance of the bulk of the people who use Misericordia Hospital, it is not immediately obvious that two sites are the best solution, although that may be the case. I am not in a position to judge that, but 24 hours certainly is appropriate.

The questions being raised, though, are can you have a truly comprehensive community walk-in clinic without having on site many of the kinds of facilities and services which approximate a kind of hospital that is not an acute care hospital in the old-fashioned sense of the word, but which provides specialty care of a variety of kinds with a small capacity to hold people for a short stay. That is the model that is being put forward as an alternative here, and I am not in a position to answer the question and would not put myself in that position. But I think it is a valid question to ask, because the minister wants to kind of have a black-and-white position about acute care hospitals.

I think he knows and we all know that an acute care hospital today takes many, many different forms in different communities, and so it is not a matter of, you know, this is an acute care hospital and this is not. There are many shades and many variations on that theme. Our concern is that the services this community needs and that have been developed by the hospital not be lost in the process. I hear the assurances around that. The difficulty is, and I am very frank about this, some of the things that Misericordia has developed have languished in the system in the past, so it is cold comfort to hear that they are being taken into account we hope for the future.

I guess the assurance I would want to have from the minister—and I do not think it is appropriate to ask for it from Mr. Webster; I think it is a policy issue, not an operational issue—is will the minister assure all of Manitobans and this committee that none of these programs will be moved and taken apart in the process, but the integrity of the programs will either be maintained or enhanced in the new settings, that is, not fractured, not fragmented, but we will get at least as good as we have now at Misericordia in whatever moves are made in the future.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, it is certainly our intention and the intention of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority—the reason why we do all these things is to improve service through our overall system, and I would hope and expect that the same will be the case in the programs that are delivered currently out of the Misericordia Hospital.

The member flagged the emergency urgency centre, and one of the issues my associate deputy just raised with me was that a good deal of the types of cases that come in in that particular city into that emergency room—and even the discussions we had with Misericordia Hospital and comments made to me by their administrator—are in the true sense of the word urgency matters, as opposed to emergency life-threatening trauma accident. Those happen, but they are urgency matters. Mental health issues is a big one that they flagged for us, and so part of the planning around this urgency centre, obviously, has to involve a mental health unit there on a 24-hour basis and many of those kinds of services that that community needs, and the member knows that community fairly well, being a neighbouring constituency.

So that is the intention of this plan. There is a lot of work that has to go into it in the next while, and I think that is why the Misericordia administration is very excited about it in terms of meeting need.

* (1540)

Many an evening when I am in the city I like to go for a walk, and I have passed the Misericordia on many occasions. You know, it illustrates the point, when you are standing next to the Misericordia and you look down Sherbrook, you can see the lights of the Health

Sciences Centre at the other end. If you go on the roof of the hospital you can see St. Boniface. So, in terms of location of hospitals, that facility—I will just share with him this story. When I was at a ministers of Health meeting in Toronto on blood issues, during one of our breaks we were standing looking out the window. We were on a high floor of a hotel where we were holding the meeting. The minister in Ontario pointed out I think 8 or 9 or 10 hospitals from that one window and sort of made the comment they were all built at a time when the population in Toronto was concentrated around that area. I believe the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) was born in Ontario, grew up there?

Mr. Sale: No, I went to the University of Toronto.

Mr. Praznik: Went to the University of Toronto. So he knows, has a little familiarity with that city. In downtown Toronto they have more small hospitals than they need for what they are doing, and that is part of their dilemma. Winnipeg, you know, had that same problem. If the Victoria had not moved from its downtown location—I guess it was in the Osborne area at one time. When it was rebuilt, it moved to the suburbs. The old Concordia was closer to downtown. The old Grace was closer to downtown. I think there was a St. Joseph's Hospital at one time in the Burrows area.

In Manitoba, during the building boom, we in essence moved many of our downtown hospitals out to the suburbs. So there was a lot of forethought in that. We do not have five or six hospitals in the downtown area. We only have three in essence, Misericordia being the last one. The Misericordia has gone through a huge change in that community over a number of years and there are a lot of issues. So, compared to what has happened in other provinces where they have had to make decisions and choices like this, because of the foresight in planning with moving those other hospitals out years ago, we really only end up with sort of one situation to deal with.

The Sisters of Misericordia made the point about carrying on providing care to people in the Wolseley area, recognize the ambulatory, the walk-in part that had to be met, and that is where that planning is around. The Misericordia board, as I said, is very excited about

the clinic; they think it can provide a great deal of service. We are, too. Some of those issues about how it interacts with other areas have to be worked out in the planning.

I can tell the member there are many other places that have very intensive health clinics and do not have acute care hospitals. In my constituency, Lac Du Bonnet, for example, has a health centre. It is not even open 24 hours a day. The nearest hospital, which they were part of the same regional system before regionalization, is Pinawa, which is still a 20-minute, 30-minute car ride, depending on where you are in the area. That particular facility has met, by and large, the health needs of that area. In fact, the community health assessment indicated that. The municipality was looking for hospital beds, but it was not supported by the health assessment for the area and the needs process. So there are many places where this has happened and can work.

I will agree with him, our definition of what is a hospital, an acute care hospital, is changing somewhat. There are issues of change around that that should not necessarily restrict one, but the planners, as we work through this, I think even in the last few weeks in terms of the calls to my office and the comments being made about some of these programs, as the people involved at the Misericordia are sitting down with the WHA and as more information gets shared about other options, I think a lot of these issues will start to go away. In fairness to this doctor and to the questions that the member raises, whenever you are going to make big change there are a hundred questions. A lot of people see all of the problems with it, but as you work it through those tend to dissipate as solutions come forward and other options that were not even thought of by people in that facility become available.

Mr. Webster, I think, may want to add something to my answer. Any detail?

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I wanted to pick up where I had left off this morning talking about people suffering with epilepsy and the services which would be leaving the province of Manitoba.

After listening to the comments by Dr. Postl and the minister this morning, I am in some consideration over the lunch period into the early afternoon, I am not sure

that we have a plan—the province has a plan in place to deal with people suffering from epilepsy and ongoing research and treatments for those 5,000 patients or so that are intractable cases. I want to ask the minister: can he provide me—because I have a number of questions I would like to ask in this regard—a list of the practicing neurologists in the province of Manitoba, and do you have that here today?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, that information is available to the member from the College of Physicians and Surgeons. We can endeavour to get him that list, but it is a matter on the public record that they do make available.

Mr. Reid: I am not sure if the minister is aware or not, but that list that they have is dated by many months, and that there have been some significant changes with respect to that list. I was hoping that the minister's department would have some updated version, considering that some of the doctors that are on that current list have now left the province and that is still the list that the college is issuing.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, the registry of physicians in the province is kept by the college, so we do not keep a registry within the Ministry of Health of physicians. We use their list. He is asking for the list of that particular specialist in the province. The only repository of that list is the college. They update it from time to time, and I guess one could always phone every hospital—check admitting privileges or update that list, but it is the college who is the repository of that information, not the ministry.

Mr. Reid: I am somewhat confused here then. I hope that the department is developing some kind of a plan to deal with the exodus of doctors that provided treatment for people suffering with epilepsy. The minister says that the College of Physicians and Surgeons is the place to get that information, but the list that I have is not a current list. I am wondering here: how can the department develop a plan that is required to treat people suffering with epilepsy if you do not even know how many neurologists you have in the province of Manitoba? How can you develop a plan if you do not know what resources you have or have not available? Can you answer that for me?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, we have sat through hours in this committee discussing the process for the delivery of programs and care and within the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, the planning around providing service to people with epilepsy, whichever clinical program that falls into, rests with that program. Traditionally, that has rested with the hospitals and the ministry is involved from time to time, but the ministry is not specifically developing a care plan for any particular or most illness. I guess we do have some involvement in terms of cancer, the cancer treatment foundation, but the delivery of that specialized program rests with each regional health authority in terms of the array of services that they offer. The bulk of the care and treatment in this particular area, I suspect, comes from the Winnipeg Hospital Authority who have just taken over much of that program, from listening to the discussion with the member today, rests at the Health Sciences Centre. That particular department, the university is a partner in there, so there is a shared responsibility. Mr. Webster, I would invite him to comment on the WHA's intention in this particular area, but it is not within the ministry that that planning would be housed.

* (1550)

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, the issue around recruitment of physicians up until, well, I guess, and still, until we have our final arrangements in place with individual hospitals, will still be the responsibility of the hospitals. But I can certainly get a question of how internal medicine intends to deal with that; I can get an answer to that question.

Mr. Reid: Can the minister tell me: is the Department of Health or the Winnipeg Hospital Authority providing any direction to the pediatric community, and I am talking doctors here, on what advice they should be giving to individuals or family members that may come to them for neurological services with respect to epilepsy? Are you providing any direction, because now that Dr. Pillay is leaving at the end of May, what direction—are you providing any direction since the Health Sciences Centre obviously may not be in a position to provide that type of service? Where are these patients now going to receive that service from?

Ms. Sue Hicks (Associate Deputy, External Programs and Operations Division): Mr. Chairperson, my understanding is from Dr. Postl this morning that the discussions are with the neurologists and that they are actually looking at planning and covering the existing cases while they are also endeavouring to look at a strategy to employ additional neurologists into the province.

Mr. Reid: Does the department know what the caseload is of the existing neurologists?

Ms. Hicks: At this time I do not know the exact caseload, no.

Mr. Reid: When Dr. Pillay leaves the province at the end of May, because I do not have a comfort level from the information I received this morning with respect to any attempt to try and retain him because he has already indicated I believe in writing that he is going to be terminating his services at the Health Sciences Centre at the end of May and moving to Calgary, and I believe Dr. Booth who—we will not refer to other matters dealing with the individual—is the only person going to be left in that particular facility. When Dr. Booth goes on vacation or Dr. Booth is sick or unable to attend to her duties, who is going to be on call, since Dr. Pillay was the one to fill in after that?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, these are administrative details that the individual program managers, whether they be at the Health Sciences Centre or as the WHA takes over, will have to ensure are looked after. We have never made it a habit as a ministry to interfere at that level of decision making, and I can tell you that those who are responsible for programs usually are always able to make those kinds of arrangements where necessary—I imagine there are probably a few exceptions—but generally speaking, have been able to arrange to alternate care providers. I know in the case of Brandon, with the pediatricians, that the Brandon Regional Health Authority made alternate arrangements while they are recruiting additional pediatricians. So it does happen from time to time. This is not the first time it has happened.

Mr. Chair, may I propose—Mr. Webster would like to respond—and then I would like to propose that we take a break for 10 minutes or so and come back to us.

There is some information I would like to share privately with my colleagues the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, as you know, we are still in the process of transitioning our responsibilities from hospitals to clinical teams. Although our internal medicine team has not yet taken responsibility across the system, I will ask Dr. Postl to talk to them before he comes to the committee again so that he can respond to questions in this particular area.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to take a 10-minute break? [agreed].

The committee recessed at 3:52 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:05 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. We will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Health.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Chairperson, my comments about the service of epileptologists in the province, I have pretty well all of my comments on the record to this point. My concern here is for the patients and their families, those who do not have a clear understanding of, first off, getting diagnosis of their particular illness and then being directed to the appropriate treatment areas, and of course, dealing with the long-term care for those intractable cases, 40 percent of the overall number I believe are intractable and require some further new initiatives that are being pioneered here by Dr. Pillay, but there may be other matters that are affecting Dr. Pillay's decision and the government's decision with respect to replacements or alternative types of treatment areas.

But I will leave that with the minister, and I hope that the department can come back with some information with respect to the questions that I have left with the department seeking some further clarification or some information with respect to numbers, in particular, so

that I might have a clearer understanding on how I can provide some direction and some advice to my constituents who call me or the families who call me with these cases, as I have had over the last several months.

I want to move on to a letter that I just received in the mail yesterday from a constituent. When I read this letter from this constituent, who is a woman living in my community, I am quite distressed by what I read and it occurred with respect to services at the Concordia Hospital between the days of April 6 to 10 of this year, 1998. The individual was taken to hospital and spent all of those days in the hospital on a stretcher. Perhaps I can read this and explain to you the distress that the individual suffered as a result of her stay in Concordia Hospital.

The following, for Hansard's information, is a direct quote from the letter. I spent April 6 to 10, 1998, in Concordia Hospital. I went to the hospital with severe abdominal pain. The first night I spent in a treatment room that is meant to have four patients in it. There were seven of us on stretcher beds. The following morning I was to have some tests done. First I had to have an enema. Well, there are no bathroom facilities in the treatment room, so they brought me a commode chair, and there I was sitting on it with a curtain drawn around me while the others in the room ate their breakfast. Most humiliating for me, and I am sure very unpleasant for the others.

* (1610)

They moved me from there to the hallway where I spent the next three nights. After some more tests, they found out I had acute pancreatitis brought on by gallstones. My pain eased some when they started treatment, but my back felt like it was breaking after that many days on a stretcher. I also developed diarrhea which meant I had to get off my stretcher, pull my I.V. and trot down to the washroom at the end of the hall. When you are not well, the sights and sounds in the emergency department are not welcome. I realize these are the people who should be treated and I had no business being there. I asked several times if there were no beds even in the observation ward. The answer was always no. This was an experience I hope never to have to go through again.

I can provide a copy for the minister if he wishes to have a copy of that.

This, I do not think any individual, anybody in this room would expect to go to a hospital and have this type of service. This is a question of dignity and respect for patients, in addition to the treatments, and from my understanding, this is not a period of time when flu was causing the problems within the hospital system, as the minister has said in Question Period, and I have listened to his responses to questions. This was an individual who had some difficulties in respect to privacy matters, and I personally would not want to be put into a situation like that and I would not expect to have anybody close to me or any other members of the public in situations like this.

How does the minister respond, how does the department, what do you say to patients, people from your community when we know that our health care system should not be that type of a system? What do we say to our patients, to the people of our communities when they have to be put into positions like this, where there is no dignity and no respect shown to them, that treats them in a manner such as this when we know that an individual if they are going to be in there for a period of time and we cannot diagnose their particular ailment or their illness, that we need to have the spaces available? I am not sure whether or not there was a responsibility on the part of the hospital to refer this individual to another facility that may have had room spaces or beds available. I do not know that and perhaps I should ask that as a question. I do not want to have this letter entered into the record in the sense of the name of the individual used, and I chose very carefully not to use the name, not to table this letter, but to provide that for the minister's information. Perhaps you can tell me, how do I respond to my constituent, and this is not the first case like this that I have been made aware of. How do I respond to individuals when they bring these matters to me and they tell me first-hand their real life's experiences of how the health care system has responded to them when they are in their most vulnerable moments?

