



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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authority of
The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 4, 1998

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of R. Chester, J. Esguerra, D. Venoit and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg Hospital Food Services.

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

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

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

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

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

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

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

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

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

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again. I move, seconded by the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 47—The Brandon University Act

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), that leave be given to introduce Bill 47, The Brandon University Act; Loi sur l'Université de Brandon, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

**Bill 48—The Mennonite College Federation
and Consequential Amendments Act**

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 48, The Mennonite College Federation and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur la Fédération des collèges mennonites et modifications corrélatives, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I am tabling the Lieutenant Governor's message, Madam Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 49—The University of Winnipeg Act

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), that leave be given to introduce Bill 49, The University of Winnipeg Act; Loi sur l'Université de Winnipeg, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

**Bill 50—The Universities Establishment Repeal
and Consequential Amendments Act**

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), that leave be given to introduce Bill 50, The Universities Establishment Repeal and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la fondation des universités et modifications corrélatives, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

* (1335)

**Bill 51—The Cooperatives and Consequential
Amendments Act**

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I move,

seconded by the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman), that leave be given to introduce Bill 51, The Cooperatives and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur les coopératives et modifications corrélatives, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of the bill, recommends it to the House. I would also at this time table the advice from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

Motion agreed to.

**Bill 52—The Health Services Insurance
Amendment Act**

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 52, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I am pleased to table His Honour's message as well.

Motion agreed to.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Personal Care Homes
Accreditation**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Holiday Haven inquest report into the death of Mr. Molnar was released last Friday afternoon.

Madam Speaker, one would recall that four years ago today, May 4, 1994, the former Minister of Health said that the government of the day, the Filmon government of the day, would not delay in addressing the issues of safety for residents of personal care homes here in Manitoba. Regrettably, four years later, the report again raises a number of issues of safety, standards, accreditation and inspections in the personal care homes. In fact, in the death of Mr. Molnar, they say the

Holiday Haven Home was not accredited, and accreditation could assist in preventing a similar tragedy in the future. They go on to recommend that sanctions be put in place and enforced to ensure that our standards are met.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon): when are we going to act on having standards for our personal care homes and accreditations that can prevent deaths like Mr. Molnar's?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. First of all, Madam Speaker, many of our personal care homes in Manitoba—they always have been encouraged to meet the accreditation standards. With respect to Holiday Haven, they are under new ownership, and the new owners I understand will be applying after they have owned the facility for one year, which is the prerequisite time in which to make an application.

Madam Speaker, one of the things that we discovered in the course of this particular matter was that the legislative authority available to have a licensing scheme with sanctions and other things was very much lacking, and that is why we took some steps legislatively last year. This year we now have a bill before the House which will provide the Ministry of Health with the necessary authorities to put that kind of extensive licensing process in place. We have discussed this with his critic in Estimates rather extensively.

* (1340)

Inspections

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I cannot believe that the government did not know in 1994, following the report of 1993 of personal care home problems, and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) did not know that legislative authority was necessary to fulfill the commitments that the government made. We believe that it was the lack of political will to put in the legislative authority and other resources for our personal care homes.

Madam Speaker, the report goes on to recommend another commitment that the government made five

years ago or four years ago that we have in our personal care homes unscheduled inspections of all personal care homes. In light of the fact that I believe that there were only 30 visits of 120 homes last year, four years after the government committed itself to inspections, will the Premier order that his Minister of Health fulfill the commitment he made four years ago and have regular unscheduled inspections of all personal care homes in Manitoba to ensure standards are met and residents are being treated with the proper care and the proper safety in our personal care homes?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): As we discussed extensively in Estimates, one of the problems with the old legislative scheme was that there was a licensing scheme but a very inadequate one, because the only option available to ministers of Health or governments was in fact to withdraw the licence, which meant you may have some problem in a particular facility. If you withdrew the licence, you might have a hundred and fifty residents that you would have to be moving out in January, so there were not the intermediary steps. That is why we made changes to The Regional Health Authority Act last year and are bringing in some additional changes this year.

I am pleased to indicate that we have put in place the unannounced inspection process. Thirty have been done to date, and within this year all 120 personal care homes will have an unannounced inspection.

Hepatitis C Compensation

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, with a new question to the Premier. We put out a press release in December of 1997, and we quoted the fact that Krever in his report talked about the moral responsibility that we all had as citizens across Canada for hepatitis C victims.

Madam Speaker, today Mike Harris, the Premier of Ontario, pledged his government's share to deal with the victims of hepatitis C or people that have contracted hepatitis C through the blood transfusion system prior to 1996. He said these people need our help, and we agree with the Premier of Ontario. Will the Premier of Manitoba be taking similar action to provide support and compassion for people prior to 1986?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as the member well knows, there are many, many people from right across the country who are working on this particular issue. As recently as Friday, there was a lengthy conference call amongst all the provincial Health ministers in the country, and the Health minister from Saskatchewan, the New Democratic government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Serby, reported on behalf of all the ministers at that time.

There have also been a variety of different discussions taking place amongst Premiers. I certainly have spoken to some of my colleagues on the issue. I spoke with Premier Harris on Friday, and there have been different positions taken. I know that a news bulletin has come out suggesting that Ontario is prepared to co-operate and be involved in a solution. At the time that I spoke with Premier Harris, his intended solution or the solution that he was examining was the fact that the provinces are responsible for \$1.6 billion of costs to serve the needs, the medical and health needs, of the victims of hepatitis C across our country, and that none of that was given credit for in the negotiated settlement for the victims who are being compensated or intended to be compensated between '86 and '90. It was, I believe, Ontario's position that until the federal government matches that by virtue of their additional compensation offers that Ontario would not be putting additional money on the table.

I am not sure whether that position has changed, and certainly I would agree with him on that position as we discussed it on Friday, but as I say, the positions are changing rapidly. Various different governments are attempting to find solutions. All of us want to be as fair and as reasonable as we possibly can in this whole matter. It is an issue of concern to all Canadians and certainly to all Manitobans, and so I can assure the member opposite that we will continue to be in touch with our colleague counterparts across Canada and continue to try and find a way in which we can all work co-operatively.

I think the one thing we do not want to do is have different provinces with different fiscal capacities making different offers because people are mobile. I overheard last Friday or Thursday on the radio a victim in Winnipeg who was the victim of a transfusion in Regina. You could not have people moving to the

province in which there was a so-called better offer of compensation. So I do not think you would want that kind of two-tier solution. I think it is important that we all continue to discuss with our counterparts a collective solution, Madam Speaker.

* (1345)

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, we too would not want someone in Ontario or Kenora, for that matter, having potentially one set of rights in this area versus somebody in Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker, we were hoping last week that the free vote would have resolved this issue or moved it along. We have put similar resolutions before the Chamber, and we had tried to push this along with the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) here in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, the Ontario government is saying that the federal government needs leadership from the provinces. Victims need leadership from the provincial governments, as the Premier points out, who have to deal with this issue. The Ontario government, in a press release, not a news bulletin—and I have a copy of it—are exploring legal avenues to require the federal government to meet their responsibility. They are saying that these people need help and we are prepared to do our part to give it to them. I call on Ottawa to do the right thing, to join them. We certainly agree that Ottawa is wrong to limit the package to post-1986, and we certainly believe that the leadership now must come from the provinces, and I agree. The leadership should come from all provinces together.

I would like to ask the Premier: what position will he take to provide the leadership for Ottawa to stop their stubbornness and be fair to the hepatitis C victims that are not covered by the package after 1986?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, we will continue to take the position that our Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) has taken, and that is that we will seek a co-operative solution that is one that characterizes our response as being fair, just and reasonable under the circumstances. I emphasize that we would want to be a positive part of the solution, but we would want to find a consistent common solution so that we do not create a two-tier approach to compensation.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to recognizing the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), with the indulgence of the House, I would like to introduce some special guests both in the loge to my right and in the Speaker's Gallery who have joined us this afternoon. In the loge to my right, I would like to introduce Mr. Kevin O'Brien, MLA for Arviat and Baker Lake in the Northwest Territories. In the Speaker's Gallery, we have this afternoon His Excellency Robert Sabga, High Commissioner for Trinidad and Tobago to Canada.

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

* (1350)

Hepatitis C Compensation

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, Premier Harris may have said one thing to the Premier on Friday, but later today the Premier will table a resolution in his Legislature calling for a second compensation package which will provide compensation for all hepatitis victims, at least those infected through the blood before 1986. Today the Premier of Ontario has said Ontario will not stand idly by while the federal government ignores the plight of these victims, and then he says: I call on Ottawa to do the right thing and join us.

Today I would like to call on this Premier to do the right thing and join Ontario and pledge its share, that is, our share of compensation to those victims infected before 1986.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I thought that I had dealt with that matter very thoroughly in my response to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer). If the member for Osborne is disagreeing with the position and suggesting that we go off on an ad hoc basis and that we just simply offer different levels of compensation depending on our different fiscal capacities in the country, then I would think that is not the right solution. I will go back to my position of saying that we will play a positive role in attempting to

work out a national approach to this, that we will be fair and reasonable in the circumstances.

Ms. McGifford: I want to ask the Premier, since he is very willing to play a positive role and since I believe last week on talk radio he said that approval for Quebec's National Assembly resolution would be unanimous and easy to get, I would like to ask the Premier then if his government will be supporting our resolution which is currently before the committee on the National Assembly's motion on hepatitis C.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, you see, this leads to the confusion and the raw attempts for people to get involved for political purposes in this thing. I say that what she asked in her first question is different from what she has asked in her second question, because in her second question she is talking about the Quebec resolution. The Quebec resolution calls for all the money to come from Ottawa, whereas in her first question she asked about the Ontario solution, which is to put provincial money on the table, and there we have to be sure that we have a national consensus on it so that we do not create a two-tier approach to this. Now we cannot just go rushing headlong into this because it is good politics. We have to do it on the basis of trying to find a fair and reasonable solution that is agreed to by all the provinces and jurisdictions in Canada. We cannot just go running around and tilting at every possible new avenue in hopes that it will bring some positive political benefit to us.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Beaulac is very clear in terms of imputation of motives, and on such a serious issue as compensation for hepatitis C victims, I would like to ask you to direct the Premier to withdraw those comments. I think everybody in this House is trying to do the right thing, and we in our party make no apologies for saying we want justice for victims of hepatitis C. That is not a question of politics; it is a question of humanity.

Madam Speaker: The honourable First Minister, on the same point of order.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order. There is no question. We can all agree that all

us want justice for all of those involved in this issue, and we want fairness and equity to be the solution to this. But it is the confusion that I point out of having two different questions pose two different solutions, and then asking us do we agree or disagree. How can we, when there are two different proposals from the member opposite? Now that is confusing.

I know New Democrats are usually confused, but we have to deal with rationality.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I will take the matter under advisement so I can very carefully research the exact comments and context of the words spoken by the Premier.

* * *

* (1355)

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

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, I want to ask this Premier—and explain to him we need to ask many questions because we get no answers. I want to ask this Premier if he is going to maintain the cold and heartless position taken by his Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), or is he going to do something to compensate these victims, those infected before 1986. What is he going to do? Simple question.

Mr. Filmon: Well, you know, Madam Speaker, this is a member whose colleagues and she regularly tell us that we ought to be doing what Saskatchewan does, their colleagues, the New Democratic government in Saskatchewan. Now she is calling the Minister of Health in Saskatchewan cold and heartless, because this is his solution that is collectively arrived at by all of the ministers of Health in Canada. That is the kind of two-faced approach that we have consistently from members opposite.

I pointed out that she has asked in one question about the Quebec solution, which involves only money from Ottawa. Then she has asked in the second question about the Ontario solution, which involves money coming from Ontario as well as Canada. There is no

consistency over there. There is total confusion, and that is why we prefer to deal collectively with this so we do not set up a two-tier system of compensation and so that we deal fairly with the people who are involved.

SHL Systemhouse Desktop Management Costs

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Government Services and concerns this government's top-secret computer agreement with SHL. Last Wednesday the minister misrepresented the total cost of the new desktop computer program, when he knows that the real cost is 10 times the amount he claims it to be.

I would like to ask the minister: would the minister now admit his mistake and confirm that the true cost of the computer replacement will be in the neighbourhood of \$150 million?

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, I would just like to clarify for the member opposite that when I mentioned the figure of \$15 million the last time he asked a question, that was the ongoing cost the government was incurring each and every year. That is expected to actually increase over the time of the contract to as much as \$20 million if we did nothing.

I would like to assure the member, though, that the incremental cost that is estimated for the desktop management project is in the neighbourhood of \$25 million to \$30 million.

Mr. Maloway: I would like to thank the minister for confirming our figures, that the contract will be \$150 million.

Contract Tabling Request

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, why does this minister refuse to release a copy of the agreement, which we know contains financial rewards for the company if equipment does not break down and penalties if service levels are not met? What are the big secrets in this agreement that the minister is trying to keep from the public?

* (1400)

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, when the provincial government decided to go to the desktop management project and our request for proposal was placed and responses to this request for proposal, under that request with a committee that was assigned to look at the request, the offers, that desktop management contract was awarded to Systemhouse.

I would also like to take the opportunity now to explain that, within the provincial government up until now, each individual department in government was basically going in its own direction within the information technology era. What is happening, and I compare it to several different kinds of railroads with different gauges, what we are attempting to do with the desktop management project is to ensure that there is a consistent highway that is developed within all the government structure so that the transfer of data and information can be uniform right across the entire government.

Proposal Tabling Request

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Since the minister refuses to release a copy of this agreement, I would like to ask the minister to at least explain the point system that was used to select the successful hardware bidders. Will he reconsider and provide us with a copy of the agreement and the point system used to select the bidders?

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, throughout the entire government when purchases are made or requests for proposals are taken into account, there are evaluation criteria that are established. Of course, depending on the project, the criteria change with that particular project. In the case of the evaluation criteria with the selection of hardware, we were looking at product quality, general qualifications, the technical specifications, the current cost requirements and the ongoing cost requirements as part of the evaluation criteria. Then they were weighed in accordance with—from low to critical, and in terms of those scores, it would be one to four, one for low, four for critical. Then the evaluation process also encountered or took a look at the degree of satisfaction and awarded points as

to whether the proposal did not meet the requirements or sections of it did not meet the requirements, partially meets the requirements or exceeds the requirements.

So these are, in a way, the evaluation criteria.

Hepatitis C Compensation

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, if you were operated on in December of 1985 and were infected with hepatitis C, there would have been no compensation. If you were operated on in January of '86, one month later, you would have received full compensation. That is the reason why we are asking the provincial government to take some sort of responsibility for those who were infected prior to 1986.

My question specific to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of the province is: listening to his response, will he give Manitobans, in particular the sufferers of hepatitis C prior to 1986, the commitment today that there will be some form of compensation? Will he get on the record today of making that commitment?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, we have discussed with the member for Inkster in committee the rationale behind that particular time frame which, by the way, was developed by his federal Liberal colleagues in the preparatory work for this particular case. The principle on which the package was advanced was one of in that particular time frame it is very arguable that the Canadian blood system run by the Red Cross, regulated by the national government could, may have been able to do something to prevent the spread of hepatitis C. Prior to that particular time—and one always knows, you are picking time frames, you pick it around the facts, what is happening in the medical community. The argument goes very strongly that the test was not one that had been part of the standard of care, was in the developmental process, and it was only in the early part of 1986 that the test came to be accepted and began that process of acceptance when it was finally used everywhere by 1990.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the minister did not even come close to answering the question. The question specific is: will this government make a

commitment to those individuals who were infected by hepatitis C prior to 1986? That is the question. Is the government prepared to answer that question straight-forward? The people deserve that.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, the issue that we have discussed on many occasions and one that Ontario—I am looking forward to hearing Premier Harris's comments on it, et cetera, over the next number of days. The fundamental question here: do we as a health care system have a responsibility to provide a package above the Canadian social safety net, because let us remember no one is being left with nothing anywhere. If you become ill with cancer, if you become ill today with heart disease and are unable to work, your health care is provided for, Pharmacare in Manitoba, home care and the Canada Pension Plan with a disability plan provides income support. It may not be as adequate as we would all like it but it is there. So the question is: do we provide above that social safety net? If we extend it beyond the areas where there is a negligence by the system, the question that we all have to answer: will we provide that same for individuals who have an allergic reaction to drugs, who have an injury in the normal risk of health care and how are we going to finance that? I would be interested to hear what the member for Inkster is proposing in that realm.

Mr. Lamoureux: Will the Premier (Mr. Filmon) make a commitment to compensate those individuals who were infected prior to 1986 with hepatitis C? Will the Premier stand in his place today and make that commitment?

Mr. Praznik: You know, Madam Speaker, this is a very important issue, and it is one in which there are many complexities. It is not a simple issue because it has a lot of ramifications. What I find so untenable in the question from the member for Inkster is in the debate on the New Democratic Party resolution, he moved to take Ottawa and the House of Commons out of that resolution. Never once in his question has he called upon the federal government to do anything. In fact, I think he has become a great apologist for Ottawa.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the Deputy Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau) himself heckled across to me

that the Minister of Health is in fact imputing motives, and that is in fact why I would be standing up. The Deputy Speaker is correct. The Minister of Health is imputing motives. The Minister of Health is trying to say that I am not holding Ottawa responsible, and I am not about to hold Ottawa responsible; I want to hold this government responsible. So, if the minister wants to impute motives, he should be imputing my motives in wanting to hold this government accountable for its lack of actions in dealing with hepatitis C of those that were infected prior to 1986.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the official opposition, on the same point of order.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I enjoy the debate as much as anyone on any given topic, but I think this is a very serious matter. We know the political parties from all different stripes have agreed to a federal-provincial package. We on this side believe there were mistakes made and we said so in December. We know the provincial government is working with other provincial counterparts and the federal government. I really think it is important on this issue—we wanted a free vote last week; we thought that would have been very helpful for us to vote in a free way. It is a very, very important issue—that we maintain decorum in the House, Madam Speaker, on an issue like this, and we remember who is most at risk: the people that are not covered pre-1986. I really think it is important for us to try to find a solution to this. It is very important in our questions and our debate we try to find a solution to this. There is political responsibility everywhere and provincial leadership required everywhere.

Let us take leadership here in Manitoba. Let us find leadership here with the Premier (Mr. Filmon). We will support that to deal with the Krever report and then really support victims. I think, Madam Speaker, you should rule accordingly.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), the honourable member for Inkster does not have a point of order.

* * *

* (1410)

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

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, the point that I make to the member for Inkster is that the Canadian blood system was operated by the Red Cross and regulated by the national government, that provinces by and large were the funders or purchasers of that product, and for him today to come to the House and ask the provinces to come up with all the solutions after we have had withdrawal of federal funding after withdrawal of federal funding—even in this particular package the federal government has not borne its fair share of the cost here. We have to look to those who bear the prime responsibility. Even Mr. Justice Krever identified that as the national government.

Law Enforcement Review Agency Complaint Rejection

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): To the Minister of Justice. This is the government that has messed up the Law Enforcement Review Agency, and indeed in January KPMG concluded that LERA is not seen by any of its participants as being effective and efficient.

My question to the minister is: could the minister now explain why LERA refuses to even accept a complaint from an aboriginal woman who alleges an assault by an officer of the Dakota Ojibway Police Service, contrary, Madam Speaker, to the words of this government in its reports that suggest that LERA is there for all Manitobans?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Madam Speaker, I know that LERA is an independent office, makes decisions on the basis of the legislation that it has before it, and while I cannot comment on that particular case, I trust that the legislation was followed and that the appropriate considerations were made. If in fact the member has any indication that there was something improper in the way that any complaint was dealt with, I would certainly appreciate hearing from the member so that I can refer that to the appropriate officials in my department.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister—who was made aware of this complaint by the individual involved, by the potential complainant, Madam Speaker, and passed it on—explain to all Manitobans, particularly aboriginal Manitobans, why despite an agreement that has been in place since 1994 which requires that complaints against Dakota Ojibway Police Service personnel shall be considered under LERA, would he explain what has gone wrong here and why this government is now involved in further incompetence when it comes to law enforcement review in this province?

Mr. Toews: Well, Madam Speaker, again the member for St. Johns avoids imputing any impropriety on what the LERA officials did. If there is something that they did wrong, tell me, because I will take that to the appropriate officials and I will ask them to review it, but the member does not want to deal in specifics. The member continually deals in vague generalities and character assassinations. That is not the type of thing that I am involved in. I want to ensure that problems are dealt with.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would this minister who received a letter dated January 20—and, by the way, a response was not sent back until March from an official in his department. Surely he had time to look at this. Would he now explain to Manitobans, this complainant and aboriginal Manitobans why it is that they are suffering this discriminatory effect and why LERA does not accept complaints from aboriginal Manitobans? Would he explain that?

Mr. Toews: Well, Madam Speaker, if in fact there is a problem with the legislation that the New Democrats brought in, I would be more than happy to look at it to ensure that if there is any situation where people are being improperly discriminated against, I will deal with that. Our government is committed to ensuring that justice is accessible to people of every race in this province.

Brandon General Hospital Physician Resources—Pediatrics

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Health. As he very well knows, the problem of the lack of pediatric services, adequate pediatric services at

Brandon has been around for many, many months. Now the College of Physicians and Surgeons, because of the current pediatric crisis, has downgraded the hospital to Level 1—in effect, comparable to that of a small rural hospital—saying that BGH should not offer high-risk obstetrical services except in emergencies at this time.

I wonder now whether the minister is prepared to take some action. Can he tell this House exactly what does he propose to do to resolve this serious situation which is causing a lot of anxiety and concern in the community?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, a lot of action has been taken and is working through its course in recruitment.

But let us understand how this developed. We had two pediatricians in Brandon. They indicated to the old—I believe it was the Brandon Hospital board—some time ago, before the RHA came into effect, that they were overworked, had too large a call schedule with only two and would not perform call for the whole week. The Brandon Hospital, at that time, recruited physicians to fill in during that period for which there was a premium, I understand, paid in order to get them to come to Brandon for those periods. The two existing physicians indicated that they would be prepared to work if they were paid the premium, but of course if the issue is overwork, more money is not the answer.

We have authorized funding to the new Brandon Hospital authority in a range of \$185,000 to \$205,000 a year to recruit pediatricians, and I am told from my last update as of Friday evening that there are negotiations going on now with two physicians to come to the Brandon community.

Mr. L. Evans: I thank the minister for that information.

A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Can the minister tell us what action he plans to take to deal with the plan of the local doctors who have now stated that as of this Friday they will not deliver babies at the Brandon General Hospital? This is very regrettable and very serious, and the minister has to address this problem immediately. We have to get a solution now.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, as I have indicated, we have authorized the Brandon Regional Health Authority for contracts between, I believe, a range, depending on the experience of the physician, of \$185,000 to \$205,000 per year. There are two that they are negotiating with. I am hoping that they will be successful in concluding those contracts.

But it is interesting to note that the average income for pediatricians in Winnipeg is at least \$20,000-plus less. So Brandon is probably one of the places in the province that a pediatrician can earn a very good living, which raises the question: why are more pediatricians not interested in relocating from Winnipeg to Brandon? As the member knows his community, as does the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae), there may be some other issues here that make it difficult to recruit.

Hepatitis C Compensation

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Premier has had an opportunity to read the press release from the Province of Ontario, and we have been informed that Allan Rock has said that there may be a meeting or he is looking at a meeting of federal and provincial people to reopen the package.

Ontario, Madam Speaker, is proposing as their solution to this situation that its share for the hepatitis C victims be shared prior to 1986 on the same proportion as the package that is presently agreed to after 1986. I would like to ask the Premier: does the Premier feel that this proposal put forward by Ontario to deal with the prior to 1986 hepatitis C victims could lead to a possible federal-provincial settlement, and is it a possible solution that he could support?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I have the news release that the member refers to. I am not sure that I am interpreting it correctly so I will not make comment until I have a full understanding of it. I do believe that, rather than us negotiating something here in the Legislature, we ought to be having the kind of approach to it that Mr. Rock is apparently suggesting, and that certainly was attempted last Friday, which is that all of the Health ministers across Canada ought to sit down and compare their figures, their notes and their understanding of the issue. I know that we are

more than committed and more than prepared to do just that.

* (1420)

Students-At-Risk Report Government Action

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, last week when we raised in the Legislature the students-at-risk project, it appeared that the minister was not familiar with the report and her response in the hallways was to blame the union and blame the teachers. The next day in Question Period she clearly had read the report and reported that all seven recommendations were being acted upon. I would like to ask the Minister of Education, given that, when she intends to follow Recommendation No. 7, which is the release of the executive summary of the report to all the superintendents and principals who took part.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I am puzzled by the member's preamble. Blaming the union, I do not recall ever having made any reference to that in any way, shape or form, so, Madam Speaker, I categorically deny that. I did indicate, which is absolutely accurate, that this perspective in this report came from workers in the workforce, some who may belong to unions and some who may not.

Madam Speaker, it is the perspective of workers in the field, and I do believe I said it was a valuable perspective. Where she gets this verbiage from is beyond me, I do not know. But I wish to state for the record that it is entirely inaccurate and a very wrong interpretation of my comments. If the member feels that any time I indicate something is the workers' perspective it implies a criticism, perhaps it is more about her understandings than mine.

I indicated to the member that we were working on all seven of these recommendations, and I think that is an answer to her question.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us when she is going to follow Recommendation No. 7, which is simply to release the report? It is step 1. When is she going to do it?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I absolutely disagree that it was step 1. It was the final addendum to all of these recommendations.

Madam Speaker, step 1 was that we have an integrated system which we have now developed through Children and Youth Secretariat. Step 2 was that we indicate that we show how best practices work, which we are doing with standard exams. Step 3 was that we take a look at the aboriginal youth perspective, which we have done with our aboriginal youth directorate. Step 4—every single one is underway. So she says it was step 1. I am indicating to her what the steps were. The member is going to say I am out of order. She said this was step 1. I am indicating what step 1 was, step 2, step 3 and step 4. She is talking about step 7.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order. My original point of order, Madam Speaker, was Beauchesne's Citation 417, answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate.

Madam Speaker, if there is any doubt that the minister was violating that, her extensive comments after you stood up, I think she went on for another two or three minutes of rambling nonanswer. I would like to ask you for once to have this Minister of Education actually answer a question in this House.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, indeed I would remind the honourable Minister of Education and Training to respond to the question asked, to be as brief as possible and not provoke debate.

* * *

Ms. Friesen: Well, for the third time, I would like to ask the minister when she is going to release the report

that Recommendation No. 7 says she should. When is she going to do it?

Mrs. McIntosh: We will be preparing for those 10 focus groups information as to how we are addressing the report, the recommendations that they gave us, and giving that to them. They know what they recommended; they are the ones who recommended it. What they are really wanting is a reply back from us as to how we are addressing those concerns. We are clearly addressing each and every one of them, and we will provide that information to them as soon as that answer is ready for them.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Housing Starts

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Last week the member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) rose to ask questions about housing starts and population levels in our province. I would encourage the member to look at his own community when it comes to housing starts and population levels. An article in the Brandon Sun titled "Building boom" wrote about the situation in Brandon. It just happened to be the same day as the member for Brandon East accused our government of desperately trying to portray the economy as buoyant and expanding.

Did the Brandon Sun concur with the assessment made by the member for Brandon East? A review of the article indicates that if early numbers are any indication, 1998 is shaping up to be a record year for the Brandon construction industry. Mr. Jack Cumming, general manager of the Construction Association of Rural Manitoba indicated that in Brandon building permits are up nearly 250 percent over the same period last year. He went on to note that permits are sitting at a value of \$5 million as opposed to \$1.5 million this time last year. The article goes on to state that Brandon's population is expected to soar by as much as 10,000 people in the years following the completion of Maple Leaf's \$112-million hog processing plant.

Madam Speaker, I do believe that the member for Brandon East needs only to take a drive around his own

constituency to see the positive effects of our government's progressive policies.

Gilbert and Sullivan Society

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the wonderful volunteer community in Winnipeg that has for so many years sustained and developed our music industry in this province by providing festivals and opportunities for people, as amateurs and as beginners, to learn and to excel and then to move on to careers that have put both them and Winnipeg on the world map as a centre of musical excellence. I am sure all members in this House know Tracy Dahl, they know Victor Pankratz, and we could go on and name many, many more Winnipeg musicians who have risen to prominence through the amateur festival scene and the amateur performance scene in this city.

I want to pay particular tribute to the Gilbert and Sullivan Society, which recently concluded its eighth presentation at the Pantages Playhouse Theatre. This association involves over a thousand Manitobans. It has a regular choir that performs at volunteer fundraising efforts around the city and sings out of pure pleasure and enjoyment. Madam Speaker, the conductor of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra came on stage at the end of one of the performances a year or so ago and said that the choir in Winnipeg in the Gilbert and Sullivan chorale was equivalent to or even better than the D'Oyly Carte which he directed for some five years in London, England. So this is a high tribute to the quality of the volunteers who have developed and provided support in a whole range of musical endeavours in this city, and in particular I pay tribute to the members, the officers, the board, the volunteers and the performers of the Gilbert and Sullivan Society.

Student Employment Centres

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure this afternoon to announce to the House that today 47 Student Youth Job Centres are opening in Manitoba. These centres are opening in communities right across Manitoba. Our government continues to support the youth in rural and urban communities. These centres are a great method to connect employers and employees. Once again we see that it is the Filmon

government's priority to support the youth of our province.

It is also a priority to continue increasing employment opportunities in Manitoba. Recently Statistics Canada reported that Manitoba leads the country in job creation. Last year approximately 10,000 young people obtained employment through these centres. It is a great benefit to the students when they can locate employment in their own communities. This lessens their expenses and increases their disposable income. This is also a great benefit to local businesses as they can hire students who know the community and understand the local environment.

Madam Speaker, today many new career opportunities exist. With new technology and new public demands, we have seen and continue to see the different types of jobs being created. These centres that we are opening are a great way to test our future career possibilities. I am very proud of our government's commitment to the youth of Manitoba. Thank you.

* (1430)

Canada-Manitoba Flood-Proofing Program

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, when a disaster strikes an area, it can be very expensive, and I refer to disasters such as floods which can be expensive for the people who have to leave their homes. It disrupts their lives, and it can be very expensive for governments as well. One of the things that can be done is that preventative measures can be taken between floods to ensure that when the next flood strikes there are not such big losses.

This government had the opportunity to do that. It had the opportunity to extend flood protection to areas such as the Shellmouth and the Swan River Valley and other areas in the province that have faced floods in previous years, but this government chose not to. The government's own documents state that the Canada-Manitoba Flood-Proofing Program is a program separate from the disaster assistance program that it applied across the country. The flood-proofing program in Manitoba was expanded in August to include areas outside the Red River Valley, and it is the provincial government that will administer the program

and make the decision how it should be acted on. The document goes on to say that the program is available to all Manitobans whose homes, businesses and properties are threatened by floods anywhere in the province.

Well, this province has chosen to ignore other parts of the province. People in my area have made application for flood-proofing assistance and they have been denied. I have to say that that is a very foolish move on the part of this government when there is an opportunity, when the federal government has put up part of the money, when we can take steps to flood proof other homes. There is a small number of homes that could have taken advantage of this program, and the government has denied us. The minister across the way is saying the government has denied them. We have talked to the federal government. They said it is this provincial government that made the decision not to extend the program to other parts of the province. Their documents say it is for all parts of the province, and it is a shame that the government chooses to ignore other people who are going to be facing disastrous floods in years ahead.

Crow Rate-Elimination

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, it is almost two and a half years since the federal Minister of Agriculture and the federal Minister of Transportation announced in Ottawa that the Crow benefit that had been accrued to many Manitoba and western Canadian farmers for many years would be eliminated. The additional cost of transporting grain in this province, especially in this province, has been nothing short of phenomenal. One-third of a load of grain taken to an elevator now is deducted. One-third of the benefit of the grain is now being deducted for transportation and handling costs. In order to recognize the difficulty that Manitoba farmers are going to have to make ends meet, it is important to note that we need to start adding value—in spite of what the editor of the Manitoba Co-operator says—to what we produce in this province. Therefore, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) has announced that we are going to increase, through the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, the development of a program for producers to finance agriculturally based, new generation co-operative shares.

I think it is also important to note that our Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe) today announced the establishment of a new co-operatives act which will allow the establishment of a recommendation that was made by the rural task force on value-added to establish new generation co-operatives in this province. That will allow individuals to not only contract their produce to these co-operatives but will in fact allow ownership and financing of new business ventures in this province and new processing facilities to be established, creating large numbers of jobs, thereby keeping our farm families viable in this province. I congratulate the two ministers for having taken that initiative.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. David Newman (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

* (1440)

House Business

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, we had an agreement for today that we would sit till six o'clock in Estimates. I am just wondering if that was approved formally in the House, and if it has not, I would suggest we do that currently which would be to waive private members' hour and continue sitting in Estimates till six o'clock, if there is agreement.

Madam Speaker: Yes, unanimous consent was received last Wednesday, I believe, in the House to waive private members' hour and sit consecutively through till six o'clock this evening.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

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

This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Civil Service Commission.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 17.1.(c) Human Resource Management Services (1) Salary and Employee Benefits on page 22.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Yes, we were talking about the Management Internship Program, and I have some other questions for the minister regarding that program. The minister said that they actively recruit at the universities. My understanding is that there is actually a seminar or has been a seminar or a presentation made to the potential applicants or to people who might be interested at the universities prior to sending in or actually making an application. Is that accurate?

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister charged with the administration of The Civil Service Act): That is correct.

Ms. Barrett: I actually spoke with someone sort of serendipitously over the weekend who had gone through this process—I cannot remember whether it was the first year or the second year; I guess this is the third year, so it would have to have been the first or the second year—who at that seminar someone asked the question—I do not think it was this person—about the references that had to accompany the application. They had asked if the references could be connected or should be or what would the plus or minus be if the references were connected in any way to a political party, and the answer that was given was: yes, it could hurt you—you being the applicant—if the references were from one party or another party.

I am wondering if the minister has any response to that, seeing that this is a Civil Service Commission program and one would think, as would the internship program that is dealt with in the caucuses, applicants of which I have been a part for the last four years, applicants often, or sometimes, not often but sometimes have references written by people who are clearly, or can very clearly be identified as being connected with one political party or another, and that has not made any difference in our determination of whether they should be an intern or not, and I am wondering if the

minister has any comments on this. It would appear that that kind of a comment does not have any place in the civil service process.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I have been an MLA for 10 years and a few days now and been Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission for a year and a few months and I can tell you in my relationship with any of the staff at the Civil Service Commission, I have nothing but the highest respect for the manner in which they conduct themselves. I am full of confidence that any of the competitions that they are responsible for, any of the activities that they undertake, any of the processes they are involved with, with individuals across this province, it is a very professional relationship, and I believe that they always act within the guidelines of the legislation. I have tremendous confidence that they will follow the legislation and follow the guidelines that have been laid down for the Civil Service Commission.

Ms. Barrett: Then would the minister say that an answer such as was given to this person at this public meeting that, yes, references from a political party or another could potentially hurt an applicant? Would he agree that would be outside the guidelines of the Civil Service Commission and certainly outside the guidelines of the Internship Program?

Mr. Gilleshammer: This is an apolitical process that the civil service conducts, and any attempt to inject politics into the process would be seen as inappropriate.

Ms. Barrett: I would agree that it is an apolitical process, and I think it should actually be even more apolitical than the caucus internship program which has been operating since 1986, where ultimately the young people who are selected to participate in this program actually work with the various caucuses in the Legislature. They do very political things. Although it is technically a nonpolitical position, they work with the most political part of the governing process, which is with the caucuses, and there we do not take cognizance—or we would never say that a reference could hurt you in this context, so again I am not imputing any—I do not have a clue who made the comment. I can go back and try and find some more information out if the minister wants, and I do not have

any reason to disbelieve the person that said this to me. When this person said this to me, it triggered something in me that said very quickly: this is probably not appropriate. So I wanted to raise it with the minister and ask him if he thinks that if this were the case, would it have been an appropriate thing to say?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I have indicated that this is an apolitical process, and I think the member readily admits that she was not there and does not fully understand it, and neither do I. But I think that, in anything that the Civil Service Commission does and says, they try to leave the impression that the references that one uses should not be of a political nature, that they are not going to be given any weight, and one might be wise to have people act as a reference based on knowledge of that person's ability and work experience and suitability for a position.

* (1450)

Ms. Barrett: So what the minister is saying is that he thinks that perhaps the answer to this question was do not send in political references but send in nonpolitical references. Now the minister, no more than I do, has any way of knowing for sure what was actually said. But I got a very clear feeling from what was said to me that it was not. This is an apolitical process so you should not do political references at all but, yes, depending on which party it could hurt you. If that were the case, is that an inappropriate thing to have said at this part of the process for the internship program?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I think the member is saying that not only does she not know exactly what was said nor in what context it was said and is asking me to speculate on it, and I do not think we are going to go anywhere with this. I have said to the member that I am comfortable with the guidelines, the regulations under which the Civil Service Commission conducts their competitions and their business on a day-to-day basis, and I would think what staff were trying to engender amongst students is that this is an apolitical process. Do not feel that you have to load up your resume with how many political campaigns you have been involved with or whatever political background you bring. I do believe that the experience that we have had within the recruitment for this Management

Internship Program has been very straightforward and following guidelines by which the civil service has acted over a long period of time.

Ms. Barrett: I will not carry on with this, because past experience with this minister leads me to understand that I would not get any further than I already have gotten, which is not very far.

There is, as the minister said last week, a written exam or written information that was required after the first cut, if you will, of applicants. What form does that written exam take?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told we use the federal government written entrance examination.

Ms. Barrett: What kinds of things are involved in that, not specific questions, but what kinds of categories are there?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The examination that is used is an attempt to evaluate the existing skills of an applicant to be able to read a document in précis form, reproduce the essence of that in one's own words to show not only written skills but understanding of what a document is, the ability to write very succinctly what could be termed briefing notes, to give a thorough but brief explanation of a particular subject.

Ms. Barrett: So the written exam was just dealing with the précis and the ability to distill the essence of something or was the other part of the written exam, the personality test that we were talking about last time. Are there other elements to the written exam?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The personality test inventory that is used is completely separate from what we are talking about here. This is simply a tool to evaluate the written skills of an individual, one that is used by the federal government, and it deals with the ability to comprehend and ability to, in writing, explain what one has read.

Ms. Barrett: So at what point in the process would the personality profile test, which the minister said last time was called the preview assessment, take place? At what point in the examination process or the hiring process would that exam take place?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, I am told that this exercise could probably be referred to as the fifth step in the evaluation of candidates.

Ms. Barrett: What, may I ask, is the fourth step, and what, may I ask, is the sixth step then?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The fourth step is the preliminary interview and the sixth step is the selection board.

Ms. Barrett: So the fifth step which is or includes the personality profile also includes the written exam dealing with the précis, et cetera, and if not, where does that come in?

Mr. Gilleshammer: It does not. I am told it is the third step.

Ms. Barrett: So the written material that a prospective intern would deal with and the third step is the ability to write and reproduce succinctly briefing notes, et cetera. If they get past that, the fourth step is the preliminary interview at which time the preview assessment is undertaken or is part of that fourth preliminary interview?

Mr. Gilleshammer: This interview, called the fourth step, reviews the evaluation of the candidate in the previous steps.

Ms. Barrett: So after that review of the previous steps, the fifth step then includes the personality evaluation?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct.

Ms. Barrett: Is that a written personality assessment?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct.

Ms. Barrett: What happens in step six?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is referred to as the selection board interview.

Ms. Barrett: The selection board interview is the interview that takes place often with the Family Services, Treasury Board and Civil Service Commission people that the minister spoke of last week?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I believe the third part to that was the Department of Education.

Ms. Barrett: Are there any established criteria that are used when determining whether a potential intern gets past the third step, the fourth step or the fifth step?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The interns would be evaluated at all steps of the process.

Ms. Barrett: Who evaluates them at all steps of the process?

* (1500)

Mr. Gilleshammer: That would be the program staff of the Civil Service Commission.

Ms. Barrett: The program staff would be within the human resources division of the Civil Service Commission?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct.

Ms. Barrett: Do those staff members have guidelines that they base their evaluations on? I assume a précis is kind of anything that is in an essay form or not multiple-choice, question-answer, that it has a quality about it, rather than just a quantitative definition. You will have to have a subjective element to it. I am not saying anything negative about that, but there surely must also be some guidelines or parameters or criteria that the people who are assessing at stage three or four would connect with or would put their evaluation up against?

Mr. Gilleshammer: They are evaluated against the standardized criteria that the federal government uses and is marked by them.

Ms. Barrett: So if they are evaluated against standardized criteria, does that mean that those applicants who score highest in step three would then make it to step four, or are there other elements that come into play here?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, I think it is fair to say that those students who grade at the upper ends of the

grading scores proceed on, and those at the lower end are the ones who do not.

Ms. Barrett: The qualifications listed in the large information sheet that the minister gave me last week include under Additional Considerations a high level of commitment to the program. I am just wondering how that is determined.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The member is correct. Under Additional Considerations, there are a number of items, including appropriate work experience, strong interpersonal and leadership abilities, effective oral and written communication skills, problem-solving skills, volunteer experience, a language other than English, and a high level of commitment to the program. Those that evaluate the potential interns bear this in mind at all steps of the process.

Ms. Barrett: I apologize. Could the minister repeat his last sentence, please? I have in front of me the Additional Considerations. He does not need to read those out again, but the question I had was about the last one, which is a high level of commitment to the program and how that is determined. I apologize to the minister. I was distracted by my colleague and did not hear the very last sentence of his response.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am pleased to accept your apology. What I said was, in all those considerations, these are taken into consideration by those who are doing the evaluation at all steps of the evaluation process.

Ms. Barrett: Well, I would hope they would be taken into consideration, because they are listed under Additional Considerations. How does one measure a high level of commitment to the program?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I guess it is fair to say it is not like taking somebody's temperature where you get an exact reading—

Ms. Barrett: That is exactly why I am asking the question.

Mr. Gilleshammer: —but it is part of the evaluation process that the evaluators, who are skilled and trained

at this, will use as part of the criteria when they ultimately make a decision.

Ms. Barrett: What kind of skill and training or components of that skill and training specifically? Do they ask questions? Are there written questions that they respond to? Do they say: how will your family look at this? How do they determine this?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, they would look carefully at the courses that they have taken. They will look at the activities that they have been involved in. They would also evaluate the correspondence, the letter of application, with the view of evaluating the commitment to the program. Again, it is not a scientific test that is given to the candidates, but I would say that these are people who are skilled in human resource development and that they would keep that in mind as they ultimately make their evaluations.

If you are asking: is there a great deal of difference between the sixth candidate selected and the seventh one, probably the difference would be very narrow, but we rely on the expertise within the Civil Service Commission and the tools that they have at hand to make those decisions.

Ms. Barrett: The minister said on Thursday or whenever, I guess it was Thursday, that the interns, once they have been selected, go through an orientation session and then a rotation through various departments and would probably have three or four departments during their internship and that the assignments were based on the interns' background and interest.

Can the minister tell us, of the six interns who are graduating this year—well, let us start with that—what were the departments that these interns have gone through in their two years?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, some of the departments that have been involved are Labour, Intergovernmental Affairs, Government Services, Education and Training, Treasury Board, Civil Service, Justice, Culture and Heritage, Highways, and Industry, Trade and Tourism—Government Services, I have already mentioned. So there are a variety of departments that have been involved.

Ms. Barrett: The minister said that it was at least partly based on the background and the interest of the interns as to where they were assigned, but I would assume that over three or four assignments your background and interest would vary. I mean, there are about 10 departments here, so it is going to be based partly on the interns' interest, but I assume as well on the department's interest. How does the program go about assigning interns to the various departments and at what level within the department? Who decides what the intern is going to do within each department?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That would be the senior managers in the departments.

Ms. Barrett: That would be the senior managers in the departments that determine where the interns are placed and/or make application to the program for interns to be placed within them?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, the students make application, and there is a certain amount of, I suppose, latitude given to have students indicate some departments of interest. Middle managers within the departments are involved in identifying experiences that might be appropriate.

* (1510)

Ms. Barrett: Okay, say I were an intern and I had identified an interest in education and some background in that and that looked to be a good fit, so I went into the Department of Education for my first rotation. How am I picked, or how do I go from Education to another one of the assignments?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The program staff within the Civil Service branch that we are dealing with work with the departments and with the students, the interns to facilitate these moves.

Ms. Barrett: I would like to spend more time on this program, but there are other things I would like to ask questions on. So I think I will move on to the next interesting program that is under the Human Resources area. That is the Aboriginal Management Development Project.

I am wondering if the minister has any information in writing, as he did for the Management Internship

Program, on the Aboriginal Management Development Project.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Maybe I can do as I did last time and put a few thoughts on the record and give my honourable friend an opportunity to ask questions on that.

The Aboriginal Management Development Project is a two-year pilot project to train and develop existing aboriginal employees to acquire skills to compete effectively for management positions. This was announced in the fall of 1996, a partnership between the Civil Service Commission and departments to provide services to aboriginal people as customers, clients or partners.

There is an initial intake of nine management trainees identified and sponsored by departments on the basis of proven supervisory experience and demonstrated leadership potential. It is centrally managed, has work assignments, orientation, structured training, networking and mentoring over a two-year period. The ultimate goal is successful placement and enhanced ability to compete for management positions in government.

The current status, we have nine employees sponsored by the departments of Northern Affairs, Family Services, Highways and Transportation, Justice, Health, and Natural Resources, and they are commencing the second year of this project. An evaluation will be completed within the coming year regarding its success and potential for a second intake.

Ms. Barrett: The minister spoke about, as well in the annual report it talks about, employees who demonstrate significant leadership potential. How is that demonstration shown? How do you determine which ones demonstrate that leadership potential?

Mr. Gilleshammer: This could develop in two ways, I suppose: individuals could identify themselves as being interested in the Aboriginal Management Development Project, or they could be nominated by staff within the respective departments.

Ms. Barrett: When this pilot project first came on line in the fall of '96, I believe, were all civil servants

notified of this program, or how did people get to know about this program?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The involved departments who are supplying the staff year made staff within their department aware of it. It was sort of an internal process for explaining and identifying the program.

Ms. Barrett: So how many departments then would have been involved in notifying internally their employees?

Mr. Gilleshammer: It would be the ones that I read into the record a few minutes ago. I can repeat them for the member just in case a question comes to mind, but if she would rather not hear it, okay.

Ms. Barrett: No, I took down the information. The minister spoke about the departments that provide customers, clients and partnerships with the aboriginal community, I think, in the context of listing then these departments. But are there not aboriginal employees in other departments or not?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes.

Ms. Barrett: So how would aboriginal employees throughout the government find out about these programs which are in these six departments?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Chairman, this was commenced as a pilot project, and we have just completed our first year. The intention would be to analyze the experience that individuals have had within those departments and hopefully expand this in the coming years. That evaluation has not yet been completed, and we look forward to it coming forward in due course.

Ms. Barrett: My question was: if I were an aboriginal civil servant working in the Department of Education, how would I find out about this program so I could self-identify that I was interested in it?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Chairman, the first step would be for that department, or any department other than the ones I had indicated earlier, to opt into the

program. I know that there will be departments who are awaiting the evaluation of this first-year pilot project.

Ms. Barrett: So the pilot project is not open to all aboriginal employees. It is open to all aboriginal employees in these departments that have been listed because it is a pilot project.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Our first year of operation was fiscal year 1997, and it was restricted to those departments that I had indicated earlier.

Ms. Barrett: If the project is evaluated successfully, then perhaps other departments would participate in the project?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That would be my hope.

* (1520)

Ms. Barrett: I assume that there is mentoring that goes along with this program and that the program itself requires time from existing staff or additional staff to provide the assistance that is needed to assist these individuals to accelerate their potential. So that may be one of the reasons why departments need to self-select themselves into the program, because it does require some realignment of staff duties. Am I accurate in that assessment?

Mr. Gilleshammer: You are accurate in that mentoring is a part of this. I cannot stress enough that this was a pilot project, one that we as a government are very much committed to, one that we think will succeed, but with any endeavour such as this it is always wise to evaluate what you have done before you expand it to a greater degree.

Ms. Barrett: Were any additional funds available for this project, or were the funds found from within the various departments where these employees work?

Mr. Gilleshammer: As I indicated earlier, departments were responsible for the staff years and the dollars involved. There was a reallocation of some operating funds within the Civil Service Commission to be able to manage this program.

Ms. Barrett: Can the minister give me a figure on the sum funds, and from where did they come?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes. The departments that I had indicated before—Northern Affairs, Family Services, Highways and Transportation, Justice, Health and Natural Resources—were the departments that housed these nine staff years, and, usually, we assign about \$40,000 per staff year, if you want to use that, for the nine individuals. Then there probably would be some other costs associated, as well. As I have indicated, the Civil Service Commission also reallocated some existing operating funds to participate in this project.

Ms. Barrett: The civil service funds, how much were they and what were they reallocated to do in this project?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The existing dollars within the Civil Service Commission that were reallocated were around \$60,000. This would be dollars that would have been used for orientation, for some structured training, for some mentoring, and for assessment.

Ms. Barrett: The minister talked about \$40,000 per SY, approximately for the nine staff, you could say approximately for each of the nine staff. Now I do not know why, why would there have to be a reallocation? Is that because the people who are in the project are not doing the work that they were hired to do, they are taking some time off that work to do this project? I guess this gets down to what exactly does the project do? What does an individual in this project do?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The reallocation that I spoke of, the \$60,000, was funding within the Civil Service Commission, and I indicated it was for a variety of topics such as orientation and structured training, mentoring, and evaluation. So those were the civil service dollars.

Ms. Barrett: Yes, I know, but earlier the minister spoke about the nine SYs that were involved in the project, and I am assuming that is the nine individuals who were actually part of the pilot project. You said take an average of approximately \$40,000 per SY. I am asking why in the context of a reallocation of funds, does that mean that each of those nine employees is not doing their civil service work because they are in this

project or part of their day is taken up with the project? Why does there need to be a reallocation?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, maybe it would help if I indicated to my honourable friend that while they were in the Aboriginal Management Development Project, they were in a staff year and the staff year and the work that they previously did, someone had to backfill to do that particular work.

Ms. Barrett: Yes, that is what I was getting at. So the project itself is, it takes these nine individuals and they do project work rather than their own job. So they spend the entire two years working on the project or being participants in the project, rather than doing the job for which they were hired originally.

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct. The pilot year is dedicated to management development as the title indicates.

Ms. Barrett: So those nine members of the pilot project will have spent their year on orientation, training, mentoring and assessment, being assessed. Are there any other costs associated with the training part of it, the assessment, other than the \$60,000? Are there other outside services that are provided?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The \$60,000 that we mentioned was used, in part, to have somebody come in and do the assessment on their training and the skills that they developed.

Ms. Barrett: What is the total budget for this project?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, it would be just over \$400,000.