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, I cannot disagree with anything that the member has said. Hopefully, as we start looking at our hospital system as one system as opposed to nine separate stand-alone organizations, we

can start to implement some of the items he suggested, and particularly if we can get a Central Bed Registry, hospitals should be sharing with each other the information of whether or not there are beds available because we do know that at a time right now, particularly now that the flu season is behind us, that there are beds available within various facilities in the city and yet other hospitals have still got patients waiting admittance within the individual hospitals and those patients are not being transferred the way they should be.

Mr. Reid: Well, having been a member of this Legislature for a number of years now, you build up a recollection of events that have occurred, and there is a history that goes with that in the sense of you remember these issues being talked about in past, and if recollection serves me right, I remember the Central Bed Registry being talked about for a significant period of time now and I do not know if this is something that is going to occur because it has been talked about for some time. Would this have helped in this situation? Perhaps it would have. I do not know that for certain, but it did not occur and my constituent did not receive the care with the dignity and respect that she was entitled to. Obviously the individual, after the diagnosis was made with respect to the medical condition and treatment was started, started down the road to recovery. Having spoken with the individual on the weekend, I sensed that things are going along well now.

But with respect to the dignity and respect for the individual, that is the part that irritates me the most about the way this woman was treated in the hospital. There has to be a better way of doing things. If you do not have a diagnosis done and you know you have to keep the patient in for a period of time, and I am talking days here and perhaps weeks because this nearly extended to a week, that there is some way you have to find space somewhere so that the person can have some privacy for the medical procedures that are required by the hospital in the performance of the diagnosis of the condition. So by saying that you are going to have a Central Bed Registry, I am sorry if I say I have heard this before. Been there, done that. I have not seen any progress in that regard.

Mr. Webster: Well, Mr. Chairperson, if I can, I think that there is a quasi Central Bed Registry in place now, although it is on a phone-in basis as opposed to any organized one across the system. But once you have a Central Bed Registry in place, you also have to use it properly, which means you have to have an ability to move patients between hospitals into available beds without the receiving hospitals saying they are not prepared to take the patients. That is one of the difficulties we have had in the past. We do know that there are hospitals that have got beds that refuse to accept patients from other hospitals where they are waiting in the emergency departments.

Mr. Reid: So if I understand Mr. Webster correctly, what he is saying here is that my constituent or any other person living in the province of Manitoba goes to work, pays their taxes which support the health care system, and somebody in an administration somewhere is saying that you cannot come and use the hospital facilities because you did not get admitted to this particular facility. Am I understanding correctly what you are saying here?

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, that is basically what I am saying, yes.

Mr. Reid: The patient in question here is left in the position, then, or any other patient for that matter, of having to make an instant decision when they are stricken about which hospital they go to. How would a person like that know whether or not they should be going to St. Boniface Hospital versus Concordia or going to Health Sciences Centre or some other facility?

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, they should not have to make that decision. They should be able to go to the closest hospital and have the system such that they get admitted to the most available bed closest to the particular hospital that they go to, if that hospital cannot accommodate them.

Mr. Reid: Can you tell me, because there are dates on this letter, were there spaces available in the other city hospitals?

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, I do not know it right now, but we can certainly find out.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, you know, the member has hit upon an excellent case. It illustrates a problem and it certainly should be of concern to all of us, but one of the experiences I had as we were going through this system is I remember with the cancellation of elected surgery at HSC it freed up beds that would have been used for surgical purposes to be used for medical purposes.

* (1620)

I think on one particular day, and I look to Ms. Hicks, but I remember on one particular day we had 20 or 25 beds available at Health Sciences Centre, something like that, and we had patients in the hallway at Grace. I could not believe this, and I said: have those patients been offered the beds at Health Sciences Centre? Now the result that I got back—I wanted the member to hear this, I know he is—with some notes. I wanted the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) to hear this. I asked: had those people been offered the beds? The response we got back from Grace was: oh, yes, they have been offered the beds, but they wanted to stay at Grace even if it meant they were in the hallway. Now, true or not, that is what came back.

I think Mr. Webster's comment really illustrates the point. There are going to be times, and I do not want to make this sound like the panacea, when the whole system gets plugged. There have been those times. But also once the stress starts to come off and as we put more resources in, you are still going to have from time to time some facilities that have much greater stress and are plugged up while there is room in the overall system.

I am not raising this old article to get into a political debate with members opposite, but I wanted the member for Transcona just to have a look at this. I know he is making a few notes. It is from 1984 and it is: Health care crisis denied by Desjardins, hospitals forced to limit admissions.

I share it with the member because you can almost change the names today and it would be the same kind of stories, and the Free Press was running the hospitals in crisis at the particular time.

One of the things that amazed me in my experience has been if we have any pressure on the system, the first hospital we want to shut down is the Grace. I am reading this: Hospital forced to limit admissions, and I quote: faced with a capacity patient load, administrators at Grace General Hospital began limiting admissions yesterday for a 24-hour period.

Back in 1984, it was the first hospital to shut down. You ask yourself, well, what is going on here. Well, when you go out and you drive by the Grace, you realize that it is right next to the Courts of St. James. It becomes an easy access point to health care for literally thousands of people who go into those blocks, so if you are sick or not feeling well it is often more convenient to go to the Grace than it is to go to your own doctor in many circumstances. So the Grace has a pressure on it that maybe other hospitals do not have.

The point I get at, you cannot be putting more capacity necessarily in the Grace if you have underutilized capacity somewhere else. So the beauty of regionalization and building a single system—and it has taken a long time to get here; just to even get the consensus we should do it has taken some time—is that you can now operate on a systems-wide basis.

One difference between where we are today and where we were with the urban planning project—and I know when Minister Orchard was there and when Minister Desjardins was there, there were efforts made to get people working together co-operatively—is when you do not control the turf and you are expecting nine independent institutions to do what makes common sense, the turf walls get in the way and it does not get done.

What we have now with the Regional Health Authorities Act is the programming, the money, the direction come from the regional health authority, and we are ensuring that they are armed with the tools to do the job. If they do not have the right tools, we as a Legislature may have to give them all the tools they need to do the job, but there is no reason in my mind—and the member's comment I support a hundred percent. It is exactly the kind of comment I have made in the privacy of my office when I have seen these frustrations in the system—is they are all taxpayers of the city of Winnipeg. It is their health care system.

The people fund it through their taxes, and they should expect that if they walk into the doors of Concordia Hospital or Grace Hospital and there is not room for them in that hospital and there is room at St. Boniface or HSC or whatever, that if they want that bed, to be in a bed as most of them would do, that the system should be able to facilitate that and get them into a bed as quickly as possible where that bed is available, because it is all the same taxpayers.

Now the irony, of course, is that everyone says, yes, that makes sense, but many of our independent boards—yes, we should do that; it makes sense. But when you come to setting up the system that will do that, you get all of these problems in place.

So it still does not take away from some of which we faced this winter when our whole system was at a capacity, and that is what we are trying to do, is increase our capacity to be able to handle that, but even when we do that, we are still from time to time going to have certain hospitals that get plugged and others have space. I guess the public look at all of us and they say, hey, it is our tax dollars, we pay for it. It is our health system; it is a small city, how come I cannot move? To be honest, I have no good answer to them about why they cannot. Some of the independent hospital boards, from time to time, give them a good reason, but in my mind that is nonsense. It is a public system; the public pay for it; the public should be able to access it.

I know there are times when we need more resources as a whole system, and that is what we are in the process of putting in with the additional PCH beds to take some pressure off in other things. But if the system cannot allocate the resources it has well, then we are in real trouble, and that is what we are trying to change. We will get Mr. Webster—we will endeavour to check on those specific dates for the member.

Mr. Reid: I am sure the minister will excuse me if I am somewhat doubtful. Having been here since 1990, I listened to Health Minister Orchard talk about a Central Bed Registry, and this is 1998 and my constituent did not receive any other treatment than probably would have occurred in 1992 when Minister Orchard talked about it. So I am skeptical that this process is even going to move forward. You say it is. You may be determined to see it move forward, but

having heard of this now for going on six years, one would think that, yes, there would be a bit of organization involved in this, but after six years you would have expected to see some progress in these matters.

I guess you are guessing, because you say you do not know whether or not the other hospital facilities were or were not full and whether or not the patient could have been transferred to another facility. I guess then I have to ask the question: were there beds or other sections of that hospital where beds were not occupied? Why were the acute care beds for that particular facility not available for that woman in that part of her community? She lives in the northeast part of Winnipeg where Concordia is the service hospital, and now we are going to move that individual to another hospital where you say there may or may not have been beds available. That will take some research no doubt to find that out, but the overall system here I think is lacking in acute care beds. If there had been—you have beds that are shut down in hospitals here in the city of Winnipeg where patients can go. I know they are because I have nurses coming that work in those facilities and tell me. They live in my community. They tell me about beds that are closed in your hospital system and have been closed for some time.

So you have to know that there are beds that your government has closed over a period of time here. You have to get staff that is available for them. Of course, then, again, you have cut the number of nurses, going back, which causes me more concern. When I talk to my constituents about these matters, they say that the care that was provided by the hospital staff who were there, who were obviously stressed out, was as well as could be expected under the circumstances of the case because they were working under high-stress situations in that particular area with lack of resources available to them. That is the question they ask of me. The resources are lacking, and they have asked me to raise this with the minister and the department with respect to nursing staff in the hospitals and with the lack of available beds, acute care beds for people who come in with emergency cases such as this that have not been diagnosed and are forced to lay on stretchers in the hallway for up to a week, as is this case, which causes them more problems with respect to their recovery.

No one—having had my father in the hospital just a few weeks ago and seeing first-hand the circumstances of the St. Boniface Hospital where you have to spend days on stretchers in the hallway, there is no way an individual can make any kind of a decent recovery in a hallway, lying there 24 hours a day with all of the activity going on around you. That is the other issue that my constituent here is referring to, this woman is referring to. You cannot make a decent recovery and be expected to do well lying on a stretcher in the hallway, very uncomfortable, very unrecognizing of the dignity and respect that should be afforded to every individual in the system. You have to forgive me, Mr. Minister, when you talk about the Central Bed Registry. I have been here since '90. I have heard that from the previous, previous Minister of Health. I have heard it from the previous Minister of Health and now I am hearing it again, and I am somewhat suspect that this is ever indeed going to occur.

* (1630)

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, I cannot even comment on the area around dignity and respect for individuals because I agree with you 100 percent on that. I also cannot deny that there are patients lying in stretchers in emergency departments that should not be there. But very honestly, if people are bringing it to your attention that there are hospital beds available within the system that are not being used, I really—sincerely, I would like to know where they are because it is my understanding they are using all of the available beds within the system at the present time.

The secret of a Central Bed Registry is not the fact that you have the registry. The secret is using it properly once you have it. Our system today, despite the fact that we know where beds are available, the beds are not being utilized the way they should be. Let me give you an example. When we brought in the temporary deferral of elective surgery requiring hospital admittance, within 24 hours, because of the nature of the patients that flow through, Health Sciences Centre had 25 empty beds. When I met with the CEOs at the end of that week, I was informed that there were some hospitals that still had patients lying in emergency on stretchers. I asked the question: well, why did you not transfer them? The question was the Health Sciences Centre had contacted the other hospitals and told them

their availability, and the response they got back from the hospital that had the largest number of patients waiting for admittance, we wanted to keep our patients here until we could admit them into our own hospital. I could not overrule them.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I do not take anything away from the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) because the member for Transcona is dead-on in his line of questioning. If I sat in his shoes, I would be asking the same questions, but the story that Mr. Webster just described is exactly what is fundamentally wrong with our health care system and has been for 20 years. The only reason I share this article with him is not to say it happened when the New Democrats—it did happen with the New Democrats. It happened with the Tories. What happened?

Let us analyze why in 1984—it is good to sometimes put these in context. I quote this article. It says: doctors, nurses, administrators, union officials and hospital employees recently outlined a litany of problems affecting patient care. They include dangerously long waiting lists for surgery, aging equipment, high numbers of chronic care patients occupying valuable space in acute care hospital beds and four recent deaths at the Health Sciences Centre which may have been prevented if intensive care beds were available.

Of course this Dr. Gerry Bristow is quoted—and he was one of the many professionals who blamed problems on chronic severe underfunding. They said the situation will worsen if the government sticks to its 3 percent increase for '84-85. The reason why I just raise this is that you could take these lines, change the numbers and the names and have the same story again, before, and here the Free Press in the article has created a series, Hospitals in crisis, et cetera.

You ask yourself why is it always this way? Well, there are a number of reasons. I think the nature of health care will always have people in it looking for more dollars for their particular programs, and if you are lobbying for dollars, you are never going to say I have enough. You always need more. That is the nature of the business. But secondly, why could any governments not, why could Mr. Desjardins not, why could Mr. Orchard not, why could Mr. McCrae not, and

I think it was Wilson Parasiuk who was the last Health minister of the New Democratic government for a short time, why could they not get these simple common sense things, because what the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) asks is simple common sense? If you have the beds, why can you not move them?

The reason why is we as a province, like every other province in Canada, left the delivery of health care in the hands of independent institutions. Now I am not saying that is the be-all and end-all. There will always be issues of financing. We can always debate that, but just to make simple movement decisions, when you have independent facilities making those decisions who are in essence the real deliverers of health care—we are just the funders under that system. We just send the money, and of course it is never enough. It was never enough when the New Democrats were in power. It is never enough when the Tories are in power. It will never be enough no matter who is in power.

But why can the common sense things not happen? It is because independent boards and their independent facilities, all relying on their tradition of service and their public community support, say, no, we must continue to provide health care. I was told by some of the faith-based chairs, for example, that Mr. Minister, the best way to provide care is let us continue to provide it. You just be the funder. We will be the provider. But people like you and I—and I say that to the member for Transcona—we have constituents who end up in hospitals where there is not a bed in their facility. I think the matter Mr. Webster referred to is the situation at the Grace—had the largest number I think at that time, it may have not been the Grace. It might have been another hospital—but we had 25 beds freed up at the Health Sciences Centre to take that capacity. People would not move them. They did not want to lose them out of their hospital.