Ms. Barrett: And the elements of that budget.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, there would be nine staff years, plus \$60,000 within the Civil Service Commission for training.

Ms. Barrett: So nine individuals get a year of training for \$60,000. That is the total cost of the whole year of training for all nine of those individuals. Are there no other training programs or other external or internal costs to this?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, the on-the-job training takes place by existing staff members within those departments, and they give up and use some of their time to do that training. The \$60,000 that I referenced was the cost to the Civil Service Commission to do the things that I have indicated that they do.

Ms. Barrett: I think that completes my questions on that particular element. Now if you can hold for just a moment because I am not sure if this is all that I—

Yes, continuing on in the Human Resources element, some of the activities that are identified additionally to the two very interesting programs that we have been speaking about, one says "Identify barriers and issues related to employment equity and recommend program enhancements." Can the minister give me some examples of barriers and issues that still exist in relation to employment equity and what some of those recommended enhancements might be?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We currently have two staff within the Civil Service Commission who work with the employment equity co-ordinators who are in each department. The employment equity co-ordinators identify some of the barriers as they see them within the department that they are responsible for, and our staff will work with them to see if we can resolve or eliminate some of these barriers.

* (1530)

One example that was given to me was in the Department of Justice where previously one of the academic requirements for candidates within the Corrections branch was that they have a Grade 12 certificate. This is no longer the case. It was removed. In place, their experience and activities were reviewed and that which had been seen as a barrier was removed, and others could apply to get into that particular position.

Ms. Barrett: Is there a report that the Civil Service Commission gets from these employment equity co-ordinators within each department, like an annual report of the issues and what has been done to enhance them?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, each of these employment equity co-ordinators does provide a report to staff

within the Civil Service Commission on what would be called, I suppose, employment barriers. Working with our staff, they evaluate these barriers and attempt to, where possible, eliminate them.

Ms. Barrett: Is that report an internal document or is it accessible to anyone who would like it?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told it is internal to the commission.

Ms. Barrett: In the annual report, it speaks about the percentages of employees in each of the employment equity designated groups. I am wondering if the minister can provide me, in writing please, not reading into the record right now as has been done in the past, with the numbers of people in each of those categories. Like women 51 percent, what does that correspond to in an actual number? And also representation by the various categories, which are managerial, professional-technical and admin support. So if that report could be distributed to me, that would be very helpful.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I can provide some information for my honourable friend if I understand what it is that she is looking for. I have comparative statistics indicating the staffing percentages and staffing numbers of male, female, aboriginal, persons with disabilities and visible minorities. Is that the information you are looking for?

Ms. Barrett: That is half the information. The other half would be, within each of the categories in the Civil Service, which is managerial, professional/technical and admin support. Within each of those categories, what proportion are male, what proportion are female, what proportion are disabilities, aboriginal people and visible minorities? So total, and then within the three basic employee categories.

Mr. Gilleshammer: If I have heard my honourable friend right, yes, we can see that that information comes forward, and if it is not to her liking, she can simply tell me and we can redo it to suit her needs.

Ms. Barrett: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 17.1.(c) Human Resource Management Services (1) Salaries and Employee

Benefits \$1,010,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$674,100—pass.

17.1.(d) Labour Relations Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,187,700.

Ms. Barrett: I may have made a mistake here. I did. I would like to revert, if I may, to the Employee Assistance Program just to make a comment and a very positive comment on that item. Is it possible for me to revert to that?

Mr. Chairperson: Is there unanimous consent of the committee to revert to the previous section? [agreed]

Ms. Barrett: Under the Employee Assistance Program, one of my longtime friends is not a civil servant but is a worker in an agency that is funded by the government, so an external agency I guess. She had personal and work-related stress factors in the last six months that were very difficult for her, and she asked me what I thought she should do. I said to her: you should see a counsellor. She said okay. Then I was trying to get some names of people that I have known from my experience.

In the meantime, she phoned the Employee Assistance Program. I think within two hours she had an interview and she went down and saw the person at EAP. She called me back later the next day and said it was magnificent. She had gotten exactly the kind of assistance she needed and was very impressed with the quality of service that she had received and the expediency which she had been dealt with. So I just thought I would put that on the record, that one person's experience on this side was very positive.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I thank my honourable friend for those kind words. We will be sure that staff within the civil service do have a chance to read those. I think the Employee Assistance Program is very important to large organizations. I would just comment that just over 10 years ago I was part of the Manitoba Teachers' Society and employee assistance program workers were relatively new there at that time. In the initial start-up, I think there were people who were questioning expenditures of that nature and the need for employee assistance personnel. Since then, that particular unit within the Teachers' Society has grown

somewhat, and someone that I am familiar with is also working in that area.

* (1540)

It is dramatic the number of people who are seeking assistance, not only, as some thought at the time, young people just getting into that profession. It does span all age groups, all geographic areas of the province and is a source of some concern to some of us that so much of that kind of assistance is needed and particularly for people who are late in their career who should be coming to the end of a wonderful career where they have made a major contribution. Yet sometimes the case is in the final years they do experience a great deal of stress and discomfort. I know from what my honourable friend has just said and the people that I know within government and within organizations like the MTS, these people play a very valuable role and do a very needed job for individuals who are faced with that stress.

Ms. Barrett: It is not just individuals who are in their final years, as the minister suggested. I know the minister did not suggest that, but I did want to say potentially part of the stress might have been caused by the, in some cases, reduction in numbers of civil servants, in the uncertainty about their jobs and their future, in the uncertainty about programs, in all of the decisions that have been made, many of which we believe were not good management decisions and certainly have not shown to be good programming decisions for services as well as enormous stress placed on civil servants. So, again, the Employee Assistance Program has, I am sure, proven itself time and time again to be a very effective tool and I think in some cases probably has had to be utilized more than it should be because of some of the decisions made by the government.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I do have to take a moment to correct my honourable friend. I think she corrected herself, but I certainly did not indicate that programs of this nature were only for people at the end of their careers. In fact, I started my comments by saying that they served a wide spectrum of people from a number of geographic regions and the program, whether it is within government or within the private sector, is there for all employees. The member should be aware that in

today's society there are lots of stresses on individuals, whether they are students in schools or universities, whether they are individuals that work for government or individuals who work for the private sector. I do not think any particular group has a claim to being the only group that feels this stress. It is widespread across society.

Ms. Barrett: I am not going to get into an extended debate with the minister on this because it could go on for a great period of time, and I do not want to take away from the positive work of the Employee Assistance Program. So I will move on and at some later date perhaps have an opportunity to put on the record some of my more general concerns.

I have finished with my comments on Employee Assistance Program, so are we now technically back into 1.(d)?

Mr. Chairperson: Item 17.1. Civil Service Commission (d) Labour Relations Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,187,700.

Ms. Barrett: In the Negotiation Services component of 1.(d), I would like to ask the minister who the Public Sector Compensation—who are the members of the Public Sector Compensation Committee of Cabinet. The Negotiation Services acts as secretariat to this organization or this body.

Mr. Gilleshammer: There are 18 members in Executive Council and a number of those from time to time serve on the Public Sector Compensation Committee.

Ms. Barrett: Other cabinet committees, the Urban Affairs Committee of Cabinet, the committee that deals with—that has on it the Family Services, Justice, Health and Education committee have concrete specific names of ministers attached or departments. Why is the Public Sector Compensation Committee of Cabinet not structured in that same way?

Mr. Gilleshammer: It is structured by Order-in-Council, and currently the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer) are on that committee.

Ms. Barrett: It would have been easier had the minister just given me those three names at the beginning. Could the minister tell me how many civil servants there are actually in the government today versus how many there were at the end of fiscal '96-97?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The most current information that staff have put in front of me is that as of December of 1997, we had 14,591 employees, comparing that to December of 1996 at which time there were 14,475.

Ms. Barrett: How many positions does this represent, or staff years, perhaps?

Mr. Gilleshammer: For our purposes within the Civil Service Commission, we just count employees.

Ms. Barrett: So there is no way of figuring out how many of these people work part time?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Full-time equivalence, we have 11,219; part-time casual, 3,372 as of December 1997, which gives you that figure of 14,591.

Ms. Barrett: This is interesting, because in the annual report ending March 31, 1997, on page 43, Employment Statistics: Total Number of Civil Service Employees at Fiscal Year End 1995-1996-1997, the grand total of civil service employees and contract employees, March of '97, was 14,373. So is the minister saying that in the period between March 31, 1997, and December 31, 1997, that they added approximately 218 employees?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct.

Ms. Barrett: So the government is employing more people now than it has in the past. Is this a reversal of a trend that we are seeing?

* (1550)

Mr. Gilleshammer: The trouble that my honourable friend is having with the arithmetic is probably explained by the fact that there are seasonal employees, so the number of employees is not static through the entire year.

Ms. Barrett: When do most seasonal employees work?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That would be in the summertime.

Ms. Barrett: That is what I thought. But we have here two statistics, March of '97 and December of '97, neither of which period is summertime or even spring. Yet there are approximately 220 more employees at the end of December last year than there were in March last year.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I could give the member some numbers for each department showing what their staff complement was at four different times within the year, and then she would perhaps understand that these numbers vary. In March of 1997 our staff complement was 14,373. In June of 1997 it was 16,273. In September it was 15,209, and in December it is the aforementioned 14,591. But maybe I could select some departments that would help her understand this better.

In Government Services, in March there were 961 staff members. In June there were 937; September, 915; and December, 922—so slight changes. I will perhaps pick out another department, the Department of Labour. In March there were 268 staff; in June, 261; in September, 265; in December, 258. Natural Resources maybe is a good example of a more seasonal one. In March there were 996 staff; in June there were 2,174; in September there were 1,701; and, in December there were 1,099. So these numbers vary on a seasonal basis, and I have given my honourable friend an accurate snapshot of the number of employees at the end of 1997.

Ms. Barrett: I think what perhaps would be more helpful for me if the minister could provide it, again, I do not need it read into the record, but the March '98, if he has it, equivalent to the employment stats as were in the annual report, just the Civil Service employees, rather than adding the casuals on. If that is available at some future date, I would appreciate that.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The numbers for the end of March 1998 are, obviously, not available, but at a future date they will be.

Ms. Barrett: May I ask in advance for them to be sent to me when that future date comes to be?

Mr. Gilleshammer: It would be our pleasure.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 17.1.(d) Labour Relations Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,187,700—pass; 1.(d)(2) Other Expenditures \$327,800—pass; 1.(e) Organization and Staff Development Agency.

Ms. Barrett: Who sits on the advisory board, please?

* (1600)

Mr. Gilleshammer: The gentlemen to my left, Paul Hart, is a member of the board; Tom Farrell, who is the Deputy Minister of Labour; Bruce MacFarlane, Q.C., Deputy Minister of Manitoba Justice; Jack McKay, vice-president, Human Resources, Investors Group; Herb Robertson, Director, Organization and Staff Development; and, Jim Robson, Information Services director, Great-West Life Assurance.

Ms. Barrett: The 1997 annual report, page 7, talks about training and projects, and the number of workshops that has substantially decreased from '94-95 to '96-97, half, actually, and almost a quarter of the people that participated in '94-95 participated in '96-97. Rural workshops went from 60 to seven, et cetera, and I am wondering if the minister can explain that decrease.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The organization responds to interests and needs of members of the civil service and, if you will look at the bottom table, there has been a shift from the workshops to more projects and training, as indicated in that second table. So I guess it is fair to say that the organization attempts to adjust to the needs of the workforce.

Ms. Barrett: So the projects are much more specific than the general training or the workshops are?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, the shift is from general workshops to more specific training as identified by client departments.

Ms. Barrett: I do not understand the column in both of those categories, the percentage column. What do the percentages relate to? Like the first column in the

workshops, '96-97, that figure is 70 percent. What is it 70 percent of?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told it is vendors used as a percentage of the number of workshops. In other words, in the first line, 70 percent, there were 73 vendors out of 104 workshops.

Ms. Barrett: Okay. I think that is it. Yes.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Are we completed?

Ms. Barrett: Yes, for now.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 17.1. Civil Service Commission (e) Organization and Staff Development Agency zero—pass.

Resolution 17.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,258,000 for Civil Service Commission for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND OTHER PAYMENTS

Mr. Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply are the Estimates of Employee Benefits and Other Payments. The Civil Service Estimates have been concluded. We are now on Employee Benefits and Other Payments.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): I have some factual questions dealing with some of the elements of this. I am dealing with pages 12 and 13.

Mr. Chairperson: Excuse me. Before we do proceed, are there any opening statements that the minister wishes to make? No? None.

Ms. Barrett: Is Other Salary Related Benefits, which is \$3.5 million here, as a result of the Auditor's recommendation?

Mr. Chairperson: I just want to read this into the record. We are now on Employee Benefits and Other Payments, 6.1. under (a) Civil Service Superannuation Plan.

Item (a) Civil Service Superannuation Plan \$43,135,000, am I to assume that item is passed? The honourable member for Wellington, the reason for the clarification is that you are asking a question under (b) Other Salary Related Benefits \$3,500,000. So this item (a) \$43,135,000, is that item passed? The item is accordingly passed.

6.1(b) Other Salary Related Benefits \$3,500,000. A question was posed by the honourable member for Wellington to the minister.

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister charged with the administration of The Civil Service Act): The answer is no.

Ms. Barrett: How come there was nothing in it from '97-98? Where did it come from or where was it before?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told it would have been within the departmental salary lines, and this year it has been broken out to display it in this manner.

Ms. Barrett: That is fine then.

Mr. Chairperson: 6.1 Employee Benefits and Other Payments (b) Other Salary Related Benefits \$3,500,000—pass.

6.1(c) Workers' Compensation Board (1) Assessments re: Accidents to Government Employees \$3,698,000.

Ms. Barrett: Could the minister explain the three figures here?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am sorry. Can you clarify that?

* (1610)

Ms. Barrett: The \$3,698,000, I guess it is to the plus, and then the \$3,683,000 liability, clearly, that is leaving a \$15,000—

Mr. Gilleshammer: If the member is on page 12 under the Workers' Compensation Board, we budgeted \$3,698,000. We recovered \$3,683,000, and the

difference is \$15,000 which is a cost to this appropriation.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 6.1. Employee Benefits and Other Payments (c) Workers' Compensation Board (1) Assessment re: Accidents to Government Employees \$3,698,000—pass; (2) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations (\$3,683,000). Item 6.1.(d) Canada Pension Plan \$16,457,600.

Ms. Barrett: There is about a \$2-million, not quite a \$2-million increase this year over last. What is that as a result of?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is as a result of the federal government setting new rates, and we have a statutory requirement to pay that.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 6.1.(d) Canada Pension Plan \$16,457,600—pass. Item 6.1.(e) Employment Insurance Plan \$20,391,300.

Ms. Barrett: Can the minister explain why there is a reduction in this item?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, the statutory requirements of the federal government, when they lower the rates we respond accordingly.

Ms. Barrett: Lower the rates. Which rates?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I believe we are talking about employment insurance which used to be unemployment insurance. They changed the name and they lowered the rates. CPP went up and employment insurance went down.

Ms. Barrett: So I pay and the government on my behalf pays more into the Canada Pension Plan line, and I pay and the government on my behalf pays less into the employment insurance plan.

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct.

Ms. Barrett: Both of these are, as a result, solely of federal government changes.

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct.

Ms. Barrett: Well, this is one place where I cannot argue about the provincial government's responsibility in these two matters, so I will not.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 6.1.(e) Employment Insurance Plan \$20,391,300—pass; (f) Civil Service Group Life Insurance \$1,844,000—pass. Item 6.1.(d) Dental Plan \$5,092,800.

Ms. Barrett: Are all civil servants eligible for the dental plan, or is it based on the—it is based on the collective agreement, right? So not every civil servant is given this same coverage for dental plans.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The member is right. It is based on the collective agreement, and I point out that there is a waiting period to participate.

Ms. Barrett: Can the minister tell me what the administrative fee is that is paid to Blue Cross?

Mr. Gilleshammer: There is an administrative charge per claim that goes to the carrier, and I believe it is a percentage. We do not have that number here, but we could clarify that for the member.

Ms. Barrett: I would appreciate that. That per-claim percentage would be very helpful.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 6.1.(g) Dental Plan \$5,092,800—pass. 6.1.(h) Long Term Disability Plan \$2,873,900.

Ms. Barrett: Yes, again, in this as well as the Dental Plan, the Civil Service Commission reimburses the plan carrier for payments made to government employees under the plan as well as an administrative fee and expenses. So this is different from the Dental Plan. What are the expenses that the Civil Service Commission reimburses to the plan carrier?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Maybe the best way to explain it with the Dental Plan, which is usually based on a visit or two, there is an administration fee that is charged back and goes to the carrier. With the Long Term Disability Plan, there is not only an administrative fee but also expenses, because there is more consultation involved with the individual involved, and other expertise has to be brought to bear on that specific case.

Ms. Barrett: There is one other difference, as I read it again, which I had not noticed before between this and both the Dental Plan and the Ambulance and Vision Care plans, and that is the phrase: or as provided by contract between the government and an insurance company. So it is not only negotiated under various collective agreements but as provided by contract. Can the minister tell me who would be covered by that contract and what is the insurance company's name?

* (1620)

Mr. Gilleshammer: For the Long Term Disability Plan, the carrier is Great-West Life. For the Dental Plan it is Blue Cross. So there are agreements that are negotiated on behalf of government and employees with those organizations.

Ms. Barrett: What employees would be covered by a contract between the government and an insurance company? Would that be employees that are not covered under collective agreements? What does that mean?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The contract is for services and the contract is on behalf of government and the employees.

Ms. Barrett: Okay. I see.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 6.1.(h) Long Term Disability Plan \$2,873,900—pass. 6.1.(j) Ambulance and Hospital Semi-Private Plan \$234,000.

Ms. Barrett: There is a hundred-thousand-dollar increase here. What is the increase due to?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that the key factor in the difference is volume.

Ms. Barrett: Volume, that means the government is sending more people to hospital as a result of its policies?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I think it would be more proper to say that there are more people making use of the plan.

Ms. Barrett: Almost double making use of the plan. Is that due to an aging civil service? What are the

reasons for this? There must be something upon which this estimate is based to almost double this figure.

Mr. Gilleshammer: It is pointed out to me that the plan is not only for government civil servants, but also the families are covered by the plan. The Civil Service does its best to estimate the costs that will be required and, as a result of internal discussions and estimates, that is the number that comes up. Certainly the demographics would be a part of that.

Ms. Barrett: We have only the Estimates from last year and the Estimates for this year. I am assuming then that perhaps one of the elements that went into the increase is the actual for the year ended March 31, 1998. Is that an element that went into the discussion of the Estimates for this next year?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, the member is absolutely correct that the previous year's experience is taken into consideration.

Mr. Chairperson: 6.1 Employee Benefits and Other Payments (j) Ambulance and Hospital Semi-Private Plan \$234,000—pass; (k) Vision Care \$1,052,400.

Ms. Barrett: I am making a big assumption here, but I am assuming, because there was nothing last year and over a million this year, that this is new program. I should know this, I am probably covered by this.

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, the member is right on her assumption and wrong on her second assumption. I thought maybe that under the Civil Service Commission the member would have asked about the master agreement that was negotiated between the MGEU and government, am very proud to have signed that Mr. Olfert a number of months ago. It is a three-year agreement from March 29, 1997, to March 24, 2000. It did call for a general pay increase in each of the years of the agreement, and it also had a lump-sum signing bonus of 1.5 percent which was paid out at the end of 1997. This, of course, was payable to all employees on staff at the date of the signing of this.

It also made some reductions in the workweek, a reduction program that was very popular within the

civil service over the last number of years. In year one, there will be 10 days of workweek reduction; in year two, there will be five; and in year three, it will disappear. Part of the negotiations this year brought into play a Vision Care plan, and it will be implemented on July 1, 1998. That is why I said that the member was right in her first assumption and wrong in her second assumption, that she will be covered after July 1 along with the rest of the civil servants. The plan, the Vision Care plan, will provide coverage for employees and dependants. The eligibility criteria will be consistent with those applicable to the dental plan. Co-insurance provisions will apply with payment of 80 percent of eligible expenses by the plan and 20 percent by the employee. The plan will cover up to a \$150 payment every 24 months per person. The maximum will increase to \$190 effective April 1, 1999.

Coverage applies to prescription lenses and eye examination. For eye exams, the fee guide will be the optometrists' suggested fee guide. The fee guide will be the actual fee guide for each year of the agreement. So, again, the member is correct, this was not in existence in the previous year but will come into effect on July 1 as a result of that master agreement between the government and the MGEU.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Moving on to 6.1. Employee Benefits and Other Payments (k) Vision Care \$1,052,400—pass; (m) Levy for Health and Post-Secondary Education \$14,169,900—pass; moving to subtotal (n) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations (\$62,115,900)—(pass).

Resolution 6.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$46,650,000 for Employee Benefits and Other Payments for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

This concludes the Estimates of Employee Benefits and Other Payments.

The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply are the Estimates of the Department of Family Services.

Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and the critics the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next set of Estimates.

The committee recessed at 4:28 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:40 p.m.

* (1640)

FAMILY SERVICES

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Peter Dyck): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Family Services.

Does the honourable Minister of Family Services have an opening statement?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I do. I have copies for my honourable friend. If I provide copies to the committee, could we ensure that all the independent members get copies should they so choose? Okay.

I am pleased to present the 1998-99 Expenditure Estimates for the Department of Family Services to this committee for its consideration. I look forward to a constructive discussion on our programs and of the policy directions which our government has set for the department.

Provincial governments have been challenged to adjust to the loss of millions of dollars in federal transfer payments which occurred in conjunction with the introduction of the Canada Health and Social Transfer. This loss in funding has made it all the more necessary for government to assess what we do and how we do it. We have examined our program delivery mechanisms to ensure they are cost effective and have ensured that our programs are focused to meet the needs of our most vulnerable citizens. I am pleased that we have been able to maintain and enhance our essential programs and our commitment to those most in need.

Our government's overall consistent emphasis on fiscal responsibility and a competitive tax structure have helped to build confidence in our province. These

directions have helped us achieve a strong vibrant and prosperous economy. A strong economy is required if we want an effective and sustainable safety net for those who are having difficulty providing for themselves and to finance the services which improve the lives of children, families and vulnerable persons. By carefully managing our financial resources, we have helped ensure the availability of high-quality social services for our citizens.

I am pleased to indicate that we have been able to increase funding from our department for 1998-99. Particularly notable is an overall funding increase of 7.6 percent for the Community Living Division and an 8 percent increase in the allocation for the Child and Family Services Division. Through our Employment First efforts, there have been significant reductions in income assistance caseloads which have enabled us to redirect resources to other areas within the department.

Before providing members with a detailed overview of the department's expenditure plans and new initiatives, I would like to say a few words about the department as a whole and its structure. The department has as its main focus a number of critical goals. They include encouraging individual, family and community responsibility, independence and self-sufficiency, while assisting Manitobans in times of need; keeping children safe and protected; supporting adults living with a mental disability to safely live and participate in the community; continuing to develop partnerships with the community in the development and delivery of services; continuously improving the quality of services and the results experienced by clients; and ensuring services are delivered in the most effective and cost-efficient manner possible.

In terms of the department's structure, there are four main operating divisions: Administration and Finance, Employment and Income Assistance, Community Living, and Child and Family Services. In addition, the department is supported by two internal service providers: Policy and Planning, and Human Resource Services. The Social Services Advisory Committee and the Children's Advocate are associated with the department but report directly to me.

In 1996, our government introduced a bold new approach to delivering welfare in this province.

Through the Employment First initiative, we have placed a high priority on providing supports and services to enhance employment skills, encourage self-reliance and facilitate the transition from income assistance to employment. Assistance with personal job planning and job readiness sessions have helped clients access gainful employment. Partnerships across departments and with community and business groups have been forged to help place many income assistance recipients in jobs.

This practical, co-operative approach has helped move us forward in a significant way because it represents a break from the old welfare system which fostered dependence and reliance on government. With the very best of intentions, that of helping the most needy, we have in the past encouraged a cycle where generation after generation of families remain on welfare. I have said on many occasions that the best form of social security is a job. Our government will continue to work to create an economic climate which generates jobs and employment opportunities for all Manitobans.

I am very pleased to see that income assistance clients have responded positively to our government's challenge to seek work. It is clear that clients want to work and to support themselves and their families. As a result of our efforts and those of clients, we have seen a substantial decrease in the provincial caseload. Since the introduction of this initiative, the single-parent and general assistance caseloads have decreased by more than 1,800 or over 13 percent. In fact, single parent caseloads have reached their lowest point since 1990-91, and general assistance cases are at their lowest level since 1980.

Our government's welfare reform initiative has resulted in even greater reductions in the municipal caseload. Compared with the May 1996 level, municipal assistance cases have declined by more than 6,000 or over 30 percent. This caseload is now at its lowest level since 1991-92. In addition to those who have achieved financial self-sufficiency, large and increasing numbers of provincial clients have reduced their dependency on income assistance through earnings. Since May of 1996, the number of clients reporting earnings from employment has increased by 40 percent.

These very positive developments have made it possible to reduce the expenditures in the Employment and Income Assistance division by over \$21 million while maintaining our support for persons who continue to require it. The savings which we have achieved in this area are being invested in important new initiatives and enhancements to existing programming. In addition, our government will be moving forward to build on the successes in the areas which we have achieved to date. Manitobans have told us that they approve of the steps we have taken to help get people off welfare and back to work. In the coming year we will continue to build on this approach in the strong belief that employment is the best form of social security and the surest way of avoiding poverty in the long run.

I would also like to take a moment to mention the one-tier project. An important component of welfare reform has been the commitment to develop a one-tier approach to income assistance in Winnipeg. Work continues towards the implementation of a single system which will reduce the administrative overlap and duplication involved in two levels of government providing similar services.

I am very pleased that we have been able to significantly enhance our funding for programs which fall within the area of community living. Adult Services programs include a range of supported living and day services to assist adults with a mental disability to live as active and contributing members of the community. They also include vocational rehabilitation programs to assist adults with a physical, mental, psychiatric or learning disability to acquire or enhance employment skills, to adapt to and participate in the workforce. This fiscal year we have increased funding for Adult Services programming by \$7.1 million or 10.7 percent. The funding increase for supported living will assist more adults with a mental disability to live in the community in community residences, with natural or foster families or independently with supports. As well, funding levels paid to residential care agencies are being increased in order to stabilize and enhance the quality of residential support services provided to vulnerable adults.

* (1650)

A further \$300,000 has been made available to establish a four-bed crisis stabilization unit in Winnipeg for individuals experiencing breakdowns in their living arrangements due to medical or behavioural crises. Additional funding support for day services will make services available to more adults with a mental disability and will also provide for an increase in the funding levels allocated to day services agencies.

We are always striving to explore innovative approaches to supporting individuals in the community. My department has been working closely with the Manitoba Coalition of Service Providers, the Manitoba Supported Employment Network and the Association for Community Living-Manitoba to look at options for improving the current system.

Three working groups have been established to develop pilot projects to test alternative approaches to providing support services for adults with a mental disability. The family care project for adults is aimed at providing supports for families to care for their adult children with a mental disability. This project is being operated by St. Amant Centre in co-operation with ACL Manitoba with partial funding assistance from the federal Community Inclusion Initiative. A working group on alternative generic services for seniors has been established to examine more appropriate day services for seniors who are mentally disabled. A third working group will develop pilot projects which examine the feasibility of enhancing support for natural and foster families, providing direct individualized funding in support of self-managed care and introducing alternate approaches to case management and individual planning functions.

Our commitment in the Adult Services area will include provision for improvements to facilities and programming at St. Amant Centre. Our government has approved a five-year strategic plan which will incorporate improvements to living space within the centre, facilitate a more effective school program and adult day program and strengthen supports to clients and families in the community.

These projects and the funding we have provided demonstrate our government's commitment to this priority area. I am pleased that our government has once again been able to increase funding to provide

services and supports for adults living with mental disabilities to assist them with living and participating in the community.

Our government has worked actively with other jurisdictions towards the renewal of the federal-provincial financial arrangements to support vocational rehabilitation programming for persons with disabilities. The new funding framework, called Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities, will place greater emphasis on activities that assist Canadians with disabilities in getting and keeping jobs and on measuring and evaluating program effectiveness and outcome. Manitoba recently signed an agreement with the federal government regarding the new funding arrangement. It will remain in effect for a five-year period and will ensure federal cost-sharing support of up to \$7.9 million annually over the life of the agreement. The Province of Manitoba will also spend an equal amount on these valuable services.

Throughout the discussions with the federal government, Manitoba has engaged in ongoing consultations with representatives of the disability community to obtain their views with regard to the new framework. We very much appreciated the involvement and contributions made by members of the community. Their contribution to this process, through the sharing of ideas and suggestions, has been invaluable. My department will continue to rely on their active participation.

Our government continues to promote an active and very exciting agenda for new initiatives and enhancements to existing programs for children. Children are the future of our society and of our economic life. Our government believes that investing in a good start in life can ensure that children will become healthier adults who will be better able to work productively.

During the prebudget consultations, which my colleague the Honourable Eric Stefanson, Minister of Finance, held in the fall, Manitobans asked that more resources be made available for early intervention and healthy child development programs and for additional supports for children in lower income families. We are making substantial new investments in such programs this year.

As outlined in the 1998 budget, our government has significantly increased spending for children, youth and their families. Most of this additional funding will be directed toward a continuum of early intervention and prevention programs that respond to the nutritional, learning and social needs of children. These initiatives will help ensure that children are ready to enter the school system and are more likely to be successful in that regard.

In response to the priorities identified by Manitobans, the following investments will be made: \$2 million for early intervention programs emphasizing positive parenting, healthy child development and preventing adolescent pregnancy; \$2.1 million for children's nutrition programs, including new partnerships with community groups; and \$2.6 million for early literacy programs and initiatives to help ensure children are ready to learn and are more likely to be successful when entering the school system.

Additional resources are being targeted to expand and to develop programs which provide the benefits and services lower income families need to participate in the workforce, including \$2 million for strategies to help income assistance in lower income families to enter the workforce, including initiatives which provide employment placements and training opportunities; over \$5 million for child care, primarily for direct child care supports which enable lower income parents to work, including improved accessibility and flexibility of child care options; and \$1.7 million for families on income assistance who are making the transition to the new National Child Benefit.

Our government has been actively involved with the federal government and other provincial and territorial governments in development of the new National Child Benefit. The National Child Benefit marks an important step forward for Canada's children and for addressing the issue of child poverty.

The initiatives I have previously mentioned are those which qualify under the criteria for the National Child Benefit. They will be funded from \$10 million made available through Manitoba's participation in this initiative and from \$5 million in new provincial funds.

Under this new approach the federal government will improve the income-based benefits that it pays on

behalf of children. Families receiving income assistance will not see a change in their overall benefits, while lower income working families will receive more supports to remain in the workforce. As families on income assistance receive the new benefit, dollar-for-dollar adjustments will be made and reinvested. Provinces and territories will focus their efforts on new and expanded programs which meet the two main goals of the National Child Benefit system: preventing and reducing the depth of child poverty, and promoting their parents' attachment to the workforce.

The new early intervention and prevention programs targeted to high-risk families will help children to develop into healthy and productive adults and to break the cycle of poverty in some families. Lower income assistance families will gain financial independence by entering the workforce and retaining jobs as a result of our efforts to increase access to placement and training options and due to the availability of quality flexible child care arrangements.

Increased support for child care is an important part of our government's commitment to working parents. As members may recall, our government consulted extensively with Manitobans on the matter of child care. A child daycare fact finding mission, led by my colleague Marcel Laurendeau, MLA for St. Norbert, and the regulatory review committee made up of community representatives received many helpful comments and recommendations from the child care community on, among other things, funding issues affecting child care facilities and child care services for children with disabilities.

Our government has listened carefully to Manitobans. As a result of this positive collaboration, I am confident that we have an improved child care system that is more flexible and responsive to the needs of families and one which promotes the well-being of children.

I am pleased to inform you that we have increased overall funding for child daycare by over \$5 million in 1998-99. The province will spend a total of \$48.3 million. The improvements being made include providing for over 1,000 additional subsidized spaces and ensuring they are portable and flexible in paying subsidy for the hours of care actually needed; establishing a single funding rate for eligible infant and

preschool spaces to simplify and equalize funding for centres and family daycare homes; offering full funding to approximately 2,000 existing infant and preschool spaces in eligible centres and homes that were partially funded or unfunded; increasing operating grants by 2 percent for infant and preschool spaces in centres and family daycare homes; providing an additional \$197,000 to extend the Children with Disabilities Program to all nonprofit facilities, including family daycare homes, to increase options and flexibility of choice for parents and providing additional funding of \$200,000 to introduce new extended hour child care options to support parents' changing work patterns. The flexible child care initiative will create up to 400 new child care spaces for parents needing more flexible services.

* (1700)

Improvements to the subsidy program are being made to ensure that child care subsidies follow the child. This particular change is a positive step towards increasing flexibility and accessibility to the subsidy program and will benefit both parents and child care providers. Child care facilities will be better able to accommodate part-time care needs. As well, a new simplified subsidy application form has been designed which will improve services to families.

Other regulation changes for child care facilities include disallowing peanut products for children under three years of age, placing restrictions on certain foods which pose a choking hazard, and making a number of regulations simpler and more flexible. Also, child care workers will now be designated early childhood educators. Manitoba has one of the finest child care systems in the country. We will continue to maintain our high standards to ensure the provision of quality child care that meets the needs of families. The changes we are making are positive steps forward in enhancing the current system.

While the health and well-being of Manitoba families is primarily the responsibility of parents, there are important roles for government to provide supports where needed. One such area is providing support to families who have children with disabilities. In 1998-99, our government has allocated \$9.4 million for Children's Special Services programming, an increase

of over half a million dollars over last year. The additional funding reflects the anticipated increase of 300 disabled children and their families requiring services. I am pleased that we are able to increase our support to families of children with disabilities to ensure that they have access to respite care, child development programs, supplies and counselling.

Ensuring the protection and well-being of children at risk continues to be a high priority for my department and for our government. As I have said on many occasions, money alone will not ensure that Manitoba's children are safe. The protection and well-being of children is a responsibility shared by all of society. Our government will continue to work in partnership with the community on new and innovative ways to ensure that the best interests of children are being served.

By tapping into the strengths of community partners, we have redesigned youth emergency services to provide crisis support for high-needs youth in a more effective and less intrusive manner. A partnership between residential care and treatment providers will reform and revitalize youth emergency treatment and residential care services, replacing the services previously provided by Seven Oaks Centre. Components of the youth emergency services system include mobile crisis teams, crisis stabilization units and crisis stabilization support services. This innovative approach will improve the services which were provided by Seven Oaks Centre and will help to ensure the effective use of resources to provide a critical service when it is needed.

Through the Family Support Innovations Fund, our government has provided support to family group conferencing pilot projects. In these projects, families will be actively involved in problem solving, care planning and decision making to encourage responsibility for developing plans that result in healthy and safe children. Community partnerships and supports are an integral part of supporting the family and the care plan for the child.

Last year, I was pleased to introduce important new legislation, The Adoption Act and The Child and Family Services Amendment Act. This legislation came about as a result of an extensive community consultation process through which we sought advice

from Manitobans on a broad range of matters falling under The Child and Family Services Act, including the protection of children, foster care and adoptions. A portion of The Child and Family Services Amendment Act was proclaimed on February 2, 1998. The balance of the amendments to this act, as well The Adoption Act, will be proclaimed this year.

I would also like to make a few comments about the plans of the Children and Youth Secretariat. As I mentioned at the outset of my comments, our government recognizes that early intervention is critical to healthy child development. The Children and Youth Secretariat is spearheading efforts to ensure that children get a healthy start to life. The ChildrenFirst strategy emphasizes the importance of families and the social investment in children and youth. The Children and Youth Secretariat, in consultation with its seven partner departments, is embarking on a series of projects which apply best practices, and which are focused on the principles of prevention and early intervention. We have designed these initiatives to improve long-term outcomes for Manitoba's high-risk children. These initiatives, and the additional funding we have provided demonstrate our government's commitment to children and families.

I would like to note that, as part of the Better Systems initiative, important work will be undertaken to examine innovative options for service delivery and to consider development of integrated case management tools and information systems in the human services area. The integrated case management project, which is being managed within this area of the department, will ultimately improve client services and streamline case management of social programs across departments.

I would like to conclude my introductory remarks by indicating that we have taken many positive steps towards improving our social services system. We have consulted with Manitobans and have developed numerous partnerships with community agencies, businesses and other governments to seek new and innovative ways of providing service. We believe that by working together with families, neighbourhoods and communities, we can best ensure the most efficient and effective delivery of social services.

As we look towards the future, we will continue to build on and strengthen those measures which are working for individuals, for children and for families in need. This will assist us in meeting the new challenges that we face in an ever-changing society. We will continue to strengthen partnerships with the community in recognition that the well-being of Manitoba's children and families is a responsibility that we all share.

I believe we have taken a proactive approach to setting our budget for 1998-99. The substantial investments we are making in Manitoba's children and families and in programs for persons with disabilities in 1998 will provide lasting benefits. We have been able to maintain our support for those in need of income assistance. Our efforts to encourage and assist those in need to become financially self-sufficient have resulted in some wonderful personal successes. I look forward to this committee's review of my department's Estimates and welcome the comments from my honourable friend. Thank you.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): We thank the Minister of Family Services for those comments. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Burrows, have any opening comments?

* (1710)

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Chairperson, the Minister of Family Service has put on the record her version of how well this government is meeting the needs of Manitobans. It is a glowing, rosy report that, if believed, would suggest that everything is fine and her government is doing a great job. The reality is there is another Manitoba, one that this government does not want to look at, admit to or seriously address.

The other Manitoba has the highest rate of children in care per capita in Canada. This has been true for several years and shows no signs of getting better. The other Manitoba has a high rate of runaway children, many of whom are living on the streets or living in situations of high risk to themselves and to others.

The other Manitoba has, or had, during the International Year of the Family, and I am quoting from a Taking Charge! handout, "the highest teenage

pregnancy rate in Canada.” In Nova Scotia the provincial government has started to look at targets for reducing the rate of teen pregnancy, a good idea that could be replicated here.

The other Manitoba has a very high rate of students dropping out of high school. The most recent statistics for 1995 showed that 8.7 percent of girls drop out and 22.3 percent of males drop out for a total of over 30 percent, and we all know that persons with less than high school have a very poor chance of finding meaningful employment.

The other Manitoba has an alarming rate of children born with fetal alcohol syndrome. According to an article in *The Globe and Mail* on April 6, 1998, quoting Mr. Ken Murdoch, the program director of Winnipeg Child and Family Services: “about 450 of the 1,100 permanent wards in the Winnipeg child-welfare system have been identified by social workers as having FAS.” He also says, “We have the poorest of the poor on the Prairies.” According to Murdoch, it costs taxpayers \$340 a day to keep one 11-year-old in a group home with two full-time social workers. Over the next decade the tab to care for this one child will likely reach \$1 million. The potential cost to taxpayers of 450 children at \$1 million each would be \$450 million. In spite of this, very little is being done by way of prevention, education or treatment.

In the other Manitoba, thousands of Manitobans are forced to go to food bank outlets to make ends meet. In Winnipeg 3,400 people and 14,350 children depend on Winnipeg Harvest food bank. For the first time since the Dirty Thirties, food from eastern Canada is being shipped by train to food banks in western Canada including Winnipeg for distribution. David Northcott says: “It’s based on a percentage of population by province that has need, and in Manitoba, we are near the top.”

What do people actually get on the receiving end of public charity? Here is a description of the food handout at St. Matthew’s-Maryland Community Ministry. I am quoting from a letter that they wrote which I believe she also sent to the minister. “What happened on Monday, November 24, 1997 is typical. On that day we had registered for food assistance 31 families consisting of 57 adults and 38 children. The

amount of food we had available for the registered families doesn’t sound too bad, until you realize they are only entitled to this help once every two weeks. Our total supply consisted of 45 cans of soup, 48 packets of dry cereal, 45 Kraft dinners, 2 boxes of almost completely rotten and unusable bananas, 45 dozen eggs, 45 packets of frozen french fries, and three boxes of frozen turkey meat. This for each family works out to about one can of soup, one package of cereal, a dozen eggs, four or five mostly inedible bananas, a package of french fries, a Kraft dinner, and a piece of turkey meat—no milk, no bread.”

This letter concludes with the observations that Winnipeg Harvest, however wonderful as a volunteer operation, simply cannot meet the needs of the hungry in this city and that public charities including church operations like theirs are no replacement for adequate income support.

A story in the *Saturday Free Press* of May 2 this year says that 22 percent of adults miss a meal daily, that is users of Winnipeg Harvest, and 25 percent went a day or more without food before their first visit to a food bank and 16 percent of children in the survey had missed meals in the past month. An article in the *Free Press* of December 23, 1997, speaks of the gap between the rich and the poor widening.

It says: “Canada’s rich are getting richer while its poor get poorer—again.

“That’s the word from Statistics Canada, which yesterday released figures showing incomes of the wealthiest Canadian families rose 1.8 percent in 1996 over 1995.

“At the other end of the scale, the poorest 20 percent of families saw their incomes drop by 3 percent.”

We recently had, in the NDP caucus, public hearings on children, and I would like to quote from a couple of the presentations. One presentation that I heard was by Ruth Diamant, the chair of the steering committee for Healthy Start for Mom and Me. They surveyed the mothers in their program. In their report it says: Here are some of the real-life multiple challenges faced by expectant participants. They are low income, lack of food—75 percent say it is hard to get enough—inadequate

housing, a variety of health issues, diabetes, epilepsy, eating disorder, et cetera. Those single mothers, many of them are living on social assistance, and if they had adequate income, they would not be lacking food and inadequate housing and have so many health issues.

Another very interesting presentation was by the parent council at King Edward School, and it was presented by the parent council president, Cindy Stroppa. I would quote extensively from this brief, because she talks about the problems facing children in their school. She mentions that the federal government, actually the Parliament and all parties in Parliament, I believe in 1989 agreed to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000.

Cindy Stroppa says: Talk is cheap. The problem is continuing to worsen. I really feel that the term "child poverty" is very misleading, as these children are not living in poverty alone. It is called family poverty. She goes on to say: I think it is a shame that so many children are in need of the breakfast program at our school.

We have, and I am quoting our principal, Ms. Seiler, seen the numbers double from around 40 to 90 in just one year. We have just over 400 children in our school. With poverty on the rise, our need for the breakfast program is even greater. As well, we are seeing the very youngest of the children eating two to three bowls of cereal plus fresh fruit and milk and toasted bagels. Our principal has had to apply to the division for an extra aide to help the staff who run this program. Our school staff are seeing many families coming to the school who do not have anything to eat in their homes. Quite often the staff are purchasing food for these families out of their own pockets. They are bringing in their own children's clothing when they have outgrown them because so many are without adequate clothing. Some are even purchasing jackets for these children. Quite often many mothers have shown up at the school to say that they are feeling helpless and have to give up their children to Child and Family Services, not because they want to, but because they cannot feed them and they cannot provide the basic quality of life that each and every child should have a right to. I cannot even imagine the anguish that these mothers are feeling.

She goes on to say: A lot of parents are starting to complain of being unable to afford many of the

fundraisers at the school such as hot dog day, especially if they have more than one child at the school. I think that it is very sad that we have to collect pennies for a playground to try to raise money for our much needed playground structure. There seems to be no help available for schools with nonattendeess, and there are many of them for various reasons. Also, we are very fortunate to have a full-time counsellor at our school. Many schools have only part-time counsellors. There are not enough prevention programs available, and Child and Family Services usually only deals with crisis situations.

Recently I was walking down Flora Avenue and then down Parr Street, close to King Edward School, and noticed that what children were playing with were boards, including boards with nails in, and pipes, presumably because they were having to create their own recreation, and there was no equipment or toys or other things to play with.

I would like to go back to--well, I have not really gotten away from child poverty, but I have some statistics here which show that in Manitoba the poverty rate in a number of categories went up from 1995 to 1996. For example, children, the rate went up from 23.2 to 26.6; and for seniors, 65-plus, went up from 20 to 24.3 percent. The overall rate for Manitoba for child poverty, as I said, was 26.6 percent, which compares very unfavourably with Canada, where the overall rate was 21.1 percent in 1996.

We have seen an increase in poverty rates of children in two different family types. In two-parent families, it has gone up from 16.4 to 18.4 percent from '95 to '96, and in female, single-parent families, from 66.2 percent to 71.4 percent from the year 1995 to 1996.

I received a very interesting document called Responding to the New Economy: Investing in Solutions That Work for Everyone. This is in preparation for a workshop, and it is a co-operative venture by a number of groups, including the Manitoba Federation of Labour, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, the Volunteer Centre of Winnipeg, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Winnipeg Labour Council, and Winnipeg 2000. It has an executive summary documenting the effects of the new economy.

One is, under wages and income, declining average real wages over the past decade in Manitoba, and poverty, poverty rates above Canadian averages for most groups.

* (1720)

We are very disappointed that this government, when they were given new money by the federal government in the National Child Benefit, chose to claw back all of it from social assistance recipients when they could have spent that money in more creative ways. They chose to spend it on programs and to target it to the working poor, but David Northcott is quoted as saying that people do not need more government programs, that they need access to more money in their pockets, that people cannot eat programs. He also said that many parents just need a few extra dollars each month to buy groceries and criticized the government for doing nothing to improve the minimum wage, welfare benefits or tax cuts for the lowest income groups.

Finally, this government still has an inability to budget. They had to pass a special warrant to fund Winnipeg Child and Family Services to the end of the fiscal year in the amount of \$8.8 million. Now it is good that the government continues the money, that it continues to flow so that services can be provided and needs can be met, but the fact that they had to pass an Order-in-Council to do so on March 11, 1998, shows that their budgeting for Winnipeg Child and Family Services was very unrealistic.

There are many other serious problems in this department, especially in the area of Child and Family Services, and we will get into them as we go through the Estimates of this department.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): We thank the critic from the official opposition for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, debate of the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of a department. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of this item and now proceed with consideration of the next line.

Before we do that, we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table. We ask that the minister introduce her staff present.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am sure colleagues around the table know my Deputy Minister Tannis Mindell and the ADM of Admin and Finance Kim Sharman.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): We will now proceed to line 9.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$491,400. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Martindale: Not a chance. I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services if she is familiar with The Conflict of Interest Act in the Province of Manitoba?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, if you would like me to recite it for him, I will probably say no, but I can certainly attempt to answer any questions around the conflict of interest.

Mr. Martindale: Section 19(1) says: No member, minister or senior public servant shall communicate either directly or indirectly, with another member, minister or senior public servant or with an officer or employee of the government or of a Crown corporation for the purpose of influencing the government or a Crown agency to enter into a contract or to confer a benefit in which the member, minister or senior public servant or in which a dependant of the member, minister or senior public servant has a pecuniary interest.

Could the minister tell us what she believes "communicate" means in this context? What do you think the intent of this legislation is when it says that there must be no communication?

Mrs. Mitchelson: If I can indicate to my honourable friend, the Province of Manitoba's conflict of interest policy is administered by the Civil Service Commission. I know those Estimates have just wrapped up and finished, but there are probably questions that would concern the interpretation or the application or the administration of specific provisions of that policy, and those are referred to the Civil Service Commission. So that would be the appropriate place to ask any questions. If there is a perceived conflict, it is the Civil Service Commission that does review that or give advice to individuals around conflict of interest.

Mr. Martindale: Is it not up to this minister, Mr. Chairperson, to see that a former employee, in this case, former Assistant Deputy Minister Mr. Sexsmith, has no contact with her department? It is a former employee of her department. I think it would be—well, I am asking the minister: Does she not think that it is her responsibility to see that a former employee of her department has no communication with the department for one year after the date on which the public servant left office?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I will reiterate that it is the Civil Service Commission that is the vehicle within government that has the expertise and the understanding around the conflict of interest rules and guidelines. So I know where my honourable friend is coming from. I know he has asked questions in the House around this issue. I will repeat again for his information the process that was followed, and it is that the Civil Service Commission, in consultation with legal counsel, reviewed Mr. Sexsmith's circumstances, and they provided direction regarding the conflict of interest guidelines with respect to Mr. Sexsmith. I will read those into the record.

Mr. Sexsmith was precluded for a period of one year from using his influence to secure new business for IBM. He could not be involved himself in ongoing contractual discussions between IBM and the Manitoba government with respect to One Tier and Better Systems for a period of one year, but he could, however, be involved in internal IBM discussions regarding these matters. Number 3, Mr. Sexsmith could play an internal advisory role with IBM on how it may conduct its affairs with the Manitoba government. He would be permitted to play a more visible role with IBM and its dealings with the Manitoba government with respect to the implementation of One Tier and Better Systems projects once negotiations on these matters were concluded. This could include being present in a resource capacity at informational meetings relating to implementation of these programs. So I am completely satisfied that our department proceeded correctly on all matters regarding potential conflict of interest. We follow the established procedures in our department and receive direction from the Civil Service Commission to ensure the necessary compliance with established policy.

So, if my honourable friend has some concern or question about the impartiality and the decisions and directions that were made by the Civil Service Commission, if he has some issue to take with the Civil Service Commission and their interpretation and advice to our department, I would suggest that he should have been at the Estimates of the Civil Service Commission to ask those questions, and should deal with it through that in that manner. There is a standard procedure that is followed right across government. So, if my honourable friend has some concern or some question about the credibility of the Civil Service Commission, I would like him to indicate that or I would like him to pursue that matter through the appropriate vehicle. He probably should have been here asking those questions just an hour or two ago when the Civil Service Commission was going through the Estimates process.

Mr. Martindale: The problem I have is with the credibility of this minister. We know that Mr. Sexsmith was working on the request for proposals for the one-tier before he left government and that after he left government he was working on the one-tier file for IBM. He attended at least three meetings. It is this minister or her staff, in which case the minister is ultimately responsible, who invited him to those meetings. So there is, I believe, a violation of The Conflict of Interest Act. I would like the minister to admit that there is a problem here, at least a problem of perception when someone helps negotiate a contract and then leaves government to go to work on it when the act says they are not to have any communication with the government for one year after leaving government employment.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I take great exception to the comments and the direction that my honourable friend is coming from. I want to read into the record again what happened. Mr. Sexsmith tendered his resignation from his position as ADM in Family Services on November 25 of 1996. On November 29, 1996, the Civil Service Commission provided direction regarding the provincial government's conflict of interest guidelines with respect to Mr. Sexsmith. I read those into the record just a few minutes ago. He began attending some one-tier project meetings in a resource capacity on July 2 following the conclusion of negotiations with IBM. So he was not involved in the negotiations with IBM. What happened through the

process of developing a one-tier proposal with the City of Winnipeg was that there was a tender process that was undertaken to select a firm to move ahead with the one-tier project. The selection of that successful bidder was a unanimous selection, and there was a six-person steering committee that was involved in making that selection. It did include officials from both the province and the City of Winnipeg. It was an up-front process.