Well, you know, you look at it and you shake your head. Do we have the power to order it? No, we do not. Do we have the power to make it happen? No, we did not. Ultimately, now I think the difference between Mr. Desjardins and Mr. Parasiuk and Mr. Orchard and Mr. McCrae and today is that none of those ministers had dealt with the fundamental issue at that stage. They did not have the legislative authority to regionalize and rationalize the system to provide central control.

I am fortunate that Minister McCrae brought in the legislation and left me with the concept of regionalization. I brought in the amendments with respect to Winnipeg, and we now have the power to set up one centralized system. Will it be the answer to every question? No, it will not. Will the system still need more money and probably ever-increasing amounts as new technology and the population ages and we deal with all those things? Yes, it will, and we will always be struggling to keep up with the growing cost of health care, and we will debate whether it is enough all the time. But if you do not have the tools to do at least the common-sense things in the system, this system is headed for its own demise.

At least I, with some pride, take credit that at least at this stage we have managed to get the tools in place to at least deal with the common-sense organizational issues in health care. We can debate needs back and forth in beds, and the member is right. We do have a demand for more acute care or medicine beds. That is why we are adding the personal care home beds that will take some pressure off, and I know there are discussions going on with Concordia now and that configuration about increasing their number of acute care beds for that part of the city rather significantly. Yes, we need to do that. We are doing it. We are putting those things in place.

But you know, if we still did it without having changed the basic way we run the system, at the end of the day we would have a little bit of temporary relief, but we still would be dealing with these ludicrous situations where we are not able to manage the flow of work around the system to get the best use out of what we have. You know, one never knows how long you are going to be Minister of Health. It is not a portfolio you want for your whole life. I can tell you this. But whoever succeeds me as Minister of Health at whatever day, at least I believe they are going to have some fundamental tools that none of my predecessors, including New Democrats, had to be able to deliver better quality care in the system.

One of the mistakes we have all made as politicians is we have got caught up in the battle with those independent authorities, and both parties, I think—depending on whether government or opposition can be accused of the same thing—we have got caught

up in those battles when those independent agencies have been threatened or challenged to secede power, in essence, to the public to run their health care system. The arguments have come out, oh, we do it so well. We have a history. We have a tradition, et cetera. Yes, they do, I do not take that away from them, but the greater good of the public needs to be served and if it is not being, we have an obligation to make it happen. Whenever those debates—and I have seen it happen in this round. Perhaps, one reason after being in government for 10 years, we are doing it now, it is happening now, is because in the early days, first of all, you had to build a consensus to do it, and the opposition to make this kind of centralizing move is fierce.

* (1640)

Part of the argument of what is coming out of the Misericordia—and I appreciate the member for Crescentwood correcting the record in that he did not oppose the fundamental change of function at the Misericordia, and I appreciate that correction on the record or that clarification or putting it on the record—is because there are many in that organization or around it who would say no, we must keep the Misericordia as it is in the status quo and they will mount a campaign. We have already seen copies of a document being circulated by someone from the Misericordia, in fact I would be pleased to put it on the record because I think it makes the point, if we have a copy of it. I saw it in Mr. DeCock's file and I would like the Clerk to make me a copy.

The save the Misericordia campaign: Dear Doctor (blank), In the save the Misericordia campaign, issues have included protests over the breast program, letters from surgical patients protesting the changes. I mean it is all the classic stuff of a group of individuals who want to go out and frighten the public, raise the issue, create a bunch of heat so that the change does not take place. Ministers of Health, including Mr. Desjardins, who have tried to make the change have been met with this kind of stuff because we have to save the status quo.

The status quo does not work but we still want to save it because—how does that help this individual? The member brings it back—and I am glad he does—right

to the point. That member's constituent has a right to expect that those of us who are responsible for managing the system ensure that it is managed as well as possibly can be expected. Maintaining independent institutions that we are just the funders of is not the way to manage health care in these latter days of the 20th Century.

That member also expects that we should be able to find a reasonable amount of resources to fund that system, and that will always be a debate because the costs of health care rise more rapidly than inflation, for many good reasons, new technology, aging population, greater need, but they continue to rise and I do not suspect you will ever see a day where everyone in health care says yes, we have all the money we need to do the perfect job. It will never be there, but do they have enough resources to do that job they have to do, that is the real question. Will there always be pressure on the system? Yes, but I think people should have the expectation that we can manage it reasonably well, get the best use out of our resources and that there is adequate funding to meet that need.

I say to that lady, I apologize on behalf of all of us that our system is run that way and that has to happen, and I tell you I am serious in that that has to be addressed and the only way to address it is to deal with fundamental need for change, which is taking over this system to run it as a central system. We can debate on amounts of money and we always will, and whoever is on what side of the House, but we are committed to doing that.

The member has the right to ask why did it not happen earlier? It did not happen earlier, I believe, because you had to build a consensus, you had to build the support to do what we are doing. Even now with a general consensus to move to consolidation, to centralization of the administration of health in Winnipeg, we still have those who are out there fighting for the old system. And yes, you can fight for the old system and you can show a few good places where it really works, but at the end of the day the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) and all of us, the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer), and all of us who are in this committee in this Legislature

have a responsibility to do what is right for the whole system, and that is what it is about.

I sometimes do not know where the New Democrats are on this issue, but I do appreciate the fact that you have not come out and opposed the whole centralization system. Because I think whoever is going to succeed me as Minister of Health needs that ability to better run the system.

If there is one failing we have all had collectively, going back to the days of Larry Desjardins, on both sides of the House and all parties in this Legislature, is we have been all afraid to do what health care administration has required us to do, which is to take over the system to run it for the people of Manitoba as opposed to just being the funder. We have all been in the shoes where we have seen the opposition from one group or another and we said oh, well, we have to let the thing continue on and yes, we recognize the history.

At the end of the day when you analyze it, we all have a responsibility for not making this happen, and if they can say one thing about Darren Praznik at the end of the day, you can argue about how much money I did or did not get for health care, the fact of the matter is by the time I leave this office as Minister of Health, I want to ensure that the operation of The Regional Health Authorities Act is in place and it is being delivered and that the efforts to make this system work have not been thwarted by any organization, group or individual who is trying to preserve an old system that does not work.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Before I commence, I guess we should talk about where we are going to go and where I think we should go. I had planned to query both Mr. Webster and Ms. Hicks about some specific programs in their area, but we are running out of time today. I recognize that Ms. Hicks may not be available to the committee for the next little while, but we will have to deal with it. I am wondering if in terms of organization we should move towards—if this is possible, if perhaps next Monday we could go back to capital again and go back to USSC and try to deal with those.

Mr. Praznik: Monday?

Mr. Chomiak: Monday. If we could, and then Tuesday perhaps deal with—if we can get Ms. Suski in to deal with the long-term care issues.

Mr. Praznik: Personal care home or home care or both?

Mr. Chomiak: Both, if we could. Then Wednesday, we will go back to the WHA.

An Honourable Member: So we will not be doing bills on Wednesday?

Mr. Chomiak: Pardon me, Thursday. Thursday to deal with the WHA and related—something rough like that for next week might—[interjection]

Mr. Praznik: Can we do the breast program in the morning?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, and there were reasons for not dealing with it today because of commitments of our members to other things. That is the reason. [interjection] Well, I am torn with 15 minutes left whether or not I take the bait and go into my dissertation or whether I pose a number of questions to utilize the time that staff are here. [interjection]

An Honourable Member: Call it six o'clock, or you can too.

Mr. Chomiak: No, that is one thing I will not be doing. What I think I will do is I will compromise to a certain extent and try to do both, deal with a little bit of what the minister had to say and then pose a few questions. I do not like going on for long periods of time when staff is available, but I will go for a short period of time.

I am always suspicious when we have a constant reference to newspaper articles back in 1983, fifteen years ago. When that becomes the reliance and that becomes the defence of a government's position, I have always thought that it is not a very good defence, particularly when it is held out as the be-all and the end-all, particularly when you have a government that has been in power for 10 years and promised so much in terms of reform and changes to the system and delivered so little in actual fact. I mean, let us look at

it. The closure of 1,400 beds in the system, government figures. The report from 1990, they recommended the opening of 1,400 personal care home beds in Winnipeg, government figures. The government plan in 1995 to open those beds, government promise. A government plan to renege on the opening of those personal care home beds, government broken promise. The announcement in 1992 by Don Orchard of a Central Bed Registry as the be-all and the end-all, a government promise.

I mean the list goes on and on. The minister recalls when he was appointed as minister, and there was a, quote, crisis in the emergency beds, and he found cause to open beds. We have had those crises for the past years, ever since I have been critic, every single year. In fact, one year, the year previous to this new minister being appointed, the previous minister, we had to remind him of the Christmas rush and we had a requirement for open beds. The challenge from the present minister to myself, not I think a wise decision, to find beds in the system, and my proceeding to attend at some of the facilities and going up to the third floor of Misericordia and finding locked rooms with locked beds and saying to the people there, what is in these? Oh, there are beds in these rooms. What are they being used for? Oh, they have been converted to plastics. Now plastics is being shifted over to some other facility after a conversion. I mean, the list goes on and on and on.

* (1650)

The fact that the minister, yes, found 25 beds. He had to cancel elective surgery in a system that already had the longest elective surgery lists in the country. Give me a break. That was somewhat predictable. The fact that we went to St. Boniface Hospital and I looked at the list. I looked at every single person on the 16-bed list of people waiting for a bed. Not one had the flu. Not one had the flu, and I confirmed it, and I went through it with both the physicians and the nurses attending. Find me the flu cases, find me the flu bug, and the Grace Hospital saying it is not the flu bug and every single institution. [interjection]

Well, the minister says that he is told by the CEO of Winnipeg Hospital Authority. Then give me the facts and the statistics because they are not there. Having

visited every facility, having talked to individuals who are actually onsite, it could not be collaborated at all, and it was predictable. It was predictable. [interjection] Sure, there were some flu people, but the minister has yet to provide those statistics, and he knows it does not exist. The first excuse—I mean, I do not want to go on, because I will use up the entire time going down this road, and I tended not to want to do it.

The predictability of the crisis, the predictability of the bed shortage was there. There was an opportunity going in to deal with the issue, and it was not dealt with. I lay that directly on the desk of the Minister of Health. The Minister of Health can bring all of the articles he wants from 1983 to the table, but the fact was there was a failing on the part of the Department of Health to not only anticipate but adequately plan to deal with the crisis situation in Manitoba, and that has to be laid squarely on the shoulders and on the responsibility of the minister. It is not the collective responsibility of members.

I will not take the responsibility for it, because we stood up in the Legislature in the fall and advised both the minister and the government of the difficulties that they were going into, and we wrote a letter to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) on December 23 asking the Premier to do something. December 23 we wrote a letter to the Premier. That afternoon—interesting, coincidentally or not—the minister announced a short-term plan. [interjection] Well, the minister says it corresponded with his press conference. Regardless, the fact was there was an acknowledgement even then that we were actually in a crisis, and the entire issue could have been avoided and anticipated and dealt with and was not.

The reason that the woman was sitting in the hospital at Concordia was because the government did not adequately plan or attend to the situation, and the fact that the only response was to cancel elective surgery when we already had the longest waiting list in the country, to my view, certainly was an administrative response and it certainly was something that was necessitated, but it was quite predictable, but it was not necessary and it did not have to be done in that fashion.

Mr. Peter Dyck. Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

So I have taken my five minutes, and I do not want to go on, regardless whether it prompts debate or not. I wanted to put on the record a few comments with regard to this. I can indicate for the record, I could go on a lot more on this issue. But I did want to ask a couple of more questions, and it can be dealt with as the minister sees fit.

I am wondering if we could have any idea from the WHA as to what sorts of arrangements and what sort of budget or planning are going into interfacility transports as it relates to the system? Has there been earmarked or are they earmarking particular funding for interfacility transports to accommodate the shifts that may be necessitated by the new system that is being put in place?

Mr. Webster: I guess there are two components to it, because we are just in the midst of working with the city as they try to restructure the ambulance services. That is one component. The second one is looking at the whole issue of the pricing around interfacility transfers and the way they have been funded in the past and whether that is going to continue to be appropriate for funding in the future. That has just started.

Mr. Chomiak: I recognize there is a subcommittee looking at the—do we know when we might see some resolution to the issue in terms of the ambulance situation in Winnipeg? Do you know, what was their time frame on that? Are we looking at something this summer or the fall?

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, there are probably two time frames. There is the city's and there is ours. I would like to get it resolved before the end of June. Whether the city is prepared to move that quickly or not, I do not know.

Mr. Chomiak: Will the funding for the ambulance service be coming out of the Department of Health budget or will it be coming from the WHA in the future?

Mr. Webster: I have been informed, Mr. Chairperson, that the funding, which has flowed from Manitoba Health to the City of Winnipeg, in the future will be flowing through the WHA. In exchange for that, we have told the city that we want an operating agreement

between the WHA and the city to outline some deliverables that we will expect in exchange for the funding.

Mr. Chomiak: Are there any guidelines that have been put in place with respect to the number of ambulances in the city of Winnipeg vis-a-vis the population?

Mr. Webster: Mr. Chairperson, there have not been any guidelines put in place, but as we talk to the city about what our expectations are, the numbers and the deployment of those vehicles will be one of the considerations.

Mr. Chomiak: I just briefly want to return to a couple of questions of Ms. Hicks as relates to her functions in her capacity. I note that she is responsible for the rural and northern task force of the aboriginal health strategy. Can I have an update on both of those, and if possible, tabled documentation in relation to both of those?

Ms. Hicks: Yes, Mr. Chair, the rural and northern task force, we have, in the process of reorganizing the department in order to reflect the needs and the change of the system, combined the rural and northern task forces along with the previous Winnipeg and rural operations. So they are all one unit right now, and they continue to support the functions of the rural and northern regional health authorities and are also responsible for supporting the development of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority and the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority. So they are all one unit now and are bridging the transition of the services being moved in Winnipeg and also dealing with some of the issues that are still cropping up in the rural areas.

The aboriginal area that we have is a program area, and we have consolidated all our programs under one unit also, of which the aboriginal unit is part of that. Ms. Arlene Wilgosh is responsible for the new implementation support services, health authority implementation, and we have also got health programs that is headed up by Ms. Marcia Thomson.

Mr. Chomiak: Structurally though, it is interesting that it says Rural Northern Task Force—

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

Ms. Hicks: I have a correction. It is Regional Health—Regional Support Services. Sorry, Mr. Chair, I have forgotten the name of one of the major units in our department.