* (1730)

I do want to indicate to my honourable friend that I take great exception to the kind of attack he has taken on the public service and a person who did a significant, good job, not only for our administration and government but for the former New Democratic government, someone who has been a long-time, very credible civil servant through several administrations, did not act in any political capacity. I take considerable exception to the kinds of comments. I am not sure what the motivation is behind my honourable friend's questioning of someone who I do not believe deserves the kind of questioning and the kind of personal attack that is being placed on his name and his reputation as a long-time civil servant who made a significant contribution to the Province of Manitoba under different administrations and under a New Democratic government for many, many years in this province.

We have guidelines. We have interpretation by the Civil Service Commission that this person acted aboveboard. I am extremely offended at the very personal attack that my honourable friend is taking on someone who has made such a significant contribution to successive governments in the Province of Manitoba for many, many years.

Mr. Martindale: I do not have a problem with this individual. The problem I have is with this minister's judgment in this case. The minister said that Mr. Sexsmith was not involved in negotiations with IBM. It is my understanding that he was involved with the request for proposals. Could the minister confirm that?

Mrs. Mitchelson: He was one person of the six-person committee. He certainly had no personal influence, and again I take great exception because no matter what my honourable friend says, or how he tries to—I mean let

him attack me and my credibility personally, but I have great difficulty with him attacking the name and the person. This is politics at its slimiest, Mr. Chairperson, when I see the credibility of someone like the character of Doug Sexsmith being attacked in this manner. If my honourable friend has some personal concerns about my integrity as an individual, that is fine.

Point of Order

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Order, please. The member for Burrows, on a point of order.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if you could seek advice from the Clerk's office about the expression, politics of the slimiest, and see if that is in order. When they have had a chance to consult Beauchesne's, if you could rule on this point of order, and if in fact it is unparliamentary, ask the minister to withdraw.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): It is not on the list. We would have to, in order confirm this, call a recess, if this is what the honourable member for Burrows—or we will take it under advisement.

The honourable minister, please, to continue.

* * *

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairperson, and you will have to forgive me for getting a little worked up over this issue, but all is fair, I say, in love, war and politics, and my honourable friend has taken me personally to task at other times on other issues. But I do take great exception. I know that from time to time there are political appointments within the bureaucracy, and it might have been under the former NDP government where there were people that were politically affiliated that were appointed through direct appointment under their administration. I know from time to time that has happened under our administration, and I have been taken to task from time to time for those kinds of direct appointments. That is all fair and valid, and governments and ministers get that kind of questioning, but I do take great exception to someone that has served our province in the capacity and worked his way up through the bureaucracy under different administrations and with no political

appointment. He was not hired or fired based on which government was in power.

I know that there are many, many people in the bureaucracy that worked in the Department of Family Services and every other department throughout the government, under the New Democratic administration and they are still here under a Conservative administration, because they are excellent civil servants, public servants that are doing their very best to implement policy no matter which government or which policy direction the government is taking. I have to say that I commend them, and I certainly rely and depend on many, many who are here in government long before we were government, or I was the Minister of Family Services. They are people that have done an excellent job providing that kind of service, and I find it terribly offensive that a critic from the opposition would publicly malign an individual. I would stand up for anyone that sort of came through the system and has done a good job year after year for the people of Manitoba to have that person be publicly, politically maligned in a very unwarranted way.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to reiterate that I do not have a problem with Mr. Sexsmith. It was this minister who agreed to have him invited to meetings.

Could the minister confirm that Mr. Sexsmith was involved in the request for proposals?

Mrs. Mitchelson: He was one of the six people on the steering committee, yes.

* (1740)

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister confirm that when Mr. Sexsmith left the department he went to work for IBM on the same file, or on the same project that he worked on in government, namely, the one-tier project?

Mrs. Mitchelson: No, that is false.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me why Mr. Sexsmith was attending meetings with senior staff after he left government?

Mrs. Mitchelson: If I could get my deputy to speak to this, well, then—

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Do we have unanimous consent that the deputy can speak?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Obviously my honourable friend does not want to hear the facts, so I want on record that he does not want to hear exactly what capacity Mr. Sexsmith, or what role he was acting in. I will try to reiterate the whole process again of what happened. Well, I will leave it at that and I will try to get exact detail, but I do want to leave on the record the fact that my honourable friend does not seem to be really interested in the facts or he would try to get a full and thorough explanation from my deputy.

I want him to know also that I am not involved in the day-to-day micromanagement of my department, as no minister is. That is the job and the role of the deputy minister and the senior administration within the department. The policy direction is set by government. We approve that policy direction, but I do not, on a daily basis, sit down and review absolutely every meeting that my department is having with every individual from the business community or the service community that works with our department.

That is why we have people with the credibility like a Doug Sexsmith who used to work for government, like a Tannis Mindell who is the deputy minister right now, and all of the other senior support within the department, to manage the department's day-to-day activities. I set the policy direction and try to ensure that we are working co-operatively. That is why we put our trust in our officials to do the micromanagement and manage the day-to-day activities within the department.

But I will try to explain for my honourable friend exactly what happened in Mr. Sexsmith's move from the public sector to the private sector. By the way, I do want to indicate that I think it is extremely healthy for interchanges and exchanges between the public sector and the private sector, great for someone from the private sector to come in and work in government from time to time and understand the internal workings of government and great for those who are working in the public service to move into the private sector from time

to time. I think those are healthy exchanges, and I support those kinds of interchanges wholeheartedly.

But if I can try to explain, Mr. Sexsmith tendered his resignation from his position as associate deputy minister in the Department of Family Services on November 25, 1996, and subsequently assumed the role of general manager of social services for IBM Canada Limited. His responsibilities on a national level were as a subject manager expert. Mr. Chairperson, it was determined at the senior departmental level that Mr. Sexsmith, with his expertise, should be invited to meetings in a resource capacity in July of 1997, after the conclusion of negotiations with IBM, after the term sheet was signed on June 26 of 1997. So the negotiations were completed, and he was invited to attend one chair meetings in a resource capacity which, by the way, I read into the record awhile back, the Civil Service Commission had said was quite above board.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, the reason that I believe the minister should answer the questions is because in a parliamentary democracy the minister is ultimately responsible for everything, and this minister is quite good at answering questions. She does not really need the deputy minister to answer questions unless, of course, she wants to be evasive. Normally, when ministers do not know the answer to a question, they can ask their deputy for advice, in any case, which occasionally this minister does.

Now I do not expect this minister to micromanage her department, but the one-tier system is a major initiative in her department, a major change in how social assistance is delivered in Manitoba. So I do know that the minister knows what is going on in this file. Could the minister confirm that Mr. Sexsmith was involved in negotiating with IBM in that the request for proposals advertisement said that proposals were to be mailed to him at his address on Garry Street?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, he was designated as the contact person on the RFP, but he was not involved in negotiations.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, the minister said that he was on the committee of six that were involved in negotiations.

* (1750)

Mrs. Mitchelson: I want to indicate what the process was for the selection or the development of a contract for the one-tier system. There was a steering committee set up. At the political level at both City Hall and the Province of Manitoba there were discussions and some sense that we should move ahead and amalgamate the welfare in the city of Winnipeg. As a result of that political decision at both levels, there was a steering committee that was set up and it had six people on it. It was the deputy minister, Family Services, the ADM of Family Services, someone from Policy Management Secretariat, someone from Treasury Board Secretariat and two people, two senior people from the City of Winnipeg. That was the steering committee that was set up.

They did a proposal call to see who was interested in developing the business case for the one-tier system. They had several proposals that were submitted and they were assessed by the six-member steering committee. As a result of that assessment, three proposals were invited to make presentations, IBM being one of them. The six people that were on the steering committee then came to a unanimous decision to move ahead with IBM for the business case. So IBM was the firm that was selected to move ahead with the business case. Once that business case was done, it was up to government as a whole to make a decision on where we were going to go from there. So basically we took the business case forward through Treasury Board and through cabinet, and ultimately the decision was made there to go with IBM for the full contract.

Mr. Martindale: So, Mr. Chairperson, the minister is saying that IBM made a presentation to the steering committee on which Mr. Sexsmith was one of the members, and then IBM was selected and a contract was signed which, you know, confirms what civil servants and former civil servants were saying to me. Mr. Sexsmith worked on the IBM contract and the call for proposals and then he left government and guess what? He works for IBM.

I wonder if this minister understands that generally there are restrictions on people who are working at a department from representing other people back to the department for a period of time, because obviously they

know who to get to and they know who is working on what and therefore they have an unfair advantage over other people. So, generally for a period of time, sometimes six months, sometimes a year—in Manitoba it is a year—there is a restriction on representing people back to the department you worked in or in advising policies and programs in a significant interest or involvement, which was exactly the position that Mr. Sexsmith was in.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

He was on a committee that heard proposals, including from IBM, then he left government, went to IBM and ended up working on the same proposal and meeting with senior officials in her department.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, again my honourable friend has it all wrong. I do not know how many times I have to repeat for him the process that was followed and the advice of the Civil Service Commission that was followed by Mr. Sexsmith. I will read again into the record, and I do not know, my honourable friend can try to come at this from many different angles. I know he has tried before, and I do not think he has been terribly successful in his arguments because his arguments do not hold water. The general public and everyone else out there sees through my honourable friend and the tactics he takes, but I will read again into the record, and you know, we can spend a considerable amount of time but I know the facts of the situation and I know that the facts that have been vetted through the Civil Service Commission. The Civil Service Commission has dealt with this. They have indicated very clearly that the conflict of interest guidelines were followed with respect to Mr. Sexsmith. I have that verification, and so we can talk about it for as long as my honourable friend would like to, but I want to forewarn him that my answer will be exactly the same, no matter what angle he tries to take, because he keeps trying to find an issue of conflict where in fact we have been told that there is none. So let me take the opportunity just to read into the record again what I know to be the facts around this situation.

The Province of Manitoba's conflict of interest policy, as administered by the Civil Service Commission: Questions concerning the interpretation, application or administration of specific provisions of

the policy are normally referred to the Civil Service Commission. In accordance with the established practice, Mr. Sexsmith's circumstances were forwarded to the Civil Service Commission. The Civil Service Commission, in consultation with its legal counsel, reviewed Mr. Sexsmith's circumstances. On November 29, 1996, the Civil Service Commission provided direction regarding the provincial government's conflict of interest guidelines with respect to Mr. Sexsmith as follows:

Number one, Mr. Sexsmith is precluded for a period of one year from using his influence to secure new business for IBM. I will repeat again, Mr. Chairperson, that the contract to go with IBM was a unanimous decision of six people from the city and the Province of Manitoba. No one had one vote. It was a unanimous decision to go with IBM before Mr. Sexsmith left and went to IBM.

Number two, Mr. Sexsmith cannot involve himself in contractual discussions between IBM and the Manitoba government with respect to One Tier and Better Systems for a period of one year. He could, however, be involved in internal IBM discussions regarding these matters.

Number three, Mr. Sexsmith could also play an internal advisory role with IBM on how it may conduct its affairs with the Manitoba government.

Number four, Mr. Sexsmith will be permitted to play a more visible role with IBM in its dealings with the Manitoba government with respect to implementation of One Tier and Better Systems projects once negotiations on these matters have been concluded. This could include being present in a resource capacity at informational meetings relating to implementation of these programs.

I want to reiterate that we followed the established procedures and received direction from the Civil Service Commission to ensure that the necessary compliance was with established policy, and that is the direction we went, that is the advice we got from the Civil Service Commission, and we followed that advice.

Mr. Martindale: It seems that we get a little bit of information. Then I ask a question, and instead of the

minister answering the question, she repeats her answer again about the Civil Service Commission, so I will try again. Is it not true that Mr. Sexsmith was part of a committee of six that heard proposals, including a proposal from IBM, then he left government, then he went to work on that proposal for IBM? Is that not the sequence of events?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I have spelled out very clearly what happened. I have indicated very clearly on the record that Mr. Sexsmith was one of six people on the steering committee that heard formal presentations. There was a unanimous decision on the committee to go with IBM, and again I have indicated exactly what the Civil Service Commission said. Mr. Sexsmith did nothing different. He certainly did not use his influence to secure new business for IBM, because IBM had the business. He could not involve himself in contractual discussions between IBM and the Manitoba government, but he could be involved in internal IBM discussions regarding these matters. So he was not involved in the ongoing contractual discussions between IBM and the Manitoba Government.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being six o'clock, committee rise.

HEALTH

Mr. Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Health.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering a motion moved by the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford). The text of the motion reads as follows: that this committee recommend that the Legislature support the content of the motion adopted by the Quebec National Assembly and further that the Legislature urge the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to contact the federal government and press for the existing compensation package for victims of tainted blood to be reopened and reviewed with a view to extending compensation.

The honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) had been speaking to the motion, and he has 14 minutes remaining.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I will continue to make some comments based on the member's resolution in regard to the Quebec proposal, and, again, I guess I would have to go back to Friday's discussion in the sense that—I guess, after today's discussion in the House and reviewing some of the comments made on Friday, my question, again, would be is it the position of the opposition to support the Quebec proposal or the Ontario proposal or any particular proposal that would suit them on this particular day?

I make note today, Mr. Chairman, that the wind is blowing rather strongly, and perhaps opinions and minds can be changed as quickly as the wind does blow, but I would like to put on the record some of the comments that were made in regard to the resolution that we are looking at. It is from statements made by the members opposite stating that they recognize that clearly the lion's share of the burden should fall on the federal government; they concur with the minister that the federal government has the lion's share of responsibility when it comes to providing compensation packages. I guess it is confusing, as I have stated several times, when you sit and listen for one week to a proposal that has been put on the table that would suggest that the province take the responsibility and move forward with its own proposal, that I guess basically having changed directions, then we moved on to the suggestion of the free vote in the House.

When I think about the resolution of the free vote, I question whether—were we really discussing a free vote on what? I think it certainly, probably, at that particular time there was no particular proposal put out by anybody at that time other than what had been discussed at the federal level and agreed upon at that particular time by the federal government and all participating provinces.

Certainly people's positions have questionably changed over the period of time, but it is interesting for me that we are entertaining the motions brought forward by the members of the opposition when—what are we really voting on and what is the proposal really saying? The Quebec proposal, as I read it, suggests that we reopen negotiations with the federal government but that we suggest that we only reopen them if they accept—[interjection]

Again, that I think is where a lot of the confusion lies. A lot of the misunderstanding is that even members from the federal Liberal government party are suggesting that they are working on alternatives, but I think for us to be consistent across the province, as I had said earlier in my comments, will we be creating an imbalance in the health care system by one particular province moving out in front of this ahead of another? I think the idea, when we talk about health care and how it should be equal and fair and representative to all people, that my greatest concern would be that we would be setting up a two-tier system which I know the opposition certainly do not want that to happen. They have made their position very clear on those particular subjects.

I think to discuss that in the context of the Quebec proposal where we are willing to open up negotiations which have been agreed upon, as I said earlier, by all provinces and all the members of the federal government, are we creating a system where one province may offer more in settlement fees or support help that may be required? I guess it is hard to say, but when all 10 provinces sat down and negotiated this deal, it seemed like everybody was in agreement that there was some fairness there and that it was perhaps equitable to all.

I know there is a bigger question out there as far as what more can we do, and I think when I read the comments and some of the things, the health care that is going to continue to be provided and the supports that are going to be in place, it becomes a real question. I think that it is something that no matter how we feel about it personally and how each province feels in their position, it is a fact that it has to be done in unity with all the provinces. It has to be done with the idea that all provinces understand what the deal is, what has been negotiated, what the federal government's responsibilities are and what each individual province's responsibilities are. In essence, I was under the impression that the first agreement that was struck was something that there had been agreement upon by all Health ministers and obviously by the Health minister of the federal government and that this would be reflected in the settlements that were made out there.

The one concern I have—and I have the opportunity, I guess, when you have a break in between sittings or committee meetings, then you can read what was said and what was expressed before. I do have some concern on the matter of the motion that is being brought forward. I know that as government, when we discuss things, we discuss it in the context or in the form of representing the province or representing the government of Manitoba and are often chastised by the opposition for bringing those positions forward and questioned, is that a position of the government or tried to appear that way?

When I made the suggestion that the resolution that was being brought forward by the members opposite was brought forward by their party, by the opposition representing that group of people in Manitoba, it was certainly brought to my attention quite clearly through a point of order from one of the members that indeed it was not a motion that was brought forward on behalf of the NDP party of Manitoba. It was brought forward by the two members listed as moving and seconding the resolution. So I would have a concern in that are we being asked to vote on a question, on a matter of a resolution brought forward that perhaps members of the opposition do not have full agreement on, or are we being asked to discuss a resolution that is the true position of the NDP party of Manitoba?

We certainly see in other jurisdictions across the country where there are NDP governments, in Saskatchewan particularly, where Mr. Serby, the Minister of Health there, has made particular statements in regard to the agreement that was reached by all members of the group of ministers and the federal minister. I think he is taking a very reasonable and concerned approach in the fact that whatever resolution, if there is any change to the one that has already been agreed upon, that it should be done as a collective group of people, that we cannot continue to bring forward individual ideas that may suit that particular person or that small group of people but actually represents all the governments in Canada and in agreement with the federal government because, again, as I read through these notes, I do not get from the opposition that there is a disagreement that the federal government should pay the majority share of this.

According to the first agreement, they have done that. We are continuing to supply additional costs that we have. Our participation in it has been agreed upon, as is all of the other provinces. I know the member opposite likes to comment that it is discussion of time, and I certainly have read her comments on the record in regard to time. She has alluded to 1982, I believe and then also back into the early war years, and I do not question the fact that that may or may not be true, Mr. Chairman. What I would suggest, though, is that if there is a motion to come forward by any member of the opposition as an independent resolution, certainly not one, at least in this member's eyes, where there is unanimous agreement from that particular group, that it should have the specifics built around it and it should indicate what they are actually asking for.

Is it if we expand it, let us discuss the terms of the resolution as to what is being put forward and not just general terms as in the discussion today, the discussion in the House in Question Period where the question was brought from the members opposite, did we support the Ontario position, did we support the Quebec position. I think it becomes painfully clear that what we are interested in doing is creating an agreement amongst all the provinces and the federal government that is workable and doable. I think really all I have seen come across is the fact of their willingness to support any proposal that is out there and really just force governments and everybody into a corner where there may not be equitable treatment created by making individual, independent decisions that affect everybody in Canada.

I think we should look very carefully when we are discussing those types of resolutions, because I think quite often when you are doing something independent of everyone else that affects everyone else and everyone else is obligated to some degree to participate in, that we should certainly be very careful how we proceed and perhaps should not proceed until we have all sat down, and, as I say, as previously agreed upon, if the recommendations and the deal is to change, then again that has to be out there for discussion, but it has to be something that is put on the table as broad-based, so that every government in Canada, every province and the federal government would have to agree to support or not to support this to a certain level, so that there is fairness in the system.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will leave my comments as they are. I will certainly listen attentively to the rest of the debate on this resolution, and, again, I really just want to question the motive behind these types of resolutions. I presume there will be more coming forward if the pattern continues, and I continue to hope that the ministers will discuss this and come to an agreement, again, as I have perceived earlier, that there was an agreement that all parties involved can agree upon and we can share equally, not equally but responsibly, based on our responsibilities to the resolution of this very serious issue.

So with that I will continue to pay attention and comment later if needed. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I am glad the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) is going to be paying attention to the debate, because I really think that if one looks at some of the debate last week, I think a lot of members opposite missed the point entirely.

I first want to indicate that I was quite distressed with some of the comments that were put on the record, trying to develop analogies with the hepatitis C situation. Members were talking about reactions to drugs. I think one member even referenced labour in terms of childbirth, other issues. I would not want anyone to underestimate the tragedy of hepatitis C contamination for the victims involved.

I mentioned this before and I want to put on the record again, that I have talked to a constituent of mine who is a victim of contaminated blood who has hepatitis C. I can tell you that if you knew this individual, like I do, you would not know it. You would not notice the fact that his lifespan is going to be significantly shortened. This is going to have very real consequences for his family. His quality of life will deteriorate very significantly as time goes along. This is an individual who to all appearances is very fit, has led a very fit lifestyle, very successful, and in an endeavour that involves peak physical fitness. But because of hepatitis C contaminated blood, that is the reality he is faced with.

I do not believe that members in the House need necessarily have to have met someone who is contaminated with hepatitis C because of the

contamination of the blood supply. I think all one has to do is put someone in those circumstances. I recognize we can get into fine debating points about precedence, whether this would be a precedent or not. I think some of the previous examples we have are a good indication that governments at all levels have looked on humanitarian basis. We have seen compensation on thalidomide. We have seen it on AIDS, and it was very much in that spirit that the issue of hepatitis C came to the forefront with the Krever inquiry. That inquiry, by the way, stated very clearly that the recommendation was coverage for all victims, and I believe that was the appropriate recommendation. It was made on humanitarian grounds. That was the starting point of this whole issue.

* (1500)

Then some other factors came into this. I think one is the obvious fact that compensation costs money, yes, and compensation in and as of itself is only part of the issue. Indeed, the minister today in Question Period said, well, you know, we have to look at other aspects that are out there in the system that will still be available to victims of hepatitis C. Indeed, that is the case, although I found the minister left out one of the more significant areas of government that is going to be called into play for a significant number of people, and that is the welfare system. This is going to lead to many individuals losing not only their health but their livelihood. It will have a significant cost not just in terms of health care but in terms of income support.

What I want to put on the record, though, is the fact that the government still, after a week of debate on this issue, does not get it. I found it interesting today when the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) got up and criticized the Liberal member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and pointed out that the Liberal member had wanted the House of Commons taken out of a resolution.

Well, what was interesting is that the resolution was calling for a free vote. It did not deal with the compensation issue. The first step was to get it agreed to in this House that there should be a free vote, but what the minister left out was that he then turned around and voted against a free vote in the Legislature. He criticized the member for Inkster for taking out the

House of Commons—and I can tell you, we put that in. Our critic put that in because this was prior to the vote in the House of Commons. We hoped to have some influence—

An Honourable Member: You did not vote for his motion in committee.

Mr. Ashton: Well, the minister voted against our motion. He voted against our motion, not the Liberal amendment.

An Honourable Member: With you.

Mr. Ashton: You see, once again the minister plays word games here. He criticized the Liberal member for taking out one component of it, but his position is to take out both components, and he still does not get it. We wanted both in there. I am glad the minister has pointed it out. We felt we could not, in good conscience, say: let us have a free vote in the House of Commons, but, oh, it is different when it comes to the Manitoba Legislature.

You know, I read the comments of the minister in Question Period again, because I remember when he talked about the Whips being on in the House of Commons. We saw immediately, the moment we suggested the Whips come off in the Manitoba Legislature, the Whips were on in this committee. I have never seen so many people in this committee. They were going around not just the one side, but right around the back. We were lucky as opposition members we were not forced out of our chairs. Government members appeared out of the woodwork. The mention of any debate which would have put this to a free vote, the Whips off, got the government members in here; the Whip was on.

So I just put that on the record because I thought that was disingenuous of the Minister of Health. He was against a free vote either in the House of Commons or the Manitoba Legislature, and he knows full well we were in favour of a free vote in the Manitoba Legislature and the House of Commons.

Now, since that time, I think it has been very clear a number of things have happened since this issue came up. By the way, we raised this issue initially in

December. Our position is on record in the form of a private member's resolution well before this issue ever received any of the kind of prominence it has received in terms of national attention the last several weeks. We were on record based on the Krever report, we said: compensation for all victims. If the minister does not know that, he should read our private member's resolution, which is on the books clearly supporting that situation.

Now, the ministers of Health, both federal and provincial, sat down, decided '86 to '90. Anybody who was contaminated before 1986 is not covered under the federal-provincial agreement. The agreement factored in \$800 million federal support, \$300 million provincial support. That is not counting other costs. We are more than aware of that, and that is one of the reasons I think the fact that the lion's share of the coverage is coming from the federal government is reasonable, because the province has to be faced with the reality of other costs, especially hospitalization costs and, yes, income support costs. We end up picking up a significant part of the bill.

Now, after the federal government rammed through their position, and let us remember what they did, there was an Opposition Day motion in the House of Commons moved by the official opposition, supported by all opposition parties including the federal Conservatives. They supported a motion that would grant coverage to all Canadians. Okay? So their federal party was clearly on record in favour of this, because when they try and get into what parties in this and that and the other jurisdictions say, their federal party, the federal NDP, the Bloc Quebecois, and the Reform Party said full compensation.

The federal government, fearing that they could not get their members to support a vote against this resolution, put the Whip on, did so quite effectively. Jean Chretien, I guess, as he was off lecturing Fidel Castro about democracy in Cuba, was very much on the phones back in Canada making sure there was not too much democracy within the federal Liberal caucus. I thought that was somewhat ironic. One thing about Cuba, I think they know about the party Whip. I do not think they need any lectures from Jean Chretien on that one. But, anyway, the fact is the Liberals pushed through a no vote on compensation for all victims.

Now, what happened after that point? In the Quebec Legislature, Daniel Johnson, the outgoing leader of the Liberal Party, he introduced a resolution calling for compensation for all victims. It was amended by the government, the PQ government. I suspect, by the way, that Jean Charest, someone the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) is quite knowledgeable of—I believe he was his main supporter in Manitoba in the leadership convention—I am sure Jean Charest has not changed the position of the Quebec Liberal Party. The bottom line, Mr. Chairperson, I think Quebec started to show the fact that many Canadians, including a lot of governments, had difficulty with that decision to exclude pre-'86 victims.