Mr. Chomiak: I am looking at the organization chart. It is interesting that it is Rural Northern Task Force. Why that nomenclature? Or is it just because it is the carry-over from the previous exercise, is that correct?

Ms. Hicks: Yes, it was a carry-over from the—we set up a task force when we first initially began the development of the regional health authorities. Now we are seeing that their role is far more support than it is actually a task force, so we have changed the nature of their function.

Mr. Chomiak: And the aboriginal health strategy headed up by Arlene Wilgosh. Is that specifically a program, a delivery of program support, and what is the status of it?

Ms. Hicks: Mr. Chairperson, the Regional Support Services are headed up by Ms. Wilgosh. That includes many of the members of the former task force plus the operations, former operations which were Winnipeg and rural operations. The aboriginal strategy has been rolled into health programs under Marcia Thomson and is considered to be a program within the department.

Mr. Chomiak: So we do not have a designated, or do we have a designated component area that is looking at the overall aboriginal issues as they relate to health?

Ms. Hicks: At this point, what we have in the department is we have a couple of individuals and one specifically within Ms. Marcia Thomson's area who is responsible for aboriginal health issues, and that is Ms. Loretta Bayer.

Mr. Chomiak: So an issue like, if we are to say hypothetically the issue of provision of home care services to aboriginal people, how is that handled in the department?

Ms. Hicks: Mr. Chairperson, we would take advice and there would be some communication through the program area which would be through Ms. Loretta Bayer and Ms. Marcia Thomson, but the issue that

deals with home care on First Nations and other communities would be brought to our central management table and discussed as a policy issue, and then if there was an implementation component to that, then the implementation aspect would then be expected to be interpreted to the regional health authorities and to the First Nations through the program, but the policy decisions and the planning would be done at our executive management level and at the table with the minister.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): The hour being five o'clock, time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Would the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time. We are on Resolution 16.1 Administration and Finance (c) Native Education Directorate (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): The member had asked earlier for some things to be tabled, and we have them here. I think we have three copies of each. One is the Native Studies: Senior Years (S1-S4), A Teacher's Resource Book Framework. It is Senior 1 to Senior 4. We also have the Success for All Learners: A Handbook on Differentiating Instruction, which is a resource for kindergarten to Senior 4. As well we have the Native Studies: Middle Years, Grades 5 to 8, A Teacher's Resource Book Framework. As well, we have the Native Studies: Early Years, kindergarten to four, A Teacher's Resource Book.

As well, from information asked about the technology survey, I have three reports. I would just like to read something from one of them just before I put it in.

This survey was requested yesterday during our discussion on technology in context of the educational finance committee report. It was an internal document, but now we have it on our website—we did at one point

any how have it on our website. There is a random sample of 881 schools, which shows the types of hardware, the operating systems, peripherals, Local Area Networks, access to the Internet, et cetera, including administrative applications, applications for teaching, staff development needs and technical support.

There is a summary at the end of it. Just quickly reading from the summary, it shows that this tabling contains information about the number of computers in Manitoba schools increasing substantially over the period from '86 to '97. Since the '95 survey, however, the number of computers in Manitoba schools has steadily increased in all Manitoba districts. The number of Apple/Macintosh computers in Manitoba schools has decreased from 92 percent in '86-87 to 34 percent in '97. DOS computers currently represent approximately 66 percent of the computers in Manitoba schools, so they are switching from one to the other.

The largest number of computers in Manitoba schools are DOS 486s. The number of DOS Pentium computers in schools reporting increased by 11 percent between '95 and '97. Approximately 19 percent of computers have 16 MBs or more RAMs. Approximately 27 percent of computers in Manitoba schools have sound or CD-ROM capability. The number of computers being used in classrooms is expected to continue as curriculum and technology are increasingly integrated. Subject areas including language arts, mathematics and technology education use computers in the classroom on a regular and frequent basis.

Relatedly, schools reporting across regions identified a strong need for professional development in the area of curriculum-matched software from multimedia to support learning. In addition, 84 percent of schools reporting said that technology can best support teaching and learning through curriculum-matched software.

The most frequently used operating system is Windows, three times, 60 percent of schools reporting. In 1997 almost 70 percent of schools reporting indicated they have a Local Area Network. Seventy-five percent have an e-mail address. Thirty-two percent of the schools still use SchoolNet, and 38 percent have a home page. Almost twice as many rural and northern

schools were likely to have a home page when compared to the urban centres, so in that respect the northern schools are more advanced than others.

* (1440)

Few schools indicated they have business industry partners who assisted them to acquire and implement technology, although we certainly would encourage that if industry is interested. Trevlac continues to be the most frequently used software for scheduling and timetabling and for grade reporting and attendance. Most technical support is provided by a school division technician or school division or co-ordinator, although this varied by region.

Approximately 40 percent of schools indicated that they had used the services of MERLIN, and 25 percent indicated they had visited the Manitoba Education and Training home page. This response was significantly higher in the urban schools than in other districts in Manitoba.

In the last 10 years, Manitoba schools have acquired computers and gained experience in a variety of applications. Increasingly, computers are being used in the classroom to increase students' learning outcomes. Schools are responding to the changing role of technology in education. Schools indicated a need for curriculum-matched software and professional development activities to support them to respond to the current challenge of integrating curriculum and technology.

That is a summary of what is in this document I am about to table, Mr. Chairman. We have three copies there. This was requested by the member yesterday.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Chairman, at the end of last time, we were looking at the implementation of a strategy of teaching aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum. The minister had made reference to a document on the implementation of the math curriculum, and I had asked her to indicate in that curriculum where aboriginal material was presented or aboriginal perspectives. The minister, I think, then suggested this was not the place to ask it, and we went round a few things on that.

But I wanted to ask particularly about the implementation of the math curriculum, because I was not clear from the minister's statement whether in fact there was an implementation document for math or not and whether in fact there are aboriginal perspectives in that, not necessarily to discuss it now, but simply is there, and I will put it on my list to discuss it in the right place.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, yes, there are mathematics implementation documents for K to 4 and 5 to 8. She is right. I did say that, and I am confirming that, yes, I did say that, and that is the answer. We will have a report for tabling on Monday, and we will extract from that for her benefit those portions of the curriculum that are specifically with aboriginal perspectives in mathematics. I believe that is what she is looking for. So staff will compile those out of the document for her where they appear.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to ask about—and we can pass both lines at once—something under the Other Expenditures, and that is the increase in funds this time under this line for desk-top services. Can the minister explain what is proposed to be published under that particular increase? It goes from zero, I believe, in '97 to 4.7 in '98-99.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, this is the prorata share of the government's cost to shift desktop management to Systemhouse.

* (1450)

Ms. Friesen: I would like two things following from that. One is: could the minister give us an indication of a two- or three-year plan for that? Is it likely to be the same amount each year? I understand there is a full government contract with Systemhouse of which each department is then charged a portion. Is this going to change over the next three years, or is this what we are likely to see each year? Secondly, the capital as a 27 point—this big increase from 4.5 to 27.5 for capital under Other Expenditures. I wonder if the minister could explain what that will be used for.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, regarding future costs, these numbers for '98-99 are projected to go to about 5.4, about 500,000–5,400. I am not sure. You know

on doing projections, you are never absolutely positive. They should stay about that level once they get there. We have 27.5 capital, those are for increased costs for IT renewal, and staff is just looking up the other figures that you had asked for.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I wonder while the staff is doing that if the minister could explain what she means by IT renewal? I assume that is information technology renewal, and it is not interactive television, for example, in this context, and what exactly that means, \$27,000, and what will it be used for? Obviously, it indicates a shift in this section of the department. You only used 4,000 last year; this year there is 27,000. That is a bit of a jump. Can the minister explain what will be done this year that was not done last year?

Mr. Chairperson: If I could just take a moment of your time, when you are being recognized, if you could wait till your light comes on on your microphone. These microphones are a little slower than the ones before. They take a second to energize. That way we will get your full statement.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, yes, IT renewal is information technology renewal, and I think the member knows what that means. I think she was just asking if IT did in fact stand for information renewal. I am pretty certain she understands what information renewal itself means. If not, I certainly welcome a question on it, but that is what it means.

The difference between this year, when we said we expect them to go to about \$5,400 and then we are also looking at \$25,000, we have added two new staff and those staff need to be equipped in terms of furniture, equipment, et cetera, plus we moved them to a different location. That is the reason for the difference in those two amounts but, as I say, we expect that once they get to the '98-99 level on the \$5,400, they probably stay at about that level.

Ms. Friesen: The bottom line for expenditures in this section '97-98 was 212. I wonder if the minister could tell us what the actuals were?

Mrs. McIntosh: It is still being compiled, but staff indicates they expect it will be very close to that

amount. They do not have the final figuring completed yet.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the item pass—pass.

16.1.(c) Native Education Directorate (2) Other Expenditures \$90,600—pass.

16.1. (d) Human Resource Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$565,100.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I have added to the staff component here this afternoon one Mr. Jack Gillespie from Human Resources Department of Education and Training.

Ms. Friesen: This section of the department appears to have undergone a considerable shift in that it now has become part of a larger service organization to a number of other sections of government, and I wonder if the minister could perhaps indicate what implications this has for changes in the department? Does it mean that there are fewer resources allocated to the department for this area? Could she indicate what are the six operating agencies that the Human Resource Services in this consolidation will cover?

* (1500)

Mrs. McIntosh: We are still being provided with the same degree and quality of service in human resources that we were prior to Mr. Gillespie assuming other duties as well as those particularly relating to our department.

Ms. Friesen: The second part of the question dealt with which of the six operating agencies that are part of this consolidation, departments to be served by one human resource service.

Mrs. McIntosh: Property Registry, MERLIN, Manitoba Textbook Bureau, Vital Statistics, Fire Commissioner's office, Companies Office.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us who deals with the human resources policies for the Council on Post-Secondary Education?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Gillespie would do that.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us how many new appointments there have been in the department this year, and how many of those were done by open competition?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could just seek some clarification from the member on her question. Does she mean the total number of staffing actions that have taken place by competition or does she mean have we added new positions or taken away new positions, if like we added new positions and had competitions or do you mean the total actions that took place across the department without adding or deleting any positions?

Ms. Friesen: I am interested in the first instance in new positions. How many were filled by open competition?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, we will come back with the number of positions on Monday, but I can indicate that, if you include the new federal employees that we have taken, we have got well over a hundred here including them. Yes, there are 118 there alone that we took over from the federal government on devolution of the labour market agreement because of the labour market agreement. Those, of course, were not open to competition because the people were coming with the positions, but I will get the exact numbers.

Mr. Gillespie advises me that pretty well all of these were done by open competition. There may have been a couple that were closed or internal. We will get the details on those too. Pardon me, we may have those details here, sort of case by case, but the exact number department-wide, as I said, will be well over a hundred. But we do not know until we go back and pull them out and check through, which we will do for the member.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, for purposes of the analysis, I think you can group as one group those who were transferred and then let us look at the other ones individually as to new positions and those which were either filled or intended to be filled by open competition.

I wanted to ask the minister, secondly, about Order-in-Council appointments and how many there have been this year in the department, and how many Order-in-Council appointees there are in the department as a whole as it stands at the moment.

*(1510)

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not believe there were any in this last year, unless the member is referring as well to those O/Cs for board appointments such as boards of governors at universities and those types of things because there would be several of those, but in terms of staff for the department such as the deputy, for example, who is appointed by O/C, I do not think we have had any in this last year. Mr. Gillespie will go back and check the records, but he does not recall any for this year either.

We have two deputies and three assistant deputies and Dick Dawson from the Council on Post-Secondary Education. They have all been there for more than a year. I do not believe we have any others in the department. We will double-check it for her though.

Ms. Friesen: Is the minister then saying that to her knowledge there are only six Order-in-Council appointees in the department?

Mrs. McIntosh: It is either that, or, if we are out we are out by about one, outside two. We will double-check it, but certainly we believe this is correct; that this is all we have got. We may have one more. I doubt we have two more.

Ms. Friesen: The majority of the department will have been appointed by open competition through the Civil Service. There will also be people who are on contract and people who are seconded. Is there another category of employee?

Mrs. McIntosh: I think these people are already included here unless the member is referring to my own executive and special assistants, but they too have both been there more than a year, I believe. Mr. Lockhart may be within the year, but I do not think so, and Mrs. Hall has been there for four years.

Just for clarification, we have three areas that we look at in terms of categories, just to make sure we are all talking about the same thing. By open competition, we mean right across government; closed competition, we would mean like within the Department of Education and Training; secondments are pretty well always done by competition, as well from our experience here. If by open competition she means right across government, well, let us just say that is what we mean so that when the member is asking questions she will know that we are interpreting it that way. Open is right across government, closed is within the Department of Education and Training and secondments, from our experience, have pretty well always been by competition as well. There is also open to the public, and that would come under that first open across government and beyond, sort of thing, not limited to the department.

Ms. Friesen: That is what I meant, open ones where people can apply from other departments and from outside government. I am actually interested in the minister's including secondments as that, because I understood secondments to actually be something rather more pointed, more directed, more selected, more initiated by the department rather than by an open competition. Closed ones, I think we are on the same wave length. My question really is: can the minister clarify that secondment, but also could the department give me an account of how many people in the department are on contract rather than in regular appointments?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, we are gathering the one piece of information that the member had requested, but just in terms of the secondments, we very much believe in trying to provide as much opportunity from the field coming into the department to be part of what is happening in Education and Training, so what we do is we will, if we need an expert in an area, be it, well I will just say music, for example, or whatever, we will advertise to the school divisions and people who are interested in the school divisions can apply. We do it by open formal competition, the same as if it were a position to be filled, and then at the end of the competition the person who has won the competition, so to speak, is then seconded to the department for a period of time.

In this way, we get a really good variety of people. We also then get to find people that we might not be able to find on our own. By advertising it as a competition, people will come forward that we (a) may not know or (b) if we did know, we may not have realized they had this interest.

So I think it is a much better way of seconding from the field, because we have to second so many people from the field to come in and assist with various chores. We feel this is the most effective, most open, most fair way to do it to give everybody an opportunity as well. I know it was not done in the past necessarily, but when we came into government, we thought it was the preferred way to find experts in the field.