We have seen indications elsewhere. In British Columbia, I think a resolution has been planned for today. It has been reported in the media. But now what we have is Mike Harris. Mike Harris has come out and said a number of things, reopening discussions. We have a copy of the news release. We read from that today. Our Leader pointed out that they are talking about that, but, you know, they are going beyond that. They are talking about putting their own share of the package up front. They are talking about commitment of dollars for a provincial portion of the compensation package.

Mr. Chairperson, this is very significant because I think what is happening is I think across the country a lot of people have been saying, look, this is a humanitarian issue. I know the Premier (Mr. Filmon) wants to play this as a political issue. I found his comments, quite frankly, to be inappropriate to the tone of the debate that we have seen thus far. I believe everyone is motivated by the same thing. I would hope so. I think everybody understands the huge impacts on the individuals who have been affected and the real angst of people who are not covered when others are being covered.

* (1510)

What is happening I think is very clear. Yes, the ministers of Health have had another conference call and say they agree to the original agreement, but I think if you look beyond that, you are starting to see that within governments across the country a lot of people are saying that agreement does not go far enough. Glen

Clark, I have had the opportunity to talk to him directly about this and stated this in the public record. I think he was one of the first people to say he did not feel comfortable with the agreement that had been resolved.

I want to suggest to the minister that at times I think he slips into something that I think is not of concern to Canadians and Manitobans, the strict legalities of the issue. I think for most people this is a straightforward issue, it is a humanitarian issue, and to get into the legalities of the issue, are we now going to provide compensation only to those who have a greater prospect for success legally through class action which is allowed in a number of jurisdictions? Are we going to have a compensation package that is only focused on whether you have a good potential ability to have a lawsuit, Mr. Chairperson? I hope not, because for most Canadians the real question is compensation for all or compensation for none.

I really believe that the unfortunate part here is that some people, because of the nature of the pressures that are on them politically—I point to Allan Rock. Allan Rock, according to sources, had argued for full compensation to cover all victims. Mr. Chairperson, he was defeated obviously in the cabinet, and now the cabinet is making that argument. I do not know if anyone on the Conservative side made the argument for coverage of all victims. I do not know that. I would hope that would be the case, and if they have not thus far, I do not think it is too late.

Mike Harris today is saying something obviously quite different from what he said on Friday to the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Filmon). I suspect that some of that may be the exchange between Mike Harris and Jean Chretien. You may remember that; you know, both of them firing shots at each other back and forth.

I think that was a very political display, but, you know, the reality is Ontario, which will face the largest costs in Canada, is now indicating its willingness to involve the province in order to bring justice about for pre-'86 victims. That should be what we should focus in on. I think we have the Krever report saying: provide it to all victims. I think we have a clear statement from many people across the country. I think we have a model by the way, and I will suggest that the minister look at something similar to the Irish model.

It is not a perfect model; but, from what I have been able to determine from it, it certainly goes beyond what we have in Canada. I think that, if the minister were to look back on the original decision, even the minister himself would argue perhaps that in hindsight, maybe the cutoff at '86 was harsh, was not acceptable to the pre-'86 victims, not acceptable to a lot of Manitobans and a lot of Canadians.

Well, the real question for us, Mr. Chairperson, was how we dealt with it, and I would note to the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) and others, if you look at the way we dealt with it, I think we dealt with it in a very constructive manner. Our first resolution in this committee was urging that we have a free vote on the issue, both in the House of Commons and in the Manitoba Legislature. If that had been cleared away, if the government had agreed to that, I think then we could have sat down as MLAs in general—not as a government, not as an opposition, but as MLAs—and focused in on a constructive solution. Then we would not have needed to have people accusing each other of politics or such accusations we heard from the Premier (Mr. Filmon) today, because then each MLA would be working towards that if we had had a free vote.

When the government rejected that, it was obvious to us from the comments that were made in the House why this was done, Mr. Chairperson. It was done because the government feared that, if this matter were brought before the Legislature, there would be a decision other than support for the federal-provincial Health ministers' agreement. Think about it, Mr. Chairperson. If we had had to vote on it, we would have had the same kind of situation in the Manitoba Legislature occurring that is occurring in British Columbia, which has occurred, to a certain extent, in Quebec, and is, most definitely, occurring in Ontario. There would have been a rethinking of the decision.

Well, what motion did we move last week, the end of last week? We moved a motion based on the most recent expression of dissatisfaction with the partial compensation—a full compensation for hepatitis C, and that was the Quebec resolution. You know, I really thought that the minister and the member for Turtle Mountain got extremely carried away with themselves, debating back and forth and saying, aha, you are saying

that the Quebec resolution, the Quebec resolution that points to the federal government.

Let us put it clearly on the record, Mr. Chairperson. We have said the lion's share should be paid by the federal government. We said it outside the House. We said it inside the House. There is no disagreement on that point. We have also said, and I think in this case I would point out that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), our Leader, said on Friday publicly last week, not in the Legislature, but through the media, that his position—and it is virtually identical to the Mike Harris position, and the one that we proposed, as the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) points out, in December of 1997—is the lion's share from the federal government, but the province being willing to play a role as well. We already have established that. We already have an agreement that has the province of over \$300 million out of a \$1.1-billion package.

So that is the position we took, and I stress again on the Quebec resolution, that it started out with calling for federal-provincial action, and was amended by the PQ government to read only the federal government. Now, we could have played a political game and put in a resolution that had called on the province to put up X numbers of dollars. Well, first of all, it might have been ruled out of order, Mr. Chairperson. We did consider that because we do not have the ability to spend money. We do not have ability as a committee—[interjection] Well, the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) says amen, and perhaps he is not in a good position to be able to do that, but as a committee we do not have the ability to spend money. We can subtract from the Estimates. We cannot add additional expenditures. If we move a resolution in the House that does anything other than recommend expenditures, it is out of order because only Executive Council through the Estimates process, through Supply, is able to spend money.

So we tried, and I actually, quite frankly, was very surprised. I thought the government would have, at a minimum, agreed to the resolution we moved last week, instead of debating it ad infinitum, instead of attacking the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), who from day one has been clearly of one mind on this, and that is to get justice for victims, and if members doubt that, they should understand a little bit about the background

of the member for Osborne before she entered this Legislature. She has had a long history with the AIDS community, dealing with people who suffered, Mr. Chairperson, from contaminated blood. It is something that is very personal to the member for Osborne. I wish members at times would put aside the kind of situations we saw last week and recognize that.

That is why we moved this resolution. I still believe, by the way, that this resolution can be adopted by all members of the House quite readily, but, you know, I really think what we have to do over the next period of time—and I am hoping that we will have some ability over the next day or so for members on the government side to rethink their position. I am really hoping, Mr. Chairperson, that we will see some recognition of the need to look at what we are suggesting, what the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) put forward on Friday, what we stressed again in Question Period, a constructive approach. There are reports that Allan Rock now is talking about having a further meeting, Mike Harris has moved; British Columbia has moved; Quebec has moved.

Every other province, I believe, is starting to have this discussion except Manitoba, and I do not understand, quite frankly, why. Certainly B.C., Quebec, and Ontario which I think collectively represent about three-quarters of the population of the country, in each of those jurisdictions we have seen a significant shift. We have seen debate in the Legislature. We have seen announcements by government that move in a significant direction towards coverage for pre-'86 victims, and that is the bottom line here.

I believe that the political stands are shifting. They have shifted dramatically in a week. I think most Canadians are saying coverage for one, coverage for all victims of hepatitis C, and they are saying that because they never saw this as a legalistic decision; they saw it as a humanitarian decision fundamentally to cover '86 to '89. [interjection] Just like flood victims. The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), I believe, raised that, and, in fact, the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski). Both raised this before. We do not cover flood victims because we have to cover flood victims. I mean, I know the Premier (Mr. Filmon) even

suggested if you choose to live on a flood plain, then that is your—I mean, an element of fault is attached.

The reality is flood victims were covered and the degree to which they were covered changed over time. The first brochure during the flood that came out had significantly less coverage than what we actually ended up having. We asked the question in the House and within a day those leaflets were changed. The amount was increased to a hundred thousand dollars. I could list probably 25, 30, 35 items that were changed. You know, it was funny because every time we asked a question in the House collectively as an opposition, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) would say, oh, you are playing politics, the same thing he is saying on hepatitis C.

* (1520)

You know, it is interesting, and I look to the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid). He will remember those comments well. The reality was, Mr. Chairperson, that every time he said that, he would sit down and because we had raised a legitimate argument, a legitimate point, despite the political attack on us as an opposition, they changed it, not because of any ability of people to sue. If you are a flood victim in this province, you cannot sue the province. There is no ability to sue the province at all. The province did not create the flood. It is something that we provide, because as a community we believe it is fair to help citizens in need, and flood victims are certainly a good example of that. We do the same for forest fire victims.

I said at the time you can say the same thing about northern Manitoba, that people choose to live in a forest fire area. I mean, if you exclude floods and forest fires from this province, you have not got much left. I mean, natural disasters go with the territory. If you start getting into this reductionist kind of argument that we see from members opposite—you know, you want to argue precedence? The fact is we have clear precedence for humanitarian-based compensation for victims of natural disasters and for medical disasters.

I can tell you the reality is for someone who has got contaminated blood from hepatitis C, that will have as much impact as any flood or any forest fire will have on their lives and, in fact, will probably have more of an impact because many of them will die prematurely;

those that suffer later from liver damage, for example. You know, and it is interesting because a lot of people, if you want an explanation of what hepatitis C does to you, there were two examples that have come out just recently. James Earl Ray, the convicted murderer of Martin Luther King, you know what he died of? Hepatitis, liver disease, from contaminated blood, and that is just to show what happens. Evel Knievel apparently suffering from fatal—[interjection] Yes, he is certainly terminal. Yes, it was reported in the media, and why? From blood transfusion, contaminated blood, hepatitis C. I do not know how many more times you have to stress to people, hepatitis C can be as deadly as AIDS can for the people involved. People can die from hepatitis C; they are dying from hepatitis C. That is why we have always said AIDS and hepatitis C were very much part of the same time period in our history.

I think the Krever inquiry pointed to the need to provide humanitarian assistance, and I think that is the appropriate thing to do. I say to the minister, you know, because sometimes he keeps getting back to these legalities. He mentioned quite extensively last week about how this was a private agency providing the blood, the Red Cross and under federal regulation. Those are facts. No one is disputing that, but the reality is I do not think that washes. I think if the Red Cross did not exist, we would have another system in place and, of course, in response to Krever, another system is being put in place. The bottom line is as a society, I believe if you would ask people on the street, the blood supply is one of the key components of the health care system. Whether it is, in essence, being conducted by an NGO that has existed for many years or by the government directly, it is an important part of the health care system. Whether we are buying the blood through the health care system, whether it is federal regulation and we are buying the blood and we run the hospitals, if you want to get into legalities back and forth, I think that is the wrong analysis.

So I want to suggest the following just to conclude this. I would suggest that if members opposite wish to support this resolution, we could move to it probably immediately. If they wish to amend the resolution to put the Manitoba position on the Order Paper, we would be willing to see that. We would love to see it. I notice today every time we asked a question, we hear about everything except what the position of the

government is, and I notice the Premier does not want to even go as far as the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik). The Minister of Health at least, I give him credit, he has been saying the position is the federal-provincial agreement, no coverage for pre-'86. I think that is a fair summation of the government's position according to the Minister of Health, but the Premier managed to attack us but never answered that question.

Here is an opportunity. You can either vote this resolution down and move a subsequent resolution. I have actually suggested you could do it through a different form. You have the ability to bring in a government motion that takes precedence over all business in the House. I suggest do it. Bring in a motion that says clearly on the record what the government position is. So either support this resolution, amend it, vote it down, but let us get onto, I think, a clear position.

I think our position is well known. It is on the record. We support compensation for all victims. We know it will cost additional money. We believe the lion's share should come from the federal government, but we also believe that the right thing to do is also to be part of it provincially. We really believe that. We believe it not on political grounds, but just because I know personally and I know the member for Osborne and our caucus—and by the way, these 15 minutes spent on who moved the resolution back and forth I thought was the most ridiculous part of the debate.

When we move a resolution in this committee, it is on behalf of our caucus. We have not had a party convention. Since this issue became a major issue, we moved a caucus resolution. It is on the record. That is our position as a party. Let us not nitpick back and forth. I think people know where we stand: we want the compensation to be extended. I think we want to know from the government, are they still with their position last week, the First Minister's position? Are we with the Premier's position today who did not answer the questions? I wonder if that means his position is evolving. Are we going to end up in a situation where you get better coverage in Kenora than you do in Manitoba, in Lac du Bonnet, the minister's own constituency, right close to the Manitoba border? I hope not, Mr. Chairperson.

So the ball is back in your court. I say to the government, through you, Mr. Chairperson, tell us what your position is. I would suggest, by the way, that let us have a debate in the Manitoba Legislature itself. You have the ability to do something we do not. We can move an Opposition Day motion. We cannot have it given priority. It will not appear for several days. I would say move a motion and state your position.

Mr. Chairperson, I believe we are in a position to have a vote on this. We have had various different members opposite speak. The minister has put his position on the record; the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed). We are prepared for a vote on this and would encourage the government to do so. If they are going to vote it down, let them vote it down; if they are going to support it, let them support it.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity—

An Honourable Member: I wanted to call the question.

Mr. Praznik: The member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) wants to call the question, but the history and tradition of this Legislature, although members may call the question, if another member signifies they wish to speak, they are always granted the courtesy of the floor, and that is what I am doing. I understand that there are other members who wish to speak, so I say that as a clarification to the member for Osborne.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairperson, we do have procedures for an official calling of the question, and we are certainly open to debate. I see there are certainly two other members who have not spoken yet. We are certainly willing to accommodate them. All we were suggesting was to canvass the committee to see if there was informal willingness to have the matter put.

The minister, by the way, is wrong, and if he wants to know about traditions in this House, we have seen on MTS how the ability to debate is not always acknowledged by the government side, so let him not play both sides.

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

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: I would like to mention to all members of the committee that indeed I am keeping a list. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) is the next speaker, and the next speaker after that is the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford).

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Mr. Chair, I had understood the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) was the next speaker.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable Minister of Health is the speaker right now.

Ms. McGifford: Then are we abandoning the tradition of going back and forth between the opposite sides of the House?

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I do not know of that tradition. If the committee so wishes that, then they can bring that up. I have said before this that when a topic comes up that there are many speakers who want to speak on it, the hands are going up, and I will keep a list to try to be as fair as I can. So, at this point, the Minister of Health, for his comments.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: I do not know which committees you have been sitting in for the last number of years, Mr. Chairperson, but I have sat in a lot of these committees. It is clearly a tradition. This was raised again the other day. I do not want to get into this again. I think there is a willingness of all members to respect the right of members on all sides to speak. We are certainly—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. [interjection] Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), at this point, does not have a point of order.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairperson, you have not let me finish yet. How would you know if I have a point of order or not?

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Thompson is just rambling on. I said I called him on his order, and he just kept on rambling, plain and simple.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairperson, you do not have the right to even say that of a member in this House.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Ashton: I have chaired many of these committees, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: You are out of order.

Mr. Ashton: You hear members out; you make a ruling. If members disagree, they can challenge your ruling but to say that a member of the opposition is rambling on, Mr. Chairperson, is inappropriate from anybody who sits in that Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Thompson has my apology for saying that he was rambling on. Plain and simply, he did not have a point of order.

* (1530)

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Thompson, again, on a point of order?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairperson, if you understand the role of the Chair, when a point of order is made, you listen out the point of order, which you did not do in my case. You then make a ruling. Then you allow for members, if they disagree with it, to challenge the Chair.

You would not even allow me to get recognized to challenge the Chair, because your ruling, Mr. Chairperson, was inappropriate. If you want to proceed this way for the next two and a half hours, we can do that. We have not had to do that.

Mr. Chairperson: You do that. The honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), on the same point of order.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I would suggest in the interests of maintaining a civil working relationship on this committee, that we do recognize—we have talked—[interjection]

You know, Mr. Chair, I am trying to make some reconciliation here to resolve the matter in a fair way. If the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), I say to him, would like that to happen, if he would be so discerning to just let me finish, he may find we resolve—[interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable Minister of Health has a point of order?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, I am speaking to the member for Thompson's (Mr. Ashton) point of order, and I would suggest that we have discussed it at this committee before. We should, in fact, have a rotation back and forth.

I think that the reason we got into this is because members indicated they wanted to vote. I wanted to speak to some members. Other members wanted to, and there were no opposition members who had indicated they wanted to speak, and so the Chair indicated in the speaking order some other government members. If members of the opposition, either New Democrat, Liberal or independent wish to speak, we have no problem with having a rotation.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), on the same point of order.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): As I understood it, Mr. Chair, and I do want to resolve this in an amicable way, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) just spoke for the last 20 or 25 minutes, and the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) is presently responding to that. Then I would think it would be appropriate at least for a member of the government's side of the House to respond to that, but I will defer to the Chair's ruling.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I have listened to a number of comments from many of the members. The member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) had her hand

raised. Did she want to speak on the point of order, too?

Ms. McGifford: Yes, Mr. Chair, and I support the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) and the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) and my colleague in valuing amicability and a smooth running of this committee.

The point that I—the minister is right. I had called the question. Since his colleagues felt that it was not the appropriate time for the question, I had also raised my hand to indicate that I wished to be on the speakers' list, almost, I think, simultaneously with the Minister of Justice. The Minister of Justice, his claim took precedence, and I am not quite sure that it should.

The Minister of Justice has said the Minister of Health is going to respond and then a member from the government will respond, but the Minister of Health is a government member. I think after the Minister of Health it should be a member of the opposition.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Perhaps I should have said this in the first place, and that is, simply, any one of the committee members who are bringing up a point of order, please state your point of order, firstly. Back it up with comments if you wish, but please make it clear what your point of order is.

I have heard now from most of the committee members. It seems to be a reasonable thing in asking that we go from opposition to government members, and that we will do. So the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) will speak, the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) will speak and then the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) and then anybody else who wishes their name on the list.

Now, I would ask—[interjection] Order, please. I would ask one more thing. Those committee members wishing to raise points of order, I would ask that you do this in a manner in which you do not have points of order one after another, two, three or more times. I ask you to take that in the gesture in which it is offered, that we can simply have a good committee run very smoothly if we do this.

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Mr. Praznik: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to respond to some of the issues that were raised by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) who I believe, as well, is the seconder of the motion now before this particular committee.

With respect to the point he makes for a debate in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, his party has chosen to bring forward this motion the other day in this committee. It is a committee of the Legislature which all members are able to attend and participate in this debate. The nature of the committee room and the opportunity for us all to speak on numerous occasions as this debate develops is a very good one, so I suggest to him that the debate for which he asks is, in fact, taking place here, and we will eventually come to a vote of some sort on this particular motion, perhaps with amendment, perhaps not, but it is a very adequate forum—in fact, I would even suggest to him, is a very interesting one.

I know, again, when you are running three committees, not all members of the House are able to be in this one committee; members have other responsibilities in other committee rooms. But we have had during my involvement in this debate the previous resolution, the general discussion on hepatitis C. We have had, in my opinion, one of the best discussions I have witnessed on the intricacies of a very complex issue. Members on both sides of the committee table have I think endeavoured to really give full discussion to the many issues involved. So I would suggest that it has been a very interesting debate and one that is certainly evolving nationally as we speak.

I want to, first of all, before I deal with some of his comments on this resolution, update members of the committee as to the conference call last Friday and some of the things that have happened across the country, because I must admit to colleagues it is very difficult as a provincial Minister of Health today who has been part of the discussions and negotiations to report with accuracy as to where others are in this debate, and I wanted to share some of that information with colleagues just to give a sense of what is being said in certain places and what provinces are saying.

First of all, with respect to the conference call on Friday, it was very, very interesting because there were

three provinces who had made statements that were considerably different than what they had been saying to us as their colleagues, as provincial ministers. That, of course, was Quebec where there was a resolution in the National Assembly, the Province of British Columbia where there was a ministerial statement of some sort and the Province of Ontario.

Now, what was very interesting in our conversation was that each of those ministers of Health backtracked significantly from the public statements they were making in their provinces. They did not backtrack by way of being forced by other ministers. They were doing it right from the moment they got on the telephone. What was very interesting about it is I know the minister from British Columbia was telling us, her colleagues, that British Columbia's position really was not that there be a separate plan for hepatitis C that required provincial dollars, but rather their position was that the federal government should put more money into health care generally, so that we can improve our service level to all people whether they have hepatitis C, cancer or whatever.

When the chair of our meeting read back some of her statements in the House, it was very interesting because the line, that is not what we really meant, came many times out of that conversation, and one was left with the very strong impression that the government of British Columbia was saying one thing in a public statement and another to us as provincial colleagues, but by the end of the telephone conversation, actually from the beginning of the telephone conversation to the end of it, British Columbia was very, very firm on the position and the agreement of which they were a part, and they were indicating to us that they were not prepared in any way to be adding dollars to a separate compensation plan nor were they encouraging anyone else to do so, and that really what they meant was the federal government should put more money into its transfers to provinces, which we all agree on.

* (1540)

Ontario gave us very much the same kind of view and indicated clearly that their letters and comments to the federal government never, at that stage, called for a separate hepatitis C program, and there was quite a bit of discussion around statements they made and what

they really meant. But, from the beginning of the conversation to the end, the Ontario Health minister was very firm to indicate that they were not calling upon provinces to be part of any agreement.

The only exception to this troika of position was from Quebec where the minister from Quebec agreed very much with the positions we had taken but indicated that the legislature of which he is a servant had passed a resolution. That, of course, was the policy of Quebec, and he had to respect that. What I find so interesting is a press release that Monsieur Rochon put out from Quebec. It is dated Montreal, May 1, 1998, and it said, and I quote: Quebec is surprised that, contrary to the impression left by the reaction of some of them, Canada's other provinces have decided not to ask the federal government for humanitarian reasons to extend the compensation program to all tainted blood victims, declared Quebec Minister of Health and Social Services and member for Charlesbourg, Jean Rochon, following a telephone conference of ministers of Health.

This particular line is totally opposite what Monsieur Rochon said to us on the telephone. So I am not really sure today what the game is that is being played by some because, when we talk to them privately in conversation, they say one thing; in the public statements that they make, they say another.

We have seen a press release come out from Premier Harris in Ontario that was the subject of, and rightly so, questions in our Legislature today, and I have a copy of that release here somewhere in my material. What I found most interesting—here it is—is that Mr. Harris in this press release is indicating that Ontario is committing to sharing compensation for the pre-'86 victims on the same basis as the existing package for those infected between '86 and '90, and he goes on to say the biggest cost to Ontario is the \$1 billion in health care that we provide to all victims, regardless of how they are infected. We are exploring possible legal avenues to recoup from the federal government.

It is not quite clear—and this is why the Premier (Mr. Filmon) was not prepared to answer queries from the Leader of the Opposition, because we are not quite clear if Mr. Harris is asking for—if this is new money he is putting on the table or if he is prepared to—or he is asking that this be charged against the account that we

all believe the federal government owes us for what we are spending on the medical side of compensation. So we are not quite clear on that.

In British Columbia, to give you an update—I feel like a radio announcer here today—the motion going before the British Columbia legislature, and it says and I quote: Be it resolved that since British Columbia will spend more than \$550 million providing health care services who contracted the hepatitis C virus through the blood system, the members of the Legislative Assembly urge the federal government to develop a plan to address and fund the needs of those British Columbians who contracted hepatitis C through tainted blood prior to 1986.

Well, it is interesting. This is saying fund the needs of those British Columbians. They are not saying provide a compensation plan, and they are not offering one penny of British Columbia dollars. So we are not quite sure what they mean, and I must share with colleagues, after listening to the British Columbia minister try to explain her statement, what she said she really meant to us, and seeing the resolution that the government of British Columbia has put to their legislature, I am very confused as to what they actually mean. I am sure Mr. Rock is equally confused by it because there are a lot of different conflicting signals.

So here we have three provinces who are off making their statements. Quebec's resolution said the federal government should pay it all and is not offering a penny to be part of any particular plan. British Columbia is saying that it should not be a compensation plan but should address the needs, and what are those? Is that home care? Is that Pharmacare? It is not really clear, but it should all be federal money. Privately telling us what they really want is more transfer payments for all people. We have them there.

We have Ontario today committing, maybe committing some dollars, maybe new dollars, maybe charged against existing expenditure. So we really, quite frankly, as regards the other provinces, were not sure what any of these provinces are saying. It makes it very difficult to have partners in this Confederation. I should tell members we were assured by the Health minister of Ontario that that was, when they spoke to us on the phone, their position, and then we see the

Premier may be saying something different, maybe the Premier of Ontario saying we are prepared to give a credit for what we are doing. We are not sure. That is part of the difficulty with all of this.

Now, to put all of this into a little bit different perspective, Manitoba represents about 4 percent of the total package that has now been paid out, roughly our population. We are not going to be the ones that make or break a compensation package beyond this. If you take Quebec on the face value, which is federal dollars; if you take British Columbia on its face value, their resolution that they are debating today, that says federal dollars; if you listen to Mike Harris, who still we are not sure what he is saying; the bottom line is that any additional package, in whatever form it takes, is going to be made or not made by the Government of Canada. Even the New Democrats here in your resolution ask us to adopt the content of the Quebec resolution which, in essence, says all federal dollars.

Now, we had quite a little debate in this Chamber on Thursday as to what the New Democratic party position was. I want to talk a little bit about that for a moment, but if that is, in fact, we can take the New Democratic resolution on face value that this should be federal dollars, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) has said the lion's share should be federal dollars, but that is not what their resolution says. Their resolution says federal government. The bottom line is it is the Government of Canada who has to decide whether or not it is going to come to the table with a host of additional dollars.

Now, that raises a number of other questions that we have debated very extensively in this Chamber. If the Government of Canada, first of all, decides to come with new dollars because, quite frankly, no province is in a position to add an additional in total \$1.2 billion or \$1.4 billion or whatever it would be to extend a compensation package. So without the federal government, it is just not going to go anywhere, quite frankly. So if the federal government is going to be there, that raises a couple of questions. Number one, how will they fund it? If they are going to fund it, as they have done from time to time, by robbing our transfer payments, by stealing the money out of other pots of transfers to the provinces, then that, as I have said in the Legislature, would be totally unacceptable.

What I fear, quite frankly, by the tactics of some of the other governments, by Quebec, by Ontario, by British Columbia, is that they are tempting Mr. Rock and Mr. Chretien to do exactly that today.

I offer this as no criticism to the mover or seconder of the motion of the debate, but I share with them just some observations. That in the way this is playing out, by the way in which these three provinces, whose ministers of Health say one thing to us in a telephone conversation on Friday and whose governments do something considerably different a few days later, they are really tempting Mr. Rock and Mr. Chretien to say, okay, we will put some money on the table, not the lion's share of cash, we will put some money on the table. We will do what you want us to do, and by the way, next year, when we do our budget, you will just find we have pulled more or less the equivalent amount out of your transfers, or we will take it out of some other area where we transfer money or do programs—infrastructure, highways, whatever. We will get you. That has happened before on so many numerous occasions. I really must admit that I am very worried that that is the reaction we will see by the Government of Canada.

Yes, everyone will get up and cheer—the media, I am sure, The Globe and Mail and the CBC, who have been advancing this issue—[interjection] Well, whoever, will get up and cheer a great victory, and, at the end of the day, the provinces again will bear the lion's share of responsibility, not the national government. So that is a worry, but that is the first question.

* (1550)

The second question is probably the greater one. It is one of principle, and it is a very important one. Do we then build a no-fault insurance program for anybody injured in our health care system by whatever means? That is a very fundamental question because, if we do not decide on that question, does that mean that we only compensate or we only provide—I am not dealing with negligence issues here, because negligence we always have to deal with. People can go to court. The reason, in fact, we got into this issue as provinces with the national government is because the group of hepatitis C victims between 1986 and '90 have pursued this matter in court. The reason why those dates are

significant is, as we have been advised by the national government, who did the preparatory work, that is the area where their own lawyers have advised them there is a negligence on the part of the system.

So what we are really talking about here is: are we then going to provide special assistance to those outside the realm of negligence but for injury that is incurred in the regular risk taking that is part of the health delivery system? Are we only going to provide that when a group can raise a great deal of public sympathy and not when that group cannot? Because that is what I see happening here across the country.

I see one particular group, yes, a group who have suffered a great deal, saying we need this special case. So when an individual suffers ill through the provision of care in our health care system, when it is an individual who has an allergic reaction to a drug and is made unable to work, when it is an individual who in the course of a risky surgical procedure suffers harm and is unable to work or require additional care, but when they are lone individuals and cannot muster the kind of media attention that a larger group with a more public issue can, will we have the same sympathy? Will they demand the same, will they get the same public attention? Will they get the same level of compensation or support as some members and some governments are proposing we do, or will they just be forgotten and be part of the regular Canadian social safety net system, whether it be adequate or not?

That is really what is evolving here somewhat. I appreciate where members are coming from, but the regrettable part of this debate, when one looks at the blood system, is the early cases of hepatitis C prior to that period when a test was part of the standard of care. If the Canadian blood system had been working as perfect as human beings can run one, if there was not any issue of negligence, it is likely that many, many, many of those people, if not at all, would have contracted hepatitis C through the blood system, not because there was negligence, but because it is the nature of blood and it is the nature of that system and it is the nature of the risk of that system.

The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale)—we had a very interesting discussion on the whole area of illness, disease, and injury coming out of the treatment in our

health care system, and it is a growing part of health issues. But they are there and they will be there and, if you take that one step further, one of the issues that we have to deal with as provinces in building the new Canadian blood system, because the No. 1 issue here has had no attention in the media nor at this committee. In fact, I have not had one question in the case of my Estimates about the new Canadian blood system, one question that I recall.

The fundamental issue is how the new—and, no, I am not being critical. The fact is the media have not been asking it. We as provincial ministers have been working very diligently to get this new agency up and running. The board has been appointed, and there are some fundamental issues coming into this system that are matters of public policy that will have to be decided shortly, and yet it demands no attention. Yet that is really a fundamental issue of how the new blood system is being built today, so that we have one that is as safe as possibly can be, but the most safe blood system in the world that we as human beings can devise is still going to be prone from time to time to new blood-borne illness or disease being transferred through blood. We may not find it—we are unlikely to find it until some people have been stricken with that illness.

As one of my provincial colleagues said to me today, we talk about hepatitis C, but what about hepatitis D and E and F and G, all of which are there and are now part of our medical development? Can we safeguard our blood system 100 percent against any of those? No, we cannot.

Will we insure anyone who is injured through that blood system? Well, that is a very good question. If they are injured through our carelessness or negligence, yes, we have an obligation, but if they are injured through the regular risk, can we afford a no-fault system to attach to our blood? One of the real issues we are dealing with today in building the new Canadian blood system is insurance. How are we going to cover the insurance on that? It is difficult enough just dealing with the regular liability for negligence and things we have some control over, never mind adding to it a no-fault scheme beyond that area, but that is a repercussion of this debate, of extending this plan to areas where there have not been negligence.

Many have referred to this as the '86 to '90, non-'86 to '90. In reality, it is extending what is, in essence, a claim where the system could have done better and did not to that area where it is argued very strongly it was operating to standard, and this was a new illness within that standard.

So there are a lot of issues here that I am afraid when this national debate is settled one way or the other—and, quite frankly, today I am not quite sure how it is going to be settled, but there are repercussions after this is settled, after we no longer see it on the news every night, that are very significant for the health care system. If provincial ministers of Health and Mr. Rock as federal minister can be criticized for thinking down the road to these repercussions, so be it. Let us be criticized, but those are issues that are very important and very real and will have to be dealt with. So it is not always quite as simple as some would make it out to be.

So, today, we see a state of flux going on across the country. We have seen no willingness yet by the national government to say, yes, they are coming to the table with X number of dollars. If they do, I would warn members to be very skeptical, because they may be our own dollars coming from one pocket to be paid to another. So over the next few days, I am sure we will see this thing evolve. During the course of those few days, I think we are going to have some very interesting discussion at the committee.

Mr. Chair, one other comment I just make to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) about the resolution and some of the issues from last week is that we on this side and me as minister, when I did query the mover of the motion, I know the member had other responsibilities and left the committee, the member for Thompson, we did get, in our opinion, two different views as to what the New Democratic Party was saying.

That seems to be clarified a little bit here. They are still saying lion's share federal but we should be there even though we could debate whether we are already there in big dollars, and that will be part of the discussion. The member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) did indicate that this was not a resolution of the New Democratic Party but of two members of that party. Now, I gather the member for Thompson is clarifying that this is a caucus position of the New Democratic

Party. I am looking at Hansard and it is not in Hansard, but the member may have said that and it was not picked up on the record, but at least that issue is somewhat clarified today.

So I look forward to other members contributing to this discussion and debate. It is a good one and one that I have not seen too often, this degree of discussion in this Chamber or this committee.

* (1600)

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to begin this afternoon by making reference to some of the remarks made by the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) because it seems to me that the member for Turtle Mountain did wonder about the motivation behind the resolutions. As the proposer of both these motions, I do want to make my motives clear. Unfortunately, Hansard does not pick up tone. It merely records words. I thought that the member for Turtle Mountain's question about motive was asked rather sneeringly and sarcastically and suspiciously.

So I do want to begin and make it very clear that our motive, my motive, in proposing both the resolutions stems from my concern for victims of hepatitis C. I believe very fervently that we should extend compensation to all victims of hepatitis C acquired through contaminated blood. I think it is necessary to extend it in order to alleviate suffering, to make life a possibility in some cases or to make a reasonable standard of life a possibility in some cases.

I do not know how the member for Turtle Mountain could doubt my sincerity or question my motives. I think it has been abundantly clear in the House when I introduced my first motion, introduced through a MUPI last December. I think if the member for Turtle Mountain really thinks I have ulterior motives in proposing these motions, that he has been in politics too long, because he has become extremely cynical, and I think it is time for him to make a decision to leave the life if that is what he thinks about people. So I want to put that on the record.

I have been working on this issue since December 1997. I have met with all kinds of people living with hepatitis C, both people who are covered by the

package and who are not covered by the package. I do not know that I have done all the work that I have done with these people perfectly, but I do know that I am absolutely sincere. I know that the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) respected that and indicated it on the record, and I appreciated his support.

I think the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) has pointed out that I have a lot of experience with people living with a disease acquired through contaminated blood, that I have worked in the HIV-AIDS community, and I do know the suffering of those people, and I do know the suffering of people living with hepatitis C is related; in many cases dissimilar but nonetheless related. So my moving these resolutions is not inspired by ulterior or purely political motives whatsoever. These are sincere motions. They are sincere attempts to do everything I can, we can, to extend the compensation package to include all people who are living with hepatitis C acquired through contaminated blood.

Now, the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) also wondered aloud what we are supporting, that is the New Democratic caucus, and this seems to me absolutely amazing that this member could wonder what we were doing because we have been able to get no clear answers out of his Premier (Mr. Filmon) or no action out of his Premier. Last week, his side of the House voted against holding a free vote, and I think that the member for Turtle Mountain said that he was not sure what that vote was calling for.

I could recommend to him that he read the motion, or I could read it right now: That the committee recommend that the Legislature and the House of Commons hold a free vote on whether to extend compensation to all victims who have contracted hepatitis C from contaminated blood. I think it really is quite clear. Hold a free vote on whether to extend compensation. No, the details are not spelled out. We do not have details from the original package anyway. We are told by the minister that they are still working on those, so we could not possibly supply details here. We do look forward to the details on the original package, which I am beginning to suspect is not as good as it is trumped up to be but, nonetheless, we wait on that.

So here we have members opposite who refuse to support that motion. Members opposite refused today, at least the Premier (Mr. Filmon) did, to support the Ontario position. Now, the Minister for Health (Mr. Praznik) did make comments about the Ontario position, wondering whether when the day was over the Ontario position would be quite what it seemed in the press release, and I respect that. He may very well have a point. I understand that the Ontario government will be tabling a resolution in their House today, and we certainly look forward to reading that resolution.

I do not know whether this side of the House will support the current resolution. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) was not clear in the House today when we asked him if he would support this resolution. My suspicion is that this side of the House probably will not, because they do not want to open up debate that they are onside with Allan Rock, who said that the file is closed, and the file is closed.

But, of course, as we have repeatedly said, the file is not closed for those people living with hepatitis C infected before 1986. In fact, it is not even closed for those people infected living after 1986. I was speaking to some people today who wonder how much legal wrangling will go on with the sum of money, I think it is \$300 million, put forward for compensation by the provinces.

So the file certainly is not closed. The Premier (Mr. Filmon), by the way, said in the hall today, I heard him, to the media, that he might consider putting more money on the table, you know, so I do not know what is going on. The member opposite wants to know what our position is. We want to know what your position is. I know the Premier in the House today said, well, why are you asking me so many different questions and, of course, the point is—[interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I am having a lot of difficulty hearing the honourable member for Osborne. Thank you.

Ms. McGifford: I was talking about the Premier in the House today being very critical because I asked him questions. I thought that was my duty as a critic, to ask questions, but the reason for many different questions is that we do not get answers. Of course, perhaps the

Premier (Mr. Filmon) was merely playing politics, as the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) says of other people.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) has spoken very frequently about one of the reasons for not wanting to extend the package is that he does not want the extension of the package to become a precedent. I know we have said that there was coverage for HIV-AIDS, those infected with HIV-AIDS, as a result of contaminated blood, and there was no limit, no time frame set to that deal. I believe it was called an Extraordinary Assistance Plan, and it offered, because of that, in the deal across-the-board coverage.

I know people living with HIV-AIDS fought for this package for nine years, and I know they signed away their right to sue, and that is all right, at least it would seem to me it is probably correct because they have been given compensation, and I think it was a rather decent compensation, and because of the way in which it was done, because things were spelled out very carefully, my understanding, too, is that there was no room for legal wrangling, that all the money proposed went to the victims, and they received it as compensation. That is the kind of package that I think we need. I am not quite sure that that is the kind of package that we are going to get.

Now, the minister has also made the point that 1986 has been taken as the cutoff date, because it is at that date that the test became available, and I know that I have argued there were tests available earlier. The issue has been whether or not money should be awarded when there is no evidence of carelessness, or I think the minister's word is malfeasance, but this is a debatable point. The minister sees the cutoff date as 1986, and other people see it very differently. I suppose those people who see it very differently and will not be covered will be forced to go to the courts. We are talking about ill people. In many cases, we are talking about people who will be perhaps dead before this legal dealing can be proceeded with and completed, but I do want to make the point that the minister's 1986 date is certainly not written in stone, that there are lots of people who simply disagree and think that there was fault and carelessness long before 1986.

* (1610)

Mr. Mervin Tweed, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

The member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) seemed to be very upset when I told him this was not a NDP party resolution. Now, I know the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) explained that we had not had a convention since the time the issue first arose. When I made the point that the resolution came forward from me and the member for Thompson, I was merely saying that procedurally I am the one who moved it. I certainly did not mean to indicate that our party did not endorse it. I am absolutely, as certain as I can be of anything, that our party would endorse this particular resolution and does endorse this particular resolution. That was not my point at all. I think the member for Turtle Mountain was making hay while the sun shines and really just running off without having a clear idea as to what he was doing.

Mr. Chair, the important issue here for us has always been extending the time frame of coverage. We may or may not have quarrels with what has been done to date and with what the package proposes. As the minister has told us, and as I have said earlier, we are not quite sure of the details of the package. The details are still being worked out. The minister may have issues with those details. We may have issues with those, but our quarrel in this committee or the quarrel of my caucus has been with the time frame, so our quarrel is with what has not been done, and that is extending coverage.

The Premier (Mr. Filmon), in the hall today, talked about the importance of caution. I appreciate the fact that he could not read a document in the House and necessarily say, yes, we are onside with Mr. Harris with this; we support this, and this is what we are going to do. The Premier advocated caution and time to recollect these documents in tranquillity, and this is possibly a good rule. I think that this side of the House would agree that public policy is something that needs to be meditated on and thought about, and well and good.

Our fear, Mr. Chair, is that sometimes caution can become paralysis, and sometimes caution can become an excuse for inaction. Perhaps we are beginning to approach that point, because we have been dealing with this situation in the House I believe since it opened in early March. I think that we opened on March 6. It is

almost two months. I am not sure that caution has not moved into paralysis and that nothing will be done, that the government, as I said earlier, has, along with Mr. Rock, closed the file on this matter.

The question that remains for this side of the House is the unanswered by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) today, and that is what is his government going to do? Is his government going to do anything? Is his government thoroughly satisfied with the package? We are not really getting any answers on these matters, so along with my colleague from Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I want to say that the minimum that we ask is support for the resolution before this committee.

We have asked other things. They have been turned away. I know the Leader of the NDP party, as well, made a commitment last week to honour some compensation if we were in government. This is something this government appears not to be willing to do. We have asked that. It has been rejected.

So the resolution that we have before this committee is a minimalist one. Please, at least support this, we are saying. We are also saying: if you want, as the member for Thompson suggested, amend it, vote it down, but let us do something. Let us get some answers, let us get on with it, and let us not turn our backs on those people living with hepatitis C.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Chairman, I appreciate very much the opportunity of briefly joining the discussion and debate on the issue before the committee. I am, you know, acknowledged that in the last number of years the practice of having government members, be they ministers or upperbenchers or anybody participating in any minister's Estimates other than the official opposition and, more particularly, the official that has been designated by the official opposition as the critic, as being the only ones that participate in the departmental Estimates. I view that as a real regressive development with respect to the whole business of the examination of Estimates.

I want to tell you, Mr. Chair, and the committee, that my early experience as minister in the House was always—I dreaded the scrutiny and the examination of my own members of government very often more than

those of the opposition inasmuch as having always had the privilege of representing a party and a government that had strong agricultural and rural bases of support. You can imagine that having a number of people, including predecessors of yours, wanting to get at the Minister of Agriculture and to discuss the issues that are important to them in their constituencies was sometimes daunting, to say the least.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

So I just put that on the record in the sense that it is now, regrettably, viewed, if you go into the different committee rooms, it is virtually not done anymore that members other than the specifically designated person who is the official critic of a ministry participate in these Estimates. That brings on the kind of situation where you have a long one-on-one situation, the member asking a question, the minister responding, rather than the kind of fuller debate about asking: is the minister, is the department moving in the right direction? Is the policy of the minister and the department appropriate for these times? How is it impacting on this part of the province or that part of the province?

It seems to me that when you have four or five or six or seven individuals participating and giving a serious, well-thought-out recommendation as to how we want this young minister—and he is a fine young minister—but how we want this young minister to conduct the affairs of this most significant Department of Health. You know, he should be hearing that from four or five or six or seven other sources and contemplate the advice that he gets from all of us before he, with the advice that he gets from his capable advisors, then responds to that kind of advice, rather than the kind of situation that we have allowed to develop.

Anyway, I digress. The purpose for my wanting to add a few words is that I am genuinely concerned that this great Canadian nation of ours that is not the easiest country in the world to govern—it stretches in such massive geographic proportions, and we are delighted to have one of those parts of geography that we do not see too often represented in our House, here, from the northern part of the great country. It should not surprise us that it is hard, it is difficult and it is sometimes next to impossible to achieve consensus on

thorny issues, particularly thorny public issues, social issues like the one that we are faced with respect to this: should and what responsibility do the taxpayers of Canada have?

* (1620)

Let me put it that way. We hear a great deal about this government, the federal government or the government of Ontario or, in this case, the government of Manitoba or what the government of British Columbia is supposing to do, but let us always remind ourselves that we are talking about the Canadian taxpayer and as to what he ought to and ought not to be responsible for, or what he ought to, or she ought to, be liable for in this case. That is what we are talking about, as to whether or not we should be expanding, extending, rethinking the position with respect to some compensation for the very regrettable set of circumstances that has brought us to this state of affairs where we have to acknowledge, and we have had a lengthy judicial inquiry under Justice Krever that indicates that we have allowed a very important service in health care, the delivery of blood, to be, quite frankly, mismanaged, and mismanaged tragically, Mr. Chairman.

I could spend another half an hour of the committee's time and tell you why, in my opinion, the mismanagement occurred. It is because people like ourselves, politicians, people in charge in responsible positions, were allowed to be cowed and threatened and bullied by special interest groups from making appropriate decisions back in '82 and '83 and '84 that could have put safeguards into position earlier on such an important item like our national blood supply. But we chose to be politically correct, I suppose, and chose not to act on sound advice that was being developed across the continent and across the world, that indicated actions that, for different reasons, those responsible for the blood supply chose not to act upon.

Now we are in the position where we have done damage, serious damage, and people are dying, Canadians are dying. To what extent should the taxpayer of Manitoba, the taxpayer of Canada, be responsible for compensation beyond that which has originally been put on the table by all of the Health ministers in consultation with the federal government

and the federal Ministry of Health who, as our minister keeps on reminding us, I think, very correctly, bears, without question, not just the primary responsibility, the entire responsibility—not 80 percent of responsibility, not 90 percent of responsibility, but 100 percent of responsibility?

The Ministry of Health, the Province of Manitoba never had a word in the regulation of the Canadian blood supply. The ministry of any province has never had a hand in deciding that. First of all, I am prepared to acknowledge it is, I think, with genuine regret that I express, on behalf of myself and most, if not all, Canadians, that a venerable organization like the Canadian Red Cross, which, for so many years, has provided so many humanitarian services to Canadians and has established, in association with the International Red Cross, such an enviable reputation of being a responsible organization who operated the blood supply but totally under the day-to-day regulations—by that I do not mean that somebody from Health Canada was directing them on a day-to-day basis, but the regulations, the rules by which the Canadian Red Cross administered the blood supply of Canada were set by Canada and nobody else. So our minister is absolutely right when he continues to remind us of that fact, and honourable members of the opposition ought not to do anything to confuse that very important issue in the minds of the taxpayers of Manitoba, in the minds of the taxpayers of Canada.

Mr. Chairman, an effort is being made to bring about a solution to this critical situation. An effort is being made, I am convinced, to be fair, just and compassionate. I think the provinces have correctly pointed out their present and their continued and their ongoing liability in the case of all those unfortunate Manitobans, Canadians who have contracted an illness as a result of contaminated blood. That is our billion-dollar-plus responsibility. So there is no question of whether or not—when we say the issue of specific compensation rests solely with the federal government, that is only a portion of the cost.

Now regrettably, rather than letting the issue be decided as best as possible, we have allowed politics to enter into the game. Politics is part of the Canadian game, and there is nothing wrong with that. Let us understand that different governments and different

parts of the country find themselves at different points in the political calendar or find themselves in different situations in terms of standing with their electorate. So, if governments in British Columbia or Ontario feel they are under some specific pressure that make them kind of not want to agree to a consensus that, in my opinion, had been put in place, well, they will have to answer for that.

But I regret that in our Chamber here on this one issue—we have a raft of matters that legitimately puts the official opposition in a position to criticize this government, criticize any ministry of this government from time to time on issues. But on this particular issue, this is not an issue that the Filmon government made or is responsible for. This is not an issue that the present Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) has any responsibility for or the previous Minister of Health or the Minister of Health before that.

Members of the opposition like to, and from time to time, I suppose with some justification will point out that, well, this government did this or this government failed to do that or the previous minister did not react to this situation, we did not do this, but I have not heard for a moment a suggestion, other than the little game of politics that is now being played, that in this instance the Filmon government, the Minister of Health at the provincial level had any responsibility with respect to the unfortunate situation of having a number of Canadians being provided with contaminated blood.

So really, on this issue, there ought not to be, there need not be any politics played. I would appeal to honourable members of the committee to allow the minister to work out as best he can, in concert with his colleagues across the land, a fair and equitable resolve. I believe those statements and positions put on the record by our Premier (Mr. Filmon) were absolutely important to it. We do not want to get into a multitiered type of a compensation program on this issue where the better off provinces could provide a different level of support and put provinces with less economic power—then you have, my colleague the Minister of Industry (Mr. Downey), indicates then we would hear a great deal of screaming and outrage being expressed from the opposition, and you know, they would be right. They would be right if we allowed that to

happen, but that is the path that we are being encouraged to take.

So, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity of putting those few thoughts on the record, but certainly wanted to indicate that among the many issues that are worthy of debate in the overall issue of health—and health, I recognize is the overriding issue of governments today. This is not an issue that should be taking up time of the Estimates in the manner and way in which they are. The Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) is committed to providing an equitable, fair and just program of compensation and participating with his colleagues across this land. We have to, quite frankly, allow the various governments across the country, along with its national government, to work out a program that eventually will be the program that will be provided for those unfortunate Canadians who have been caught in this trap.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: As previously agreed, we would move back and forth, from side to side. Is there an opposition member who would like to speak?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairperson, we put our positions on the record. We are prepared to vote. We are certainly willing to entertain further comments from the government members for the duration of the rotation.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you.

* (1630)

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this issue. I do feel of the same mind as the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) with regard to this issue, that this is an issue that we should not be playing politics with. I have missed a lot of the things that have gone on in this committee, but certainly from what I have seen go on in the Chamber over Question Period and the questions that have been raised and the manner in which they were, I think that the opposition should have some clear understanding of which direction this government wishes to go on this particular issue. I think it has been made clear. It was made clear by the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) today. I really do not

understand how an opposition, who are supposedly, and they call themselves prudent and understanding people, could miss that message. It certainly came clear to me.

For me to be able to put my comments on this record here, I think also we have to consider the fact that me, as the member for Sturgeon Creek, I learned this pretty quickly when I came into government as a member, that we are talking about a particular issue that covers the entire country. When I was elected in 1990, Mr. Chairman, I had a view that whatever was maybe good for the constituency of Sturgeon Creek would often, or in most cases, be good for all Manitobans, but I found out very quickly that what fits in Sturgeon Creek may not necessarily fit in other sectors or other constituencies across this province. The opposition members are asking that this government take a position on something that is going to affect the entire country. I do not think that would be prudent of any government to take a position on that.

Even if we took it to the point where we did, if we did follow their direction and suggestion here, that we did say what we were going to do and then did take it, if it was better than say what was offered in B.C. or Alberta or Saskatchewan or something like that, then all these people would be coming, and rightly so. If we had a better plan offered to us in Manitoba, they would be coming to Manitoba, because they would be served better, and I think that that is the wrong thing to do. I think the federal government had to make a decision on this, take a position. Certainly I think this is going to be done through consultation. It is not something where we just make a hasty decision, which the opposition members seem to be wanting us to do.

This has been something that has been—you know, 1986 to 1990, the federal government has made a decision on that. They have allocated support to those people. I think that as far as the federal government is to go beyond that, this is something that has to be done through consultation with all the players, all ministers of Health, all premiers, all people who are going to have the same opportunity, the same plan, that it will be for all Canadians, not just for people in Manitoba because they live in Manitoba that they should get something different or less or better. This is something that I think is very important.