* (1520)

Having said that, there will be occasions when we will second directly without going through a competition process. Almost invariably for a position where we need somebody to come in from the field for a couple of years to work on a particular area of endeavour, it will be open competition, but, for example, my special advisor, Mr. Masters, was chosen directly, was a direct appointment, a secondment, as opposed to going through a competition, but the vast majority are through competition. I know it is unusual, but we do find some wonderful people that way that we did not know were there in other things.

Mr. Gillespie has just indicated that we do not have any at the present time. No one in the department at the present time is on a contract, which was, I think, the start to your question there, start to the member's question—sorry, through you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure then if we are actually speaking about the same thing in terms of contracts. There are obviously professional fees, professional contracts throughout the department. That would be one category, and then there would be a second category of people who are on term appointments, which I perhaps should have referred to more precisely.

If there are no people who are on actual contracts as defined by the civil service, how many are there on

professional contracts and how many are term appointments?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, as I indicated, we have no staff on a professional-fee contract. We do have term appointments, however. We have no staff on a professional-fee contract. We have term appointments, and the exact number we will table with the other information on Monday when we come back because we do not have the exact number.

The term appointments, they are sort of short-term projects, bring someone in, do the work and they go. We will have some that are a bit longer working on special projects. We do not have the exact number of term appointments with this. We can count it up, though, and bring it in for you Monday, and we will do that. We also have casual staff that will come in from time to time, which are different from term appointments, but, as I say, no staff on a professional fee contract.

Ms. Friesen: In this section of the department, and I am on to Other Expenditures, there is a large increase in Operating and in Desktop Services again. Could the minister tell me whether this also is part of the ISM contract or Systemhouse contract and what the increase is for the operating capital?

Mrs. McIntosh: The short answer is yes, and it is similar to the question on the aboriginal directorate. It is a pro rata share, this time from human resources.

Ms. Friesen: Are we speaking specifically about the Desktop Services? The 26.5 is the ISM contract?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Friesen: The other part of my question dealt with the \$40,000, which is a \$30,000 increase from last year on Other Operating.

* (1530)

Mrs. McIntosh: What we have is the coming together of five departments, and six special operating agencies, and what you see in this \$30,000 increase are two components: the pro rata cost due to desktop, and the new staff having come from the other departments with

their operating dollars. You had two staff come in from Labour, one and a half from Housing, one from Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and they managed to accomplish all that with an increase of only 13.8—\$13,800, which I think is really extremely good when you consider the amalgamation that has taken place there. The total shows then a \$30,300 increase, and that is the way it is broken down.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I do not understand the impact of this on education. Why were \$30,000 from other departments being charged to the Department of Education? There has been no change in function, there has been no change in service. Yet, all of a sudden, there is a \$30,000 increase additional charge. So why would this be charged to Education? This is not an Education cost from what the minister has just said.

Mrs. McIntosh: Sorry for the delay. Just in consulting with staff, and the member is quite correct, we were in error here and appreciate her picking it up and pointing it out. The 13.8 that we were referencing in actuality is an increase of 3.8 for computer training with the 26.5 being the desktop prorated. There was no extra cost of amalgamation because it was done by an adjusted vote, so I hope that corrects or clarifies for her what she correctly identified as an error.

* (1540)

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister table the department's Manitoba Measures business plan?

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not believe I am able to do that. My indication given here by my senior staff is that that is an internal document. It is in that category we were discussing the other day of work that is internal, it is for our own purposes. It is our understanding that it is not a public document. We can double check on that, but that is my understanding, and that being the case, then it would not be available for public tabling, unless the member has—maybe she can define what it is she is referring to.

Ms. Friesen: What I am referring to, Mr. Chairman, is what I am being asked to vote upon here and that is the Activity Identification in 16.1(d) which says that this section of the department is to develop the skills and

knowledge, the departmental role and mission statements, critical success factors and objectives as reflected in each department's Manitoba Measures business plan.

This is one section of the department where it specifically refers to the Manitoba Measures business plan, and I certainly do encourage the minister to check on whether this is a confidential document or not. I thought it was bizarre enough that increasing the graduation rate of aboriginal students was a confidential plan for so long. Now we find out the business plan is confidential for a department, and yet we are being asked to vote on it.

That does not seem appropriate to me, and I compare it to Alberta, for example, where business plans are put out to the public, where reviews are held of them, public reviews. They are published. They are re-evaluated every three years, the rolling business plan. They are not business plans I particularly like, but the public process is very clear. Alberta is very unjustly proud of that, and yet here we have a Manitoba Measures business plan which the minister is trying to tell me I should vote on and yet it is confidential.

How do I know, how does any Manitoban know whether this department is meeting the objectives as reflected in the department's business plan if we are not allowed to see the business plan?

Mrs. McIntosh: As I said to the member, we will do the double check to see what the status of the particular document is. The line here indicates that part of Human Resource's responsibilities will be to assist in various activities to make sure that plan is tested. It is in pilot stage. It is internal. It is developmental, and it is for the future.

We will, as I say, seriously take a look at what the member has requested, but I think she would know and acknowledge that things that are underway and in pilot stage and being tested, parts of the government are still in that developmental stage. There are aspects of confidentiality normally associated with them, as I know she felt it was bizarre that in developing the aboriginal policy that the staff did not speak publicly about the policy until government had approved it. But I do not think that is bizarre, and it was the same

methodology used by her government when it was in power.

* (1550)

Their policies were not announced until they had received government approval, and up until that point no matter how bizarre members opposite might have thought it to be, it was still deemed to be something that did not yet officially exist as a government thing. We are still learning and growing in terms of business planning and in terms of these particular plans, in terms of writing them, and understanding their nature and purpose. So our plan is very rudimentary right now, and the integral part of learning is teaching. In human resources, staff are being given opportunity to learn about the topic and indeed learn the skills of planning in a business plan format.

So because it is at this stage in its development, I am not certain that it is something that is able to be tabled. I will check and find out. But I think the member understands the sensitivities that we are discussing. The reference in the book refers not to the plans so much, but in context and activity that human resources does, and that activity is to see that this thing is being monitored and does not mean that it is in final stage for public accessibility.

So, as I say, I will go and take a look at that and make sure that my interpretation is correct, but I would rather err on the side of caution than noncaution. I can let the member know, and if I am able to I will table it. If I am not, I will come back with the rationale that—[interjection] Well, this is right. As I said before, the plan is still in its developmental stages. It is rudimentary, and that is about all I can say at this time.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, well, I certainly encourage the minister to do that. The Manitoba Measures business plan, of course, has had no input from the public, something which is quite unlike the experience in Alberta. It is one of three areas, three activity identifications in this section of the department, so I am surprised that the minister now refers to it—it is referred to as in the past and completed tense on page 30 of the book that we are working from, the detailed Estimates—and the minister now refers to it as rudimentary and in the process of development.

I am not going to spend anymore time on that. It is just very indicative I think of the secretive nature of this government, and I think the minister makes a mistake if she is emphasizing my concerns about the confidentiality of the government's strategic plan. What strikes me as bizarre about it is that we are to assume that the desire to increase aboriginal graduation rates, participation rates and partnership with the aboriginal community did not exist before this plan. I mean, that is what is so bizarre about it, and that that whole aspect of government goals and policy should become confidential, secretive, unable to be discussed with the stakeholders in education seems to me really very, very odd. Now we are up to another secretive measure, something which other provinces have found great benefit in talking to the public about.

So I encourage the government to talk to the public. The public is very interested in government efficiency. It is very interested in their Alberta business plans. Different sections of the Alberta community have made a great effort to be involved in that. There are three-year rolling plans that the department, that the public, that the stakeholders are all very clearly aware of, and that is not what is happening here.

I think the minister's staff is encountering some of the out from the fallout from this when they do go out and are met, as they often are, with questions and hostility and indications that they would like to have more input into the department and into the policies and, as the minister has indicated, yes, into the speed at which some of the plans from the department are coming.

So I recommend to the department that they do involve the public, they do involve the stakeholders in their three-year or five-year or, God, any-year development plans for this department and for the Administration and Finance, as well as for the programming of the department. The isolation of the department from so many areas of the stakeholders, in terms of planning and development of long-term goals, seems to me to be one of the long-term difficulties that is emerging in education.

So, Mr. Chairman, with that, I am prepared to have the government pass this line. I feel great difficulty in myself voting on anything on which I have not been shown and which appears to be quite unnecessarily

secretive, and on which the public has had no input either.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the item pass—pass; 1.(d) Human Resource Services (2) Other Expenditures \$93,700—pass.

Item 16.1.(e) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,004,300.

Ms. Friesen: I want to go back to last year's Estimates and to the Auditor's report. The Auditor made a number of specific recommendations to the department, and, again, I raised these questions last year. I thought the Auditor made some very good points about reporting. He congratulated the department on its annual reporting, that it had become much speedier. I would also like to add my congratulations again to the department this year and a very speedy report in turning out the annual report.

The other elements of the Auditor's Report, which the minister expressed interest in and concern for last year, do not seem to have changed. There does not seem to be any response. Now maybe I am missing this, so maybe I could ask the minister to tell me: In what ways has the department responded to the Auditor's Report from two years ago? When we met last year in Estimates, it was obvious that the department had not had time to make changes. Printing and preparation obviously took more time than made it possible to respond to the Auditor's report. But this year we are in the second year, and I would have expected some changes.

I am not clear that there have been the changes that the Auditor was recommending, and I am asking on the basis of a second year now of how the government has responded to them and what plans they have for the future in this area.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the Auditor's report, well, that is two years back, but going from memory, focused on results and outcomes, and in response to that report we have done a number of things. We have established a planning committee, a school division department planning committee on realignment. We have better information in the supplement via more specific statements. We have begun the indicators

project that you referred to earlier in Estimates. Those were specific responses, not just to the Auditor's report because the indicators project is a proper response to a number of questions. Certainly it is a proper response to the Auditor's report from that era. Those are the types of things that we have done to focus in on results and outcomes as indicated by the Auditor two years ago.

As I say, we have come prepared for this year's Estimates. We do not have the older documents that predate this, but that is what we can recall, as accurate response to the member's question.

* (1600)

Ms. Friesen: Well, I think what the Auditor was talking about was communication, first of all, and fragmentation of material and documentation of education issues. On page 72, for example, of the Auditor's report, he talked about that the acts and regulations governing the reporting requirements for public school programs do not clearly outline the requirement for the members of the Legislative Assembly to be provided with sufficient and appropriate planning and performance indication.

The minister has said, and I think I am getting her response to this one, that she has established a planning committee with school divisions on realignment. Is that the answer to that Auditor's question, and realignment of what?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the alignment we are talking about is the committee on planning realignment to ensure that all the planning that goes out to divisions and everything is well co-ordinated and not at cross purposes with each other. The Auditor had wanted to see our goals, objectives, those kinds of things in legislation. We have chosen a nonregulatory approach. We know that our New Directions blueprint Foundation for Excellence documents have aspects of them that are legislated or have some regulations attached to them, which is what the Auditor wants to see more of. We have responded by issuing directives to divisions, still basically nonregulatory.

It might help the member if I tabled the planning document which is called Planning in Education:

Strengthening School Division Planning as a Step Towards Aligning Department, Division and School Planning. So the realignment that I mention and refer to is that those three areas, which each on its own has planning components, that we are aligned. I think this would please the Auditor to see this document because it does help make sure that things are—I do not have three copies. I just have one. Could you make the copies? Thank you. So that is what that alignment referred to. As I say, we have chosen a nonregulatory approach. We do provide directives to the divisions on many of these issues. I hope that document on alignment will provide further information for the member.

* (1610)

Mr. Chairman, I was just wondering, it is 10 after four. We have been here since 1:30, and we will be here till six. Would it be appropriate to take a 10-minute break? Would the member—I would appreciate one at this point, and come back in about 10 minutes, just stretch a bit?

Mr. Chairperson: Recess for 10 minutes.

The committee recessed at 4:11 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4.23 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: The committee will come to order.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure if the minister has put on the record—is this being a tabled document, or is it just passed to me? Do we need to put it on the record? [interjection] It was? Okay.

I still want to talk about the Auditor's Report and the department's response to it, and I wonder if the department made a formal response to the Auditor's Report. Is there a written document whereby departments do this on a regular basis if they are referred to specifically in the Auditor's Report? And secondly, I want to particularly ask about the Auditor's recommendation that public school program costs be

brought together for the purposes of reporting to the Legislative Assembly.

He drew the public's attention to the fact that they are fragmented through the Estimates, and he also mentioned that normally he or she would anticipate that the obstacles to successful completion of activities were not mentioned in the department's reporting, and he anticipated that all departments would do this. So I wondered whether (a) there was a formal report and (b) and (c) whether the department had responded to both those concerns of the Auditor.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, we are at a bit of a disadvantage in that the report the member is referring to, of course, is two years old, and we do not have it here. We are getting it faxed over, but we have come, as I said, with this year's stuff, because it was this year's Estimates. So we will get it sent over.

But in terms of where our response to the report is, as the member knows in terms of how the Auditor does the report, our response is right in the report. The Auditor will do the examination, will come up with ideas, will sit down and discuss those with the department, the department will provide a response, and the Auditor will say something like I believe the department should do such and such, and the department has indicated that it will or it will not or it will try this other thing. So the response is right in the report, and we do not normally then write to the Auditor to tell the Auditor what our response is when it has already been discussed in-depth and is included in the Auditor's Report.

Then we do go on, of course, and if we have said to the Auditor that we are going to improve our Estimates supplement to include more outcome statements, if we have said that to the Auditor, then, of course, we begin to do that. Eventually it may be that we will move to a more complete report to the Legislature as the member indicates, but we are not doing that right now. We have to indicate as well, regarding the Auditor's report, that the Auditor in that report—although, as I say, because it is an old one, we do not have it here—did reference that we had good financial reporting but needed to improve on performance reporting. So, with that, then it was good to know that we had good financial reporting and good to know where we should improve on performance reporting.

So we went to the FRAME committee and the view was that it was broader than the mandate and the impact needed for input of schools, school divisions, superintendents, et cetera. But that led us ultimately to this thing that I have just tabled: Strengthening School Division Planning as a Step towards Aligning Department, Division and School Planning. Part of that would be how to do each report to their public on outcomes, but an intervening matter, of course, is the way all of government is wanting to change how it does business. The Better Methods, Better Systems, desktop management, Manitoba Measures activities—these, as they come to fruition, will help address some of those goals and concerns. They are coming to fruition, and they will help us meet the Auditor's expectations.

* (1630)

So this report that we have just tabled, I think, will indicate the number of people from various organizations that have been involved just because the member was concerned before that we were sort of internal and not consulting and secretive and so on; but, if you look at the number of people who have been involved here and the places and the areas from which they come and you see that we have the Teachers' Society, the department, the school trustees' association, the superintendents' association. We have the Association of School Business Officials. Those are pretty broad. As a broad knowledge base and broad experience base in terms of education experience, that is there.

Another important piece, of course, in response to the Auditor will be a fully developed set of indicators, again working with other educational groups to ensure that we are on the right track. Not only will that be done and worked with in conjunction with the Manitoba Teachers' Society, but also with the minister's advisory committee on the implementation of educational change, which not only has MTS, MAST and MASS, but it also has the parent organizations. It has principals; it has independent schools, public schools, department people, teachers, trustees, superintendents. It is a very large and very diverse committee. So those indicators, I think, when they are completed, will be very good. I think that, if the member looks through this little draft document, she

will get a sense of where we are going on the Planning in Education and what we meant by realigning there.

We will have the Auditor's report faxed to us. We still have it around, even though it is a couple of years old; they are still on file. If the member has other documents from years gone by that she would like us to be looking at in this year's Estimates, if we could know ahead of time, we would make sure we could dig them out of the files and bring them along with us, because we are not unwilling to talk about them. It is just that we come prepared for this year's Estimates, being that is what we were told to come and do. I am happy to explore the others, happy to explore the future, even though we cannot always table future decisions, because they are not yet made, and happy to explore the past and check progress, no problem. We need to know which documents we need to have here if it is not going to be this year.

There may be more to this that the member would like to ask. I will pause and if she has more I will try to respond to those for her also.

Ms. Friesen: I could point out to the minister that if she had checked Estimates from last year, we did raise these questions. We did recognize in Estimates last year that there had not been time between the Auditor's Report and the production of this year's Estimates for the department to begin to move in the direction that the Auditor had suggested, so it seems to me it would have been remiss on my part had I not brought this up again and given the department the opportunity to respond. So I do not think the minister should be dismissing this as a matter of old documents and bringing things from two years ago.

I recognized last year the department had not had the time to move on a couple of these issues and looked forward to seeing what changes the department is going to bring this time. The minister has tabled a document called Planning an Education, which certainly helps to understand the use of the term "alignment" and "planning an alignment," but it still seems to me not to answer the issues that the Auditor has raised, which are directions and suggestions to the department on how they will communicate and how they ought to be communicating the overall funding of education.

I think I have already said this before in this section, that the Auditor recognized that in Estimates public school program costs are fragmented. I am quoting directly from what I said last year. I am quoting directly from what the Auditor said. I had anticipated that that was a relatively simple and straightforward change to make, that the Public Schools Finance Board, that the educational support levy, all of the other elements of education financing could be reported relatively simply by the department in one document, and that was what the Auditor recommended. He recommended it in a number of places, the communication of education financing.

I wonder, the department last year seemed interested in it. I can quote the minister's words at her, but I do not seem to have seen any changes. I thought that was something that the government would have been interested in doing that would have benefited the public, that was nonpartisan and yet I do not see any changes. That is why I asked the department what changes they had made and what changes they intended to make.

I would like to ask, under this section of the department, about some differences in financing of this section of the department. I wonder if the minister could tell me something about the elimination of the five support positions offset by the establishment of sustainable development functions and desktop services. To which of those initiatives do we attribute the loss of five positions? Is it 2.5 in each one or which one brought in the most realignment? Were jobs lost or were positions reassigned to other areas of the department?

I have another question about the increase in Other Expenditures, but I will leave that for a minute.

Mrs. McIntosh: First of all, I appreciate the clarification provided by the member on the Auditor's Report and want to indicate that in no way was I dismissing the report or displaying any reluctance to discuss it, just regretting rather that I did not have the document here to ease the discussion. As I say it is being faxed but quite happy to discuss it, no problem. I appreciate the clarification she has provided around that.

In answer to the question about the five positions, we had policy and planning being done differently in the department. There were five staff there that were redeployed. There were no layoffs. There was one new position for sustainable development and the other costs added were for desktop management, so there were, in short, to sum it up, no jobs lost in that sense. The people are all still employed. They just have different places where they are working now than where they worked before.

* (1640)

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister explain what the department's sustainable development initiative is and does she have a document that she can table on that? The second question is the change from '97 to '98 in Other Expenditures. It goes from \$34,000 in one column to \$106,000 in '98-99. What is the reason for that shift?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the duties of this person would be to serve as a liaison with the Sustainable Development Unit in government, especially regarding the provincial strategy, to lead the co-ordination within the kindergarten to Senior 4 and with post-secondary because, as you know, sustainable development is one of those threads that were—

An Honourable Member: Buzzwords.

Mrs. McIntosh: No, the member for Burrows has said buzzword, and that is a very strong disservice to a worldwide concept that has—[interjection] Beg your pardon?

An Honourable Member: Buzzword is not pejorative.

Mrs. McIntosh: It is pejorative. Well, in my opinion, usually people say buzzword as if it is sort of trendy or faddish and easily dismissed, and the member is nodding that that is what he meant. But I am so deeply and profoundly committed to the ideas that were outlined in the Brundtland Report and I know the Premier (Mr. Filmon) as well. I know the Premier going down to Rio to head up international interests, and I know as a member of the Learning for a Sustainable Future conference and committee, which I am missing next week but I will not refer to, is like this

is an incredible, incredible thrust that is absolutely necessary if we are to sustain our planet and our way of life and still be able to progress. It is critical.

There are some things that I think are critical that need to be threaded through the curriculum, and this is one of them. Maybe it is trendy. It may be a trendy word or a trendy phrase and maybe it has become fashionable, but it has got a powerful reason, I guess, for having become popular. At any rate, a little aside there. I know the member for Burrows does have a true and honest feel for environmental protection, and I know he is sincere about that. Maybe we need to get together sometime and co-ordinate our definitions, because I have a feeling that we probably do not really think too differently on this issue. It is semantics and partisan positioning that would make it seem as if we have different views.

At any rate, back to the liaison with various parts of government, anywhere that sustainable development is being encountered. This person will also conduct school level workshops as time permits, review government and departmental documents, exams, curricula, from a sus dev perspective. We do not ever want, as we are going through curricula, as we are going through science and geography and history, to be encouraging in any way students to think that progress can be made in this world without strong attention to environmental issues. We have really good, sensitive mikes now, as the deputy has just found out. I was trying to indicate earlier today or yesterday I guess to one of the MLAs that the mikes do work. We do not have to shout anymore, and when we bump them we really know that that is true.

The policy on this that the staffperson will be working with, the government of Manitoba has made sustainable development the cornerstone of its environmental, economic and social agenda. We do not, for example, undertake things if we think they cannot be sustainable, and it is not just that we say in terms of the environment that we will not embark upon industries if in some way it is going to make the natural resources or raw products from which we derive the industry unsustainable. Similarly, we do not embark upon economic or social agenda that are not going to be sustainable. That then challenges the mind to ensure ways of determining that certain beneficial thrusts

become sustainable, and it forces the mind to focus in very wonderful ways.

The department, under the guidance of what used to be called the Manitoba Round Table on Environment and Economy, has been assigned responsibility to lead the development of Manitoba Sustainable Development Education Strategy. We have resources that are therefore required for the associated consultations, for the document preparation and eventual implementation in Manitoba, and, Mr. Chairman, in light of Bill 61, which is The Sustainable Development Act, and its significant implications for Education and Training as a whole, the department will also undertake activities to co-ordinate and strengthen its response to sustainable development.

* (1650)

Those activities will include things such as co-ordinating the implementation of sustainable development of all Education and Training initiatives, policies, programs and activities and in administering and monitoring education-related sus dev innovation fund projects assigned to the department by the Sustainable Development Committee of Cabinet.

So we have those initiatives underway, and I just want to, because I think it is confusing sometimes as to what sustainable development is really all about—I think this is an extremely important area, and I would like to have anybody who is reading the Hansard on this do some more research into it. I will not go through and read the Brundtland Report into the record because that would be taking us forever, but it is something I would love to be able to do in terms of those people who may be listening on the electronic communications or who may be following this by written words in Hansard.

Do get hold of the Brundtland Report. Do read what sustainable development is all about. Try to learn why it is so important and why it has become the cornerstone of our government and is being seen nationally as absolutely vital to the continued growth and prosperity of the nation in which we live called Canada and why it has become an internationally accepted thrust and why so many people around the world are trying to bring in countries that are not yet familiar with this concept to make them part of a

worldwide effort to treat our planet the way it deserves to be treated and to see our economy and our society in terms of that same sustainable milieu.

In short, if you ask the question, what is sustainable development—

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: I did not ask what sustainable development was; I asked the minister if she had a document on the Manitoba educational sustainable development strategy that she could table, and the minister seemed to have strayed a long way from that question. There was a second question which also dealt with increased resources in a certain area of the department.

Mrs. McIntosh: Same point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I did not realize the honourable member was on a point of order.

The honourable minister, on the same point of order.

Mrs. McIntosh: The member had asked for our strategy on sustainable development. We do not have a document. What I am explaining to the member is the principles behind the strategy. I do not have a document to table, so I am trying to provide her verbally with the information she has requested and to define what we mean by sustainable development because I was given indication earlier that perhaps there was a different definition being understood from members opposite. So, in order to clarify what our strategy is, I must first define what it is we mean by sustainable development, and I am also very highly conscious of the fact the member stressed our first day, and that was she stressed that I was not answering her.

I was speaking for the record for the people of Manitoba. She stressed that, and I accept that. So I think her point of order—I am doing exactly what she has asked me to do.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I will deal with one point of order at a time. The honourable member does not have a point of order on the first one. It is a dispute over the facts.

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Wolseley, on another point of order.

Ms. Friesen: Yes, the point of order is that the minister is, for whatever reason, misinterpreting what I said. I think one of the things a minister is being judged on in Estimates is her ability to answer questions. First of all, demonstrate an understanding of the issues facing Manitoba Education, and secondly to respond publicly to the record to the questions asked by the official opposition.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I would like—the honourable member does not have a point of order. I would like to remind the member that a point of order should be brought up when we are moving away from the rules of the House, not necessarily on whether how somebody is asking the question. The honourable member for Wolseley, to put the question or were you answering.

* * *

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

Mrs. McIntosh: The member had a two-part question: one was the strategy on sustainable development, and the other was regarding some financial figures. I will give the second part first, come back to the definition. I do think it is important the definition of sustainable development enter the record here, if I am to be truly accountable and judged on my answers. To leave that out would be a gross omission.

If you were asked, what is sustainable development, then you would get according to the government's perspective a response that would indicate that there are three components, life on earth is a complex system of interdependent components. These three components: human beings experience environmental, economy, societal health and well-being all play a pivotal role in determining our quality of life. As a result, the environment, the life-sustaining processes of the earth and its natural resources; the economy, the provision of jobs, incomes and wealth resulting from economic activity; and societal health and well-being, which is

the overall health and well-being of individuals and communities are all interdependent. A change in any one has a significant impact on the others.

Education then has a vital role to play in promoting and fostering an understanding of this integration. It must support the balance of preserving and protecting the environment while maintaining human development that is sustainable, and this is why it is one of our cornerstones. It is why we have The Sustainable Development Act. We have material and booklets on this. I invite anybody who is listening to this on electronic media or reading it in Hansard to ask for those documents and learn about sustainable development. I know I am doing a bit of proselytization here, a little evangelism, but it is such an important subject area.

In terms of the second part of the member's question, the net decrease in operating expenditures of \$75,600 is due to an increase of \$125,000 for sustainable development, an additional 22.9 to increase allotment for desktop management, for a total of \$49,700, less reductions of \$54,300 due to the wind-up of planning and policy co-ordination and a decrease in the rate charged for accommodations. So I think those two responses, I hope, have covered the question that the member opposite asked.

Ms. Friesen: I was looking for a specific answer on the reason for the shift from \$34,000 to \$106,000 this year. It was quite a specific question. The minister has given me a global response, and it is I believe the second or third time I have posed the question, so I do not believe it is unreasonable to request an answer.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, what I provided the member is the total difference between the two. Staff has just indicated looking at the time that there probably would not be time in the next 60 seconds to get the breakdown that she has requested out of that total, but we could have it for the next time we come together to sit.

Mr. Chairperson: I think that would be appropriate if the minister's staff would take the time to get the proper answer for the next time we are sitting. We will now call it five o'clock. Time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

* (1700)

IN SESSION

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., time for private members' hour.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 20—Literacy Programs

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck),

“WHEREAS Manitobans are being provided with the opportunities to acquire and maintain basic literacy skills in reading, writing, computing and problem-solving; and

“WHEREAS the Provincial Government is also dedicated to ensuring that all Manitobans have an opportunity to achieve computer literacy; and

“WHEREAS literacy is one of four foundation skills areas that are required from K to S4 classrooms; and

“WHEREAS literacy programs are responsible for the coordination and management of a range of community-based and workplace literacy programs that provide employed and unemployed adult Manitobans who lack a high school education, with literacy and numeracy skills required for daily living at home, at work and in the community; and

“WHEREAS a close linkage is being forged between literacy and employment development programs.

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that all Members of the Legislative Assembly maintain their support to the Minister of Education and Training and the department in their ongoing efforts to develop partnerships with the community and industry to provide life-long learning opportunities for all Manitobans.”

Motion presented.

Mr. Sveinson: Madam Speaker, this government considers lifelong learning opportunities for all Manitobans and partnerships with community and industry to be important. We know that the more our citizens learn throughout their lives, the stronger Manitoba will be. Development of partnerships help create opportunities for lifelong learning.

Madam Speaker, before I get going on this, as you noticed, I have a cold, and I will be lucky if I make it through it and still have a voice. However, I am going to give it a try.

It was not too long ago that there a nice gathering here at the Legislature. The member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) was there, and you could tell he was quite proud of the people from his area. I would like to read into the record some of things that were said at the time that this group was here. It was the Pembina Valley Learning Centre, a group of people from that area and indeed others from throughout the province who were here to do something that—well, it does not happen too often, but the headlines are: Thanks, Mr. Filmon. I do not say it does not happen too often because we do not do things that they could thank us for; simply, it is just human nature maybe. It does not happen as often as we would like.

Anyway, the Premier (Mr. Filmon), and I quote Ms. Ellie Reimer, was touched that Pembina Valley Learning Centre Co-ordinator Cheryl Campbell—the Premier said he had never been thanked that way. That way was with 275 thank-you letters compiled in a huge binder, presented to the Premier in a ceremony at the Manitoba Legislature without being asked for anything more. That is quite something.

Over 150 adult learners from learning centres all over Manitoba converged on the Legislature on February 26 to express their gratitude to the provincial government for keeping their promise to increase funding for adult literacy over the past three years. Campbell, together with 25 adult learners from the PVLC, attended the ceremony. After the formalities were over, learners, teachers and politicians, including the Pembina MLA Peter George Dyck and Education Minister Linda McIntosh, mingled and talked.

Madam Speaker, going on the article, it goes: for the students, the highlight was the Premier's reaction. Premier Filmon had been storm-stayed in Brandon, said Campbell; he really had to make an effort to be there for the presentation. One student commented that was the best thing, that he really talks adult literacy support seriously. Proudly, Campbell displayed samples of the letter that had been included in the book given to the Premier. Even the entry-level students did their own work on the computer, she said, and that was one thing she had stressed to the Premier. All the work was done by the students themselves. The letters were not staff-generated.

I could go on with this here, and it just shows 275 people, many of whom came to this country without knowing the language, many coming to a country that they know as the best country in the world, but still not knowing everything that they were going to meet. Happening to be in a country where your language is not the first language spoken, in fact, it becomes very hard.

I guess I can relate to that somewhat because some 30 years ago I moved into the Ste. Anne area, where at that time much, much French was spoken. Now, my wife grew up in the Ste. Anne area, and she speaks fluently three different languages. She went to school in Ste. Anne. She speaks Slovak, French, and English. When she started school, she could not speak a word of English or French. Strangely, as it might seem, or as understandable as it might seem, since then I have seen many that have been in that situation. She took, believe it or not, top honours in francais for a number of years right across Manitoba. She still, to this day, speaks French very fluently and Slovak, which she reads and writes also, all three languages. It was through that kind of a situation.

* (1710)

She told me also that when she went to school, it was rather scary, because she did not know the other languages. So at first it was, but simply because of the attitude there at the time, and it was called the 50-50 French and English course, be it actually the main subjects were taught in English and what they would term possibly as a lesser subject was taught in French, and it worked out to be 50-50. But the very interesting

part, it might be getting a little off track with the literacy program, but the interesting part at that time was that all of the kids that Milly, my wife, went to school with came out very fluent. I guess it was a little bit of an added thing, and that too was that the French language was spoken not just in the classroom but a lot outside too, so that probably did help.

Madam Speaker, part of the lifelong learning includes establishing a solid foundation in essential learning. We consider basic or essential learning from kindergarten to Senior 4 to be crucial. That is why we have embarked on education renewal.

I will try to speak about this literacy as much as I can, but there are a number of things I want to mention here again. The other night in Lorette, we had a function that was put on by the Seine River School Division. I was invited to be there with many of my people from throughout the constituency and from Lorette, and the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) walked in. Now, I invite all members to come to my constituency. It was very nice of her to come. Indeed, it gave me a good feeling just to have that kind of thing going on in my constituency, for her to see was good. I enjoyed it very much, but what it was was the collaboration approaches to developing safer communities.

Now, you might wonder how that ties into literacy, but the approach was put on by Doris Mae Oulton. She is the chief executive officer of the Manitoba Child and Youth Secretariat. She has spearheaded the development of the strategic plan for the highest risk children and youth in Manitoba. Also, another person was Spencer Clements. Spencer is well known in the educational community. He is presently working as a crime prevention officer with Manitoba Education and Training.

Now I am getting to the literacy. It was very interesting, and I will explain some of that too, how it ties in. You have many different things, take the Child and Family Services, education, health and how all of them do come in together with a child entering school, for example, having eaten and being able to learn. But it was presented by these two people, and if any of you have the opportunity to attend such a presentation within the school or within the community, take it in.

It is really, really good, and they show how it ties into education, health, justice and so on. It was good, and to watch and listen to the people, parents committees, a lot of them, as they broke up into different groups. They broke up into different towns or different communities, so indeed that they could come to a particular thing within each of their communities. What their job was was to come back to the person that was running it with this is where we are going to go in our community.

I moved from table to table, and what I found was the encouragement of a few things in this sense: firstly, that the kids could leave home with something in their stomachs. We took a couple of instances where those parents were working, but the people next door, they did not know, so the kid went to school with nothing in their stomach. Then we went back and did it all over again, where in fact the people next door, they did know. They made that effort to get to know. Indeed now because they were neighbours, and because it was concerned people next door, they said to those two people perhaps Johnny could come over here and have breakfast, and they said, well, thank you very much. Johnny went on to school feeling good and being able to go to school and learn. That is where the literacy does tie in.

There are times, Madam Speaker, when our youth do come to school, and we have got programs now that deal with this also, where indeed children come to school with nothing, as I have said, and cannot learn or what they have learned at home and possibly in the community is not up to par, perhaps. I hope I said that in a gentle fashion. They come into school and to jump right into where they can be learning at a level where many of the others are, they have to be tutored somewhat. Indeed, we do have programs of that nature now.

I see that my time is up, and I hope there is somebody else in the Assembly that will want to speak on it. Madam Speaker, perhaps, when the next time rolls around, I will be able to speak again on this or some other time. Thank you.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to take part in debate on the resolution from the member for LaVerendrye (Mr. Sveinson) on

literacy. Later on, I will be reading definitions and levels of literacy but, to start with, I would like to give a little bit of a personal history and also current involvement with a literacy program.

When I was growing up in Thornhill, Ontario, the public library, I believe the first that I can remember, was actually in Thornhill public school, the school of which my father was the principal. At that time it was a very small public library. It moved around a number of times before it found a permanent home. Eventually, it moved to the former home of the Tucker family on Colborne Street, and it is still there. It is a charming, small library located in a former residence. Since that time the municipality has built a much larger regional library, but my fondest memories are going to Thornhill Public Library in its various locations and especially on Colborne Street.

When this library began, it was a public library in the sense that it was open to the public, but it received either very little public funding or no public funding because I can remember taking produce from our garden in my wagon and going door-to-door on Elgin Street and selling it to people and telling them that the money was going to be donated to Thornhill Public Library. We used to collect six-quart baskets and do the same thing. We would take them to the farmers' market and sell them for—I do not know—2 or 3 cents each to help raise money for Thornhill Public Library.

Of course, the reason that I did that as a child was that my parents had instilled the love of reading in me and in my siblings. Coincidentally, we did not have television. There was no television in our family home until I was 17 years old, which I consider a blessing because I grew up as a book lover and so did our siblings, and all of us went to university or community college. I think that having no television and acquiring a love of reading and a love of books was probably a great contributor to that, so, of course, I want to see everyone learn to read and to enjoy reading as much as possible.

* (1720)

So, when I was asked to join an advisory committee for Open Doors Adult Literacy program in Burrows constituency, I jumped at the chance. I am pleased to

see that the member who sponsored the resolution spoke of an adult literacy program in his constituency. It is one of the things that is very easy to support because these are very small programs and anything that we can do to help them makes a big difference, whether it is donating a used computer or writing a cheque and making a small donation every year or attending their graduation ceremonies, or in the case of Open Doors Adult Literacy program they have a potluck supper once a year, which is a delicious event to attend. [interjection] As my colleague says, they appreciate it very much.

Now one of the things that Open Doors Adult Literacy program has done is to produce a book called Living and Learning. It was written by the students of the Open Doors Literacy program. I would just like to read a couple of the very short stories that were compiled into this booklet because they are very interesting, and they reveal a lot about the students and about their program.

The first story is by Tammy B. She says: I wanted to go back to school for a long time, so I talked to my worker and she said to come to Open Doors. I did. I was scared at first, but it is okay now. I am going back to school because I want to get my Grade 12. It is good that I am no longer scared to come here. I know that I will be better off going back to school.

Now that is a very interesting little story because many of the students have gone through our public education system. Most of them have completed elementary school, and some have completed part of secondary school; but, for many of them who write stories in this book and to whom I have spoken, school was not a pleasant experience. Some of them were actually afraid to go back into an elementary school, in this case, King Edward elementary school, to go to an adult class. Many of the other students are immigrants to Canada for whom English is a second language.

I would like to read another short story by Marianne Gunn who says: My school experience is very good, and I enjoy going to school to learn how to write and how to do math. I came to school because I did not know how to write and read English. I was in ungraded classes when I went to school. I had a hard time, so when I got older, my mom took me out of school. She

was sick and I had to look after my little sister, so I go to school now to learn. The school is called the Open Doors program. I have another chance.

So for these students, education as an adult is an opportunity, and, in many cases, an opportunity that was not available to them when they were younger. It is really amazing to listen to their stories and to hear over and over again some of the reasons why they dropped out of school. The usual reasons that one might suspect, such as having a learning disability or having difficulty academically, are probably not the most frequent stories that one hears. Frequently, one hears stories about someone in the family being sick and an adolescent or a child staying home to look after brothers and sisters or a sick parent, and as a result, they did not complete their education.

Here is another story—I will just read part of it—a story by Carol M. She had a number of unfortunate educational experiences. She says all the kids were laughing at me because when you had to stand in the corner, you had to do so with your nose pressed against a small circle that was drawn on the wall. The teachers that were sent out to teach in my village were the least qualified. I feel that my learning problems that I had in school had a lot to do with the way I was educated. My experience during my school years was not very good. It scared me away from reading and learning. I had no faith in the school system and teachers until I began with the Open Doors Literacy program. Now I feel confident in myself and I trust the teachers. So here is another individual who was adversely affected, she believes, by the poor quality of teachers and by the fact that she was ridiculed and made to stand in a corner.

Now they have a wonderful teacher at Open Doors Adult Literacy program, by the name of Margaret Banasiak, who is very highly respected by her students and by the volunteers and the advisory committee because of her very gentle nature and the way that she can motivate students and encourage students to learn to read and write, and we all appreciate her very much.

I have also been involved in recruiting volunteers for Open Doors Adult Literacy program by sending out letters to my constituents. Some of them have responded and are now volunteering as adult tutors in

Open Doors Adult Literacy program, and they are very much appreciated by the teacher and by the learners.

We know that literacy is a very serious problem in the province of Manitoba and in our country for those who do not have adequate literacy skills. According to Literacy Partners, literacy is defined as a person's ability to understand and use written language. It is more than just being able to read, write and calculate. This is of crucial importance in today's technological society that demands higher levels of literacy. However, literacy problems affect larger numbers of adults beyond those living on the margins of society.

In a minute I will go on to read about the five levels, but this quote about the higher degree of literacy required for the more technological society reminds me of the story by one of my constituents, who is in this book, Norma Flett, who talks about applying for a job at Motor Coach Industries. She wanted to work there, but first she had to take a welder's course, which she took at Red River College, and at the time of writing this story, she had been working at Motor Coach Industries for 24 years. So we know that there are more and more jobs which require higher and higher levels of literacy for people to be employed in those occupations, and we know that industries that are laying off employees are the ones with lower levels of literacy requirements.

About 4.7 million Canadian consumers, or 22 percent, are at Level I of the five levels of literacy, and that is the lowest level. These people who often do not have secondary education may only recognize a few words in a simple text, are unable to use labels and often printed material to make decisions and find shopping or paying bills difficult or impossible. It is estimated that 53 percent of seniors over age 65 fall into this category.

Now there used to be an adult literacy program for seniors also in Burrows constituency at White Flower House, and they did not qualify for provincial government funding because all their learners were over 65. Most of them were immigrants, but some of them were Canadians.

I met a gentleman who grew up in the Swan River area on a farm in the bush, and there was no school.

He never did get any education. I think maybe he got Grade 1 or 2, but he was at home and working on the farm in an isolated area. When I met him, he was about 70 years old and going back to school and learning to read and write for the first time and was quite thrilled to have that opportunity. Unfortunately, White Flower House adult literacy program no longer exists in spite of the fact that there is a great need for immigrant seniors to learn how to read and write, so that they can live more independently and not be totally dependent on their families or others.

About 5.5 million consumers or 26 percent are at Level II. They can only deal with plainly written reading material that is clearly laid out and have difficulty with long paragraphs of solid print and new reading tasks. Many cannot fill out a job application form or a bank deposit slip. About 33 percent of all consumers are at Level III, the minimum level necessary to understand most information. They have sufficient reading and arithmetic skills to meet most demands, for example, using the yellow pages, writing to a manufacturer for information and understanding basic health and nutrition information but can become frustrated by technical jargon in manuals and documents. The remaining 20 percent of consumers are at Levels IV and V and have the skills to understand challenging printed materials. It is estimated that 95 percent of this group have a job and earn the highest incomes.

* (1730)

As we know, there is a very direct correlation between level of education and level of income. If one looks at it by census tracks in the city of Winnipeg or even by constituency in the city of Winnipeg, it becomes very apparent. So, for example, if one looks at River Heights, we have the highest levels of education, and we have the highest levels of income and the lowest levels of unemployment. If you compare that with the William Whyte neighbourhood in the constituency of Point Douglas, you have the lowest levels of literacy, you have the lowest levels of educational attainment, the lowest levels of income, and many of those incomes are from government transfer programs, and the highest level of unemployment.

So when one breaks it down by census tracks or neighbourhoods, you can see the very clear indicators and differences in educational attainment and employment levels and level of income, so that is why it is good to see people going back to school and improving their literacy skills, getting more education, because it means they are much more likely to get a job and raise their income.

In February 1997, Liberal Senator Joyce Fairbairn stated that Canada has an illiteracy rate of 40 percent involving degrees of difficulty with reading and writing. Unfortunately, I think the 40 percent figure has been thrown around rather casually and it has become popularized, so people seem to accept the 40 percent level of illiteracy in Canada without examining it and knowing that it probably refers to various kinds of illiteracy and does not mean that 40 percent of Canadians cannot read and write.

According to the Canadian report on the international adult literacy survey released in 1996, literacy is central to the well-being of individual Canadians and to the nation, and it is important that all Canadians participate in society, not just those who read well. I think I will use this thought to conclude and say that literacy is important not only to getting a job but also to people's sense of self-worth and feeling that they are full participants in our society. For that reason, we on this side want to support all efforts at adult literacy, not just those in our own community but everywhere in Manitoba, and we would urge this government to increase the funding to adult literacy programs.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I am delighted to be able to add some comments to this particular resolution, Resolution 20. As a government, Madam Speaker, our responsibilities to the future generations of Manitobans are clear. Our young people, leaders and contributors of the future, must be prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. It is up to us to help them, and we must prepare them for this today. Providing them with skills and knowledge will enable them to make informed choices about their lives.

When we succeed in providing our children with the tools they need, we are giving them power over their future, and in giving them the fundamentals today, we are investing in the future for all Manitobans. By providing skills and knowledge to our children and youth is only part of this government's commitment to education and training and making Manitobans literate.

Literacy is important to everyone because it strengthens the economic and social fabric of our society and our province. Recently, adult literacy has been viewed as being crucial to the economic performance of industrialized nations all over the world. Just as global societies are redefining themselves, the concept of literacy is undergoing an evolution all its own. It is not defined in terms of just reading ability anymore. Theoretical and technological advances have transformed literacy. It is growing more and more complex and more and more important. Rather than just being just the basic ability to read, literacy now includes the ability to use information from printed texts and the ability to use technology in new and relevant ways.

At present, literacy is seen as how people use written information to function in society. Today adults need a higher level of literacy to be functional in society because the world itself is becoming increasingly complex. Lifelong learning is an important means of gaining new skills for Manitobans. We know that the information economy changes both the expectations and demands on those looking for employment, and it will continue to be a factor for future generations of Manitobans. Literacy, education and training will help in promoting the benefits of globalization.

In Manitoba schools, education renewal has been strongly based on ensuring that our children graduate from our schools with a solid foundation of skills that include reading, writing, thinking, computing and problem solving at a high level. These priorities for education renewal have been widely supported by Manitobans. Across the province it is widely recognized that strengthening the learning opportunities for our children is an important way of investing in their future.

In 1997-98, the government of Manitoba contributed over \$1 billion towards education in Manitoba. In fact,

funding for education in Manitoba increased from 18.7 percent of our total provincial expenditures in '96 and '97 to over 19 percent today, and education continues to be one of government's highest overall expenditures, second only to health. We want our students to be prepared for employment to be able to realize their dreams and have healthy satisfying lives right here in Manitoba. Research has demonstrated that early intervention programs for young children having difficulty to read and write are more successful and cost-effective.

Reading Recovery, Madam Speaker, an incredibly good program that was founded in New Zealand, brought to Canada not that many years ago and is centred in Toronto, and a western institute now established in Manitoba, the second place in Canada where Reading Recovery exists, is an early literacy intervention program that provides additional training to certified and experienced earlier teachers so that they can meet the rest of these at-risk students in Grade 1. One on one with trained teachers in these techniques and the success of this program is phenomenal. Success in early literacy learning supports learning in subsequent years and we know this to be true, and we know this to be important.

Last year—I guess now two years ago, in December 1996—I had the privilege of announcing the opening of the Western Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery here in Manitoba. This institute was established to provide training and professional support for teachers and it has been incredibly successful. We will not know the true impact of that success until the children who benefited from it last year—these are in Grades 11 and 12 and ready to finish school, but the early results are most impressive and the worldwide experience in New Zealand and again in Canada emanating out of Toronto are outstanding results in terms of taking children at risk and turning them, in very short order, into proficient readers.

A critical aspect of the implementation of the Reading Recovery program is the training of teachers. The Western Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery will train teacher leaders who, in turn, will train the Reading Recovery leaders, and it is the train-the-trainer model. Some schools, as we are building new schools, actually have Reading Recovery laboratories built right

into the school, with the one-way glass and all of the features that are required to make it really, really work well.

Quality implementation of this program depends on high standards for training at all levels and careful monitoring. The monitoring includes on-site visits and professional development activities provided for teachers, teacher leaders and school personnel. The teachers who are participating in this have universally and unanimously said it is one of the best tools they have yet been given to help get children at risk in their very early days of schooling and turn them around to build a foundation for success.

This is one of the most important ways, Madam Speaker, that I believe we can ensure literacy for those entering the system as they progress through the school system, but I would like to return for a moment to discuss the ways in which this government is working to helping adults who were not fortunate enough to be exposed to some of these early intervention techniques to help them to become more literate, to become educated and better prepared for the future.

* (1740)

We know that we have a number of tools now available that are coming into use. Distance Education, technology and other methods of delivery are helping to increase the accessibility to education in Manitoba. These are important thrusts. We have been encouraging institutions to utilize them to become student friendly, and we have been looking more and more at program content to help make sure they meet Manitoba's emerging needs.

We are striving to ensure that our programs are effective, and we are also striving to produce graduates who are able to find work in this province.

Opportunities for post-secondary education are critical in this picture of lifelong learning. The work of the Council on Post-Secondary Education, established by this government, will be significant because it includes work on credit transfer and articulation, and there has been some incredible success done there. I was out last night at the board of governor's meeting at the Red River Community College and the degree to

which they have already begun their articulation program amazes even me. I knew they were planning to go at it with a great deal of gusto and enthusiasm, but their record of success after such a very short time has really amazed me. They are way ahead of projected articulations, and I am pleased with them and proud of them and thrilled for the students that they have been able to put in the degree of articulation that they have done.

In addition to credit transfer and articulation, there is Distance Education, aboriginal education and the development of many other initiatives to work in this area.

Developing literacy in our schools is still the strongest method for ensuring that our children are prepared to meet future challenges, but literacy initiatives and education and training programs for adults assist Manitobans in obtaining lifelong learning, helps turn their lives around if they are currently not literate, and helps greatly enhance their lives if they are only partially literate.

Through various initiatives, programs and partnerships, this government is investing in the future of our province and our people. I believe the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinsson), if I am not mistaken, made reference to the literacy presentation made to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) not long ago. I can reference things like the Pembina Learning Centre where incredible things are happening with joint efforts, partnerships, wonderful volunteers, people working together, caring for each other, supported by the government that represents them to really effect a high degree and level of literacy in this province.

Madam Speaker, it is absolutely thrilling to see a child who had been identified as at risk, who had no sense of what the written word meant, and within a very few months that child begin to read and read well because of programs like Reading Recovery. It is why we have pumped so much money into it this year. I have sat through so many different workshops watching this happen with hope and amazement as I watched.

The other thing that is a very emotional thing to witness is the way that people feel, if they are adults, when they become literate after a lifetime of being

illiterate, and to see the change that that makes in their lives is awe inspiring. The one gentleman who spoke to us and did such an excellent job speaking in public had never gone past elementary school, and to hear him speak and to listen to him read and to know that his life had been changed makes you feel that some of the things you have been doing are really counting and that they are really worthwhile and inspires us to carry on supporting literacy in Manitoba.

So I thank the member for his resolution. I believe it does deserve support, and I look forward to other members' comments on this very important area, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): This is a very important resolution, and I am pleased to be able to take part in the debate.

Madam Speaker, the scale of the literacy problem in this country has been recognized for many, many years. I am sure that some members are aware, for example, that the union movement and the churches worked together to develop a program called Frontier School Division. There is the whole notion of the frontier schools that gave their name essentially to our northern school division of volunteer adult workers who went into the mines and went into the remote areas, the forestry camps, and brought basic education as well as, in some cases, a more advanced form of education—debate about economic systems, of political issues—and raised substantially the level of the ability of many of the workers in those camps through the years before the Depression and through the Great Depression.

In fact, when I first came to Manitoba in 1966, there were still Frontier College programs in the North and Frontier College volunteers travelling to the North, particularly in the summers because at that time many of those volunteers were university students who were not getting anything other than their transport in the way of wages. They worked in the camps during the day, and they ran their programs in the evening.

So I think it is important to remember the tremendous history, particularly on the part of the social justice

movement and the labour movement in addressing literacy questions.

The early history of the Labour Party of Manitoba and the union movement in Manitoba was, at least in part, one of a struggle to provide literacy education to working-class folk. The first kindergartens, for example, were programs established not by school divisions, but they were established by churches and unions and community organizations at a neighbourhood level to bring children into school earlier than the public school system provided for.

By the 1880s, Madam Speaker, in this city, education was taking place in 17 different languages, essentially mother tongues, language of origin of the children, and it was the unfortunate heritage of the concern in the late 1880s over what were euphemistically called aliens, who were basically anybody that was not Anglo-Saxon, that resulted in the banning by the late 1880s, early 1890s, of languages of instruction other than English in our schools, which, of course, led to the Manitoba Schools Question and the challenge to the Privy Council, the order on the part of the Privy Council to Laurier to re-establish French as a language of instruction, which was, conveniently, simply ignored for close to a hundred years before it was finally brought into place essentially by the Pawley government, an issue of which I continue to be very proud.

Madam Speaker, in the current union movement, unions like the Canadian Auto Workers and the United Food and Commercial Workers run adult literacy programs in their centres. They spend a good deal of their resources training and supporting workers who work with their members, particularly their members who are new Canadians, but not exclusively new Canadians, many people who have literacy challenges and who have become functionally literate through programs supported by the union movement.

The union movement, I am very proud to say, was an advocate for literacy long before it became a fashionable movement. So I want to pay tribute to the many people over more than a century now who have recognized that working people often have not had the opportunity to go to school long enough to become

functionally literate, and they spent a good deal of effort to address that problem.

The second group I want to pay particular tribute to are a group probably known to some members called the Laubach Literacy Program, named after a Lutheran pastor by that name Laubach who did his initial work in New Brunswick and then worked in Africa for a number of years and came back to Canada and founded a volunteer-based literacy program that recruited adult volunteers. One of my very good friends, a woman who is a nurse, introduced me to the Laubach program and told us many stories not unlike the Minister of Education's story about the tremendous emotional satisfaction from helping an adult person to be able to read.

* (1750)

Laubach volunteers and the Laubach council were early advocates of the government getting seriously involved in literacy programs in the early 1980s and through the 1980s. The government at that time began to make grants to Laubach and to other literacy programs, and the current government has continued and somewhat expanded on those programs.

I want to comment on the adequacy of the current programs, having paid tribute to the working-class groups and the church groups that founded the literacy movements in centuries past and worked on it through this century. I want to now look at the question of adequacy. Madam Speaker. In the material shared by my honourable colleague from Burrows, he pointed out that according to Literacy Partners, about 4.7 million Canadian consumers, or 22 percent, are at Level I in their literacy studies. In Manitoba's case, that would equate to approximately 240,000 Manitobans.

Now, I think that number is so large as to probably engender some disbelief on the part of many people, but let us cut the number into tenths and say 22,000. I believe it is much larger than that, and I do not find the number difficult to believe, the number of 220,000, but let us cut it by 90 percent. When we do and recognize that even if it is 10 times larger than reality, there are only 1,900 adult Manitobans enrolled in literacy programs in 1997, according to the government's own statistics. Specifically 1,900 Manitobans were enrolled

at adult literacy programs. An estimated 1,669 participated in 37 community-based programs that received provincial funding.

So, Madam Speaker, we have by the government's own admission literacy programs which reached at best 1 percent, at very best 1 percent, of those suggested to be functionally illiterate by their own group, the Literacy Partners group, which is supported by the province. The estimates of the cost to the economy of such levels of illiteracy are staggering. They run in the billions for an economy, even such as Manitoba, of \$27 billion. There are several billions of dollars of lost productivity associated with adult literacy difficulties.

Only yesterday, Madam Speaker, the government proudly took part in an announcement of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), part in an announcement of a network of high-tech firms that were announcing their commitment to bringing high-wage, high-skilled jobs to the province, at the very same time when there is a recognition that many Manitobans are not equipped to enter into those jobs, and one has to ask why. Why, when we have known for well over a decade that we have 20 or so percent of our population functionally illiterate, is government not putting far more significant resources into these quite inexpensive programs?

Madam Speaker, the total cost of the literacy expenditures in Manitoba is approximately a million dollars, approximately, and the total expenditures on education in Manitoba are \$1.3 billion. So, again, we have a situation where less than 1 percent, considerably less than 1 percent of our provincial education expenditures are directed toward a problem that affects 20 percent of our adult population. So we have a gross mismatch between needs and resources in this situation.

Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity and privilege to help one of my colleagues Dr. Benjamin Levin evaluate adult literacy programs, particularly programs using computer software to train people in basic literacy. It was about two years ago and I had the opportunity to both look at the software and to interview a number of people in those programs. I would echo and support what the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) said and also the honourable Education minister said that it is a very moving

experience to talk to people who have regained their literacy or have gained for the first time their literacy.

I remember, in particular, a gentleman who could only be described as very large, and he was not only very large but he was also largely covered by tattoos. He was a fairly gruff and imposing figure in my interview with him. He was quite a bit larger than I am. I would certainly say that, not a difficult thing to be. But I asked him what was motivating him to take this training course, and his answer just struck me as one of those things that you cannot buy motivation like this. You cannot produce it; you can only wonder at it. He said I want to be able to read to my preschool child, and he went on to say that he was embarrassed because his school-age daughter could read to him but he could not read to her.

So I thought what a wonderful story that was, but at the same time how tragic it was that we are only reaching such a small percentage of these people, because they all have tremendous gifts to contribute to our economy, to our families, to our neighbourhoods. When people come inside the circle of learning and inside the community's ability to think about its own affairs, to read about political choices, to become literate citizens, our whole community is strengthened. The strengthening that goes on for them individually is multiplied by the strengthening that happens in their families and then in their communities because they become functional citizens, not just functionally literate.

So I would urge the government to not rest on its laurels but to recognize that there are very few resources now being allocated toward adult literacy in comparison to the need for adult literacy. The groups

are out there prepared to work. Adults are prepared to volunteer. Teachers are available, and certainly the students are there. What is lacking, I believe, is a true commitment to resources on a scale that would make a real difference in this program over a reasonable period of time.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to take part in this debate, and I would urge the government to increase its efforts and not to rest on its laurels as this motion appears to do.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Madam Speaker, it is indeed an opportunity that I enjoy to rise in the House today to support this resolution, because it is one that is very much in keeping with what I believe is so important in our daily lives in Portage la Prairie and across this great province of ours. Everyone must have the opportunity to experience that of education. Anyone who is currently experiencing the job market in Manitoba must recognize the importance of education. For those entering even the line of factory work, the minimum education these days that is required is that one must have a Grade 12 education. That is why it is so important that we maintain facilities for adult learning in this province.

In Portage la Prairie, we have the Portage Learning Centre which is an integral part of this educational delivery. I am very proud—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Portage la Prairie will have 14 minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday next.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 23, 1998

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