Now, the way it stands right now, Mr. Chairman, for those people who do not have the support beyond, prior to 1986, we have a health care plan and benefits in this province that are second to none in the country, and I think that those are things that certainly have to be also taken into consideration.

Mr. Chairman, we spend \$1.9 billion on health care in this province, and this is one of the things that we as a government have taken very seriously. We have demonstrated that with the money that we have put into health care and will continue to do that. That is something that we have done in increasing the health care budget since we came in to government in 1988. I think the opposition should have some recognition of that, but I really sincerely believe that—and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), as I came into this committee, I think he said it extremely well in saying that there seems to be an element of politics being played here. I do not know that that is really what we want to see in this very important issue.

I also do not think this is the forum that we should be dealing with this issue, this debate, in terms of the Estimates. The honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), when she introduced this motion some time back, I think that that would have been better dealt with in some other forum. The Estimates process that we have is one to ask questions of the spending of the government. Certainly that is something that, as far as the honourable minister—he has demonstrated we are in our budget, the budget that had been outlined in the beginning of March. So I think that the opposition has certainly failed as an opposition in terms of dealing with this whole process, in terms of being able to ask questions of what is happening in terms of the Estimates for March '98 and '99. So from that aspect, I think that the honourable members have to certainly do some real serious soul-searching.

I think that what they should be doing is lobbying their members, their federal counterparts in Ottawa to address this very important issue. [interjection] Well, the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) says that they are. If they were very effective, then I think they would probably be told that they have to deal with it. It is not something that we here alone in Manitoba have to deal with.

I think that for us as a government here in Manitoba, I do not believe the official opposition in Manitoba really understand the whole seriousness and the ramifications that we would do as a government by entering into something or making a decision until such time as the federal government took a position on this. I think we could be debating this—well, not only debating it, but there would be nothing but a lot of court actions, court actions against the government, that we are really going to be opening ourselves up to a lot of things that I do not think any Manitoban would want to see their government in. I think the consideration that would be given to the eligibility of those people is a matter of question in terms of the honourable member's motion. I do not know whether it is the honourable member's motion and the official opposition's—I do not know whether that has been clarified.

Certainly, the demonstration that I have witnessed suggests that the official opposition has taken a position on this and are making every effort that they possibly can to score as many points on this as they can. I can understand that maybe they want to do this, Mr. Chairman, because health care has always been their strength as far as pleading to the public. I mean, we went through a by-election in Rossmere a few years ago, and that is what they ran on. For the short term the honourable member for Rossmere in 1993, I think it was, was elected; it certainly was a short-lived experience for that member of the opposition to serve in that capacity.

* (1640)

So I can see that they certainly want to make as many points on this issue as they can, but I think that the public is not going to be fooled. The people of Manitoba certainly are not going to be fooled. I guess, really, they do not really have a clear vision of what they are looking for in terms of what they feel is in the interests of Manitoba. I think their visions change from day to day. I think maybe it is based on what they read in the press, what they hear or read, from what is happening as far as the people in Manitoba—how they are reacting to their different variations of how it should be.

Mr. Chairman, I think that from the point of view that the honourable member, along with her colleagues, in

dealing with this issue, what we want to do to is address this on the basis that we look at all aspects of it. I certainly have the confidence in the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) and his department. I have the confidence in our Premier (Mr. Filmon), who has demonstrated through this whole thing that he is very concerned about the people of Manitoba and beyond the borders of Manitoba. I think that the Minister of Health has demonstrated in terms of the changes that he has made. This is one issue that has been cast upon us. It has not been one that we have brought on or had any control over.

Certainly, under the direction of the Red Cross, there were mistakes made over those years, and certainly I think if we were to jump in on this at this point at the will of the opposition, we would be making some very, very serious mistakes. The people across the whole country would be in turmoil, not only in Manitoba, but we would see that the people across the country, it would be playing one province against the other. I have real serious concerns about that, and the opposition, I think, would like us to be in that position because then we would be moving right into their hands. Then we would be criticized, Mr. Chairman. I dare say that every Question Period, every headline in the newspaper would be against this government because we did not put our plans and do it with proper thought and consideration.

Mr. Chairman, I think that is one thing that I have been able to really feel comfortable with, is that on all issues this government—and I am proud to be a part of this government with the colleagues and with the leadership of our Premier (Mr. Filmon). This is one thing where we will not jeopardize ourselves at the whim of the opposition, because they want us to make mistakes, they want us to stumble, and we will not take that position.

I think that honourable members across the way should have learned that after 10 years. Some of the members over there have not had the pleasure of being there for that period of time, but, Mr. Chairman, I think those who have been there have been there long enough to know that we are here to serve the people of Manitoba in the best interests of Manitobans, not to be creating a lot of havoc and unrest for the people that

they would propose and which is exactly what they would do.

It is interesting, I read this article in the paper today with regard to the matter with emergency care in the hospitals and people waiting in the hallways. It was an editorial. I wish that I had that editorial to read because I think that the person who wrote this letter to the editor would certainly bring this point home strongly and clearly.

Mr. Chairman, you know that the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), through this whole process and through Question Period has been severely criticized for positions and changes that he has made with the support of this government, has been severely criticized because of waiting lists and things like that.

This person, I think, put it very well. It was a very moving letter to the editor, where her parents had died during 1986 and 1987, and she gave some account of the way things were with her own personal experience with her mother and father under the government during the time when the NDP, who hold themselves out as the saviours of health care. I think that every member across the way should take the opportunity to read that letter, and they might do some soul-searching. [interjection] It was a letter to the editor, and it was one that bears reading because the NDP, who hold themselves out as the saviours of health care, were severely criticized. There were honourable members who sit across this table that were in government during that time and are speaking very openly and criticizing this government for the position that we are taking in terms of the funding and the decisions we are making in health care.

The amount of money—and I say this for the honourable members opposite, the official opposition, that they should look at the funding that this government has put into health care. It has been an increase every year, year after year, and when this government has seen situations where they have had to backfill because of overspending by certain different institutions, this government, with this Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) and the Minister of Health before that and the Minister of Health before that, they have answered the call.

Mr. Chairman, I get really seriously concerned when opposition members or members of this Legislature—and we are all honourable members, but I sometimes have to question the position that members opposite take when it comes to dealing with people's—not only people's lives but people's livelihoods, because if people do not have their health, they cannot enjoy the opportunity to work and be able to do all the things to earn a living as most honourable members would think that they would—governments should be able to offer. But the honourable members across the way have taken the position that they want to make some political hay on this.

* (1650)

That really seriously concerns me because health care is, I think, the engine in terms of what we as a government have demonstrated, and when it comes to people's health, I think there are other things that we have to look at. There are things that we want to—certainly from my point of view, I would like to see a healthier society as far as our whole aspect with regard to health care. When you look at the amount of money, that is \$1.9 billion that is spent on the health care budget in the province of Manitoba for just a little bit over a million people, the sad part that I have and what really concerns me is how much are we actually doing in terms of spending on creating health.

Those are things that I would like to see, and I think the Minister of Health and I have had discussions about this. This is something that I think society is looking for, and I think society is leaning towards that because they too recognize that after 10 years in government and putting more money in each year that we have found that people are not getting any healthier. From that aspect, I think this is the serious part of it. This is the serious aspect. It is much more serious than what the official opposition are doing in terms of playing politics with this. From my aspect, I think that I have seen some things that, you know—and the honourable members across the way, as honourable as they are, I certainly have some respect for some of the members across the way. I am disappointed that they have taken this position, because the people who are most affected by this are the ones who are going to bear the brunt of this, the shortsighted and short-thought-out version in

terms of the direction that they want us to go as a government.

I think that we as a government, and I said this earlier in my comments, have to address this and take a holistic approach with this. There is no short-term, snap answer here that we can tag onto. I think that from the aspect of this government and this minister, I am pleased to say that I think we are on the right track, and I would hope that the opposition would see that in the interests of Manitobans and serving the people who are affected by this hepatitis C virus prior to 1986.

We as members over here, I do not think they can say that they—and they have alluded to this, and they want Manitobans to believe this—are more compassionate. I do not see that at all. They want to try and give the impression, because they see an election looming, that they are going to be able to position themselves and say, well, we did this for all the hepatitis C victims in Manitoba, and because of them, they did it for all people infected all across the country.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, the NDP in their wisdom in British Columbia took a position. The NDP in Saskatchewan, they took a position, and the NDP here in Manitoba, they are taking another position. They are here one day, they are on one side of it, and then the next day they are on another side of it.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I am having a little trouble hearing the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek. If we wish to carry on a conversation, perhaps we could do it at the back or out in the hall.

Mr. McAlpine: Mr. Chairman, I hope that has not taken away from my time to speak on this issue. I do not get this opportunity to speak on an issue that is as important as this. [interjection] I thank the honourable Minister of I, T and T for his confidence that he has offered to me, but I think that my last message, I guess, to the opposition is that this is something that they should take more serious than looking for the 10-second clip or the political position that they may wish to take on this.

I think that they should look at it from the aspect that this government is going to, along with the Department of Health and the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik),

along with our Premier (Mr. Filmon), are going to make the right decisions in the interests of Manitobans and it is not going to be a political one. It is going to be a decision that is long and well thought out, taking all things into consideration, because we as government have that responsibility. We owe that to the people of Manitoba and the people who are affected by this prior to 1986.

I have the confidence with the compassionate and caring First Minister whom I have known for a number of years and I have always found him to be that. The Minister of Health and the people that I know in the Department of Health have that same caring and considerate attitude towards their services in their department.

So, Mr. Chairman, with the opportunity to put these few comments on the record, I would thank you for that time and hope that the opposition will see the light and the errors of their decision and support this government in the decisions that we are going to make, and as we do support the people of Manitoba in the interests of all Manitobans and those people who have been affected by this hepatitis C virus. Thank you for those comments.

* (1700)

Mr. Chairperson: Once more, I would ask if there is anybody else on the opposition side that would like to—

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairperson, what I just want to indicate to the member, and I realize he missed part of the earlier debate, but what we are hoping is that the Manitoba Legislature can take a clear position, something we have not had the ability to do. We did move a motion on having a free vote; that was defeated by the government in the committee. I want to stress again to the member that what we want is a Manitoba solution, a made-in-Manitoba solution.

He referenced the position of NDP governments and I could do the same thing with the Conservative Party. Elsie Wayne, the federal leader, they are in favour of extending coverage. Mike Harris, their colleague to the east of them, not usually known as a compassionate individual. [interjection] Well, this comes as some surprise to the Minister of I, T and T (Mr. Downey), but

I want to suggest to government members, do they really want to be in a position where Mike Harris is seen as being more compassionate than they are?

I mean, you know, it is like when you have got something that is right-wing of Attila the Hun, do you want to be further right-wing than they are? I suggest not, and I think members have to understand that what has happened in this case is essentially the public has spoken. I would say when the federal government used the power of its majority and the Whip to get that motion voted down, I think what they did is they did so against the will of the people. Four opposition parties spoke for the public as a whole, and I am suggesting that the government here should start that process. I realize the member who just spoke may not have realized that his Premier (Mr. Filmon) is now giving that signal, that maybe, just maybe there needs to be a review of this and maybe, just maybe, in a cautious way, perhaps the province might wish to be part of that.

So I suggest to members opposite, on Thursday, when we moved this motion, typically we were ahead of our time. We were ahead of our time by a very significant weekend. I recall—and this was moved on Thursday—since that time I think there has been a significant evolution of government's reaction to public opinion. I think the public wants this extension.

What I am suggesting to members opposite is to do nothing more than keep up with the times on this issue. If you really think about it, if Mike Harris is talking about it, if your own Premier, if not in Question Period, has now moved from a definite no to a maybe, and I suspect the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) right now is probably on the phone again trying to find out what is happening—I suggest to members opposite, let us get on with it.

That is why we have this motion. We are ready for a vote on this. You can vote for it, you can vote against it. If you have difficulty with the wording, you can amend it but, you know, do not try and filibuster this to avoid having to take a position. At some point in time, as a government, you have to take a stand. I would suggest that if you look at this motion, if anything, this is something that even the Premier would have to agree to, the Premier of Manitoba would have to agree to. If not, he is going to be left out in the political wilderness,

I think, with those that do not understand what the public is saying. The bottom line is that the public is saying that compensation should be extended to all victims.

With that, Mr. Chairperson, certainly we are open for further debate, but if the purpose is strictly to filibuster this, I really say to the government members, you know, if they are that embarrassed to take a position on this issue, to have a vote, how do they expect to explain it to the public? Surely the best way to resolve this is, if you do not agree with the motion, vote it down. If you do agree with it, let us have the vote now, and I noticed, by the way, that most of the speeches from government members kind of ducked that issue. You know, by the time the 30-minute clock starts to get close to the end, I keep waiting for it, you know, that they are against the motion.

The funny part is that they attack us for moving it, they attack various other governments, they attack our sincerity, they attack everything else, but they do not say they are going to vote against the motion. I am wondering if they are perhaps undecided. It is unfortunate, because maybe they are becoming like the provincial Liberals. I thought the classic then was not long ago, the three-person Liberal caucus—this is when they were still a caucus—had a vote and one of them voted for and one of them voted against and one of them abstained.

I think if there was a way in which the government could abstain on this so they did not have to take a position, they would do it, but we do not have an ability to abstain. This is not Scotland in a criminal case where you can be found either not guilty or not proven. This is a Legislature. You have to take a stand, and every time they attack us for taking the position we have, it is interesting. Where is the government's position? Is it the Minister of Health's position on Thursday? Was it his more conciliatory position today? A significant shift, I might add. What is the position of the Premier last week, talking about our Premier, or the Premier this week?

I suspect, to members opposite—and I felt sorry for the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine). I am wondering if he was not being heckled by his own members because somehow perhaps they know better

the evolution of the government's position, because I have a sinking feeling that as of tomorrow, you are going to see the Premier sounding a little bit more like Mike Harris and a lot less like the Minister of Health. I think there is an element of flexibility starting to creep into the words, and God forbid, Mr. Chairperson, that Mike Harris should be influencing this government on an issue, but I can tell you, ignore him on pretty well everything else, but this time you might want to listen to him.

Mr. Mervin Tweed, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I think Mike Harris's position, well, it is interesting, because once again, the government members keep asking us questions. They keep debating us. Well, they say it is our resolution. Where is their position? I suspect that the government is starting to get very tired after 10 years of government, because I notice there is a consistent pattern. They keep wanting to ask questions. I tell you, they are going to get to ask a lot of questions after the next election when they are back in opposition where they belong.

But in the meantime, when you are in government, you have to take a stand, and I say to members on the government side, we have taken a stand. We took a stand in December, we have taken a stand in this committee. I look forward to the government voting yes or no and, if they do not agree with our resolution, putting forward their position. I suspect they are afraid to because they realize in their heart of hearts that the position they took last week with some great flurry, there was a great rhetorical flourish in this Chamber from the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) and the member for Lac du Bonnet, the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), but those words that were read to us on Thursday—read the Hansard today—they are already dated.

I say to members opposite, things have been shifting. Governments across this country are listening to the people. It is time to listen to the people. It is time to take a position on this. It is time to extend compensation to all victims of hepatitis C.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I find it extremely interesting that the honourable member opposite is going to suggest that we might even invoke closure on

this debate. I mean, that is almost what I heard the honourable member suggest to us. I think we all agree that we need to take adequate time and debate this issue because it is an extremely important issue. People are suffering because of an issue that they are not directly responsible for, specifically hemophiliacs. I think the issue of whether we should compensate or whether the province should get involved in compensation in this matter is very similar to other debates that we have had regarding the federal government.

We all realize that the federal government has, over the years, certainly negated its responsibility in providing adequate funding from a national standpoint to health care. The cuts that we have had in education from the federal government are very similar to this issue, and it would appear to me that, because of the stand that the federal government is taking currently in not compensating adequately all the sufferers because of tainted blood and/or other reasons which we are discussing, it is very similar in many respects to saying: yes, we do have, as a federal government, a responsibility because we are, as a federal government, responsible for ensuring the quality standards of the products that are used by, specifically, hemophiliacs and others. Anybody that has had a blood transfusion over the last number of years or decade would attest to the fact that they might have been put at risk simply because somebody did not adequately ensure that the products were, in fact, safe. That has been clearly demonstrated.

* (1710)

I reflect on this matter of the federal government being responsible for the licensing and ensuring that blood products were properly dealt with and ensuring their safety that it is very similar to the issue of the federal government walking away from its responsibility in the grain transportation initiative. I mean, we all knew that the Crow benefit was put in place in perpetuity, and yet they had no problem walking away from that responsibility. Perpetuity, to me, is a forever commitment, and yet they walked away from it without any problems, inflicting severe economic hardship on not all of Canadians, not all Canadian grain producers, but largely western Canadian grain producers. They sectorized and penalized a group in society that had been given an assurance that this

would not happen. We had similarly believed that the federal government had a responsibility to ensure that our blood supply in this country was safe. Obviously, it was not.

So, in my view, it would now be the federal responsibility to ensure that adequate funding be provided to those that have, in fact, had their health put in jeopardy because of this. It would also appear to me that the opposition members, in having made their case in the House as well as in committee here today, are at a loss as to where they really are. I am beginning to believe that it is largely because of the conflicting messages they receive from their colleagues in British Columbia, in Saskatchewan, the party in Ontario and others because we are not quite sure where they are going to be in this debate.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

So I would suspect that they would like to draw us into a position that we might find it difficult after a while. However, I think we should take an adequate period of time to assess the actions that need to be taken. I understand that there will probably be a joint negotiating team established, and that is probably what should happen, and then there could be recommendations made. However, while discussions are going on between the provinces as to what their joint position might be, I think it would be rather irresponsible for those of us that sit in this Legislative body to take a hard position.

I would suspect that our opposition members smile and chuckle a bit internally, saying, you know, maybe we have got the government side of the House in a tough position. I do not think the government is in a tough position at all, because I would suspect that opposition members might want to give adequate consideration to ensure that there is enough time allotted to make proper decisions and to ensure that the responsible parties are, in fact, the parties that are going to take responsibility for this and that we not allow ourselves to have a bunch of costs offloaded on our taxpayers that should not be there.

I think that we should be very clear in our assumptions. We should never assume that if a party is liable for costs that others, because they are not taking

actions, should step in and cover those costs. I think that would be irresponsible. If there is a negotiated settlement or agreement over the long term and if it takes a few weeks to negotiate and debate, I accept that. I think that is what legislatures are all about. I think that is why we have leaders in the province, that is why we have premiers, that is why we have Health ministers, and that is why we hire people to advise us on an ongoing basis, to ensure that the responsible parties, in fact, carry out their economic responsibility.

I would think that if we look back a couple of years and we look at the budgetary considerations made by the federal government, we have to respect that they were trying to cut corners and cut costs and balance their budgets, but the changes that they made within the funding process in the education system and in many other sectors that affect us in society and specifically in health care have had a dramatic impact, and the responsibility that we are going to carry now or that we are being asked to carry by the NDP—or are we really being asked to carry this? Because when I heard the honourable member speak this afternoon during Question Period, the questions she asked were almost contradictory to the questions that had been put just before her.

So I really had to wonder what was being meant by taking the position that Quebec had taken. I think that was the NDP's position yesterday, that we should support Quebec and the resolution that came out of Quebec. Today, I heard them say that we should support the position that has come out of Ontario, and I am not quite sure what that position is. As a matter of fact, I am not even quite sure what yesterday's position meant, the position that Quebec put forward. I think it is absolutely essential that we give proper consideration to those two positions, because it demonstrates to me clearly that there needs to be a greater degree of debate go on before the decision is made. It would appear to me that Ontario and Quebec are not agreed on a position.

I am not sure that the NDP in Manitoba are agreed with their counterparts in Saskatchewan, nor am I clear that the NDP in Manitoba are in concurrence with their counterparts in British Columbia. So I would suspect that they might want to take a bit of time and give due consideration and maybe have some consultation with

their party. Maybe they would even want to talk to some of their federal members to find out what their position might be. I have heard them say, the federal NDP, that, yes, we agree that there should be compensation for all of the parties affected by tainted blood, and I do not think anybody argues that. I think there is an absolute agreement that there should be, but who should pay for the compensation? Who should pay the bill?

I think we can, as provinces, take hours, we could take days, and we could all agree that we have significant problems to solve within our province. There is not enough money in our province to solve all the problems, whether it be transportation, whether it be roads, whether it be infrastructure, water, sewer, those kinds of things. We need only go back a few years to when the federal government announced an infrastructure agreement. It was adequately funded, and it provided some relief to the province, yet last year during the budget, they walked away from that kind of commitment. They said, no, we will not further support infrastructure development in the province of Manitoba.

Similarly, having taken \$750 million out of grain transportation in western Canada, they are now backing away again from meeting their responsibility in helping us repair our roads, our bridges, and the farm community, quite frankly, is paying more than one-third of their total gross receipts out of the grain market system to mediate the increased cost of handling and transportation. Yet nobody is saying anything in this House about whose responsibility that should be or whether the federal government should, in fact, carry forward its responsibility to ensure that there be compensation provided to the provinces because of an in-perpetuity commitment that was made by the federal government in regard to the Crow rate.

* (1720)

Now we have the NDP sort of hinting at us—we are not quite sure what this last resolution means—that we should also take the feds off the hook in regard to funding those who are affected by tainted blood. I ask the opposition members how much more do you think our taxpayers should bear? Mr. Chairman, \$200 million in health care and education reduction from the

federal government; \$750 million in transportation reduction from the federal government. They take out of western Canada almost a billion dollars, I believe, in gasoline taxes and give us nothing in return. Yet they have no hesitation at all to give Ontario and some of the eastern provinces \$900 million to help them deal with their transportation problems.

Now the opposition are saying, well, come on, guys, come on, guys—or are you saying this—kick in to get the feds off the hook of their responsibility in the tainted blood issues. Is that what I am hearing? Is that what this resolution is all about? If it is, then I would suspect that our taxpayers are very seriously going to question the NDP's motives. They are going to ask, how sincere are these guys?

It is interesting, some of the editorialization that has gone on over the last while has been talking about the NDP being the party that is the government in waiting. Well, let me just suggest to the opposition members that if you truly are the party that is the government-in-waiting in this province, you might want to seriously consider how earnestly you would want to negotiate with the federal government on the issues that I have mentioned, including tainted blood. I think we need to be very careful, all of us in this House need to be very careful the kind of position we develop and the kind of position that we take before we make a firm decision. I would suspect that Ontario and Quebec both will want to get in on that debate, because the differences that they have put forward in their propositions are significant enough to take time to assess what the true cost per individual would be in this whole affair.

So, Mr. Chairman, I would suspect that we might want to delay this decision long enough, and I think we should ask the opposition members whether they would want to consider a motion of delay that would give us adequate time to consider whether we would want to give adequate time to consider whether we should, in fact, have structured meetings with the federal government and/or whether we should, in fact, ask Ontario whether they might want to come to Manitoba to explain their position adequately or maybe even ask Quebec to come down and give us a complete resume of what the indication might be as to the position that they have taken. And maybe that would help the opposition members take a firm position and not be on

one side of the issue one day and the other side of the issue the next day and might firm up their position as well. I would really appreciate that.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, I would ask the honourable members that they set their maypole aside, that they, in fact, stop walking around the mulberry bush and maybe put forward a position that is the same one day to the next, and that might help me make up my mind as to how or what I should do or how I should address this issue in the long term and what the long-term effects of the decision that is going to be made in this province, one way or the other, might, in fact, be.

So, Mr. Chairman, having said that, I thank you for the opportunity to put a few remarks on the record and, unless the honourable members want me to continue debating some other matters, I think it would only be fair to give some of my colleagues an opportunity to put a few words on the record as well.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Mr. Chairperson, I had the opportunity to speak on my colleague's first motion, which the government unfortunately voted down, and I would like to put a few remarks on the record in this debate as well.

I have listened to a number of honourable members opposite filling time so that they would not have to take a position on a very clear motion, and I was somewhat amused by the musings of the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) who spoke at great length about the perfidy of the national government running away from its obligations in a number of areas. I was amused because I remember his colleagues casting scorn and derision on those of us who pointed that out from 1983 and '84 and '85, in particular, at the time when the Honourable Jake Epp was the Minister of Health. We were quite accurately pointing out the inevitable consequences of the cuts that began under the Mulroney government.

It is interesting that—[interjection] Yes, that is right, Mr. Praznik was connected with that honourable minister in times gone past, so it is interesting to hear the conversions that have taken place to the facts that were known to those of us who were doing our homework in the mid-'80s that suddenly they are now aware of the federal government's withdrawal in a

massive way from health services. I welcome their conversion and their understanding that, indeed, the federal government has not lived up to its responsibilities in a whole number of areas which the honourable member catalogued.

However, the issue here is not which level of government lives up to what responsibilities. The issue here is a number of Canadians, who through no fault of their own, have been deeply and profoundly affected, in many cases disabled and in some cases killed, and in some cases at least significantly impaired in their ability to function in their families and in their working lives.

I think that the minister and members opposite have quite missed the point of this motion, and I am puzzled how the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) could be unclear on a very clear motion. The motion simply says that we recommend that the Legislature support the content of the motion adopted by the Quebec National Assembly and urge the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to contact the federal government and press for the existing compensation package for victims of tainted blood to be reopened and reviewed with a view to extending compensation.

This is a relatively straightforward motion which requires reopening and revision. There is no implication in a reopening and revision that new information might or might not cause a change in the decision that has already been made. So it is very puzzling to us that on essentially a process motion the government has held up what should have been a straightforward debate and decision for days.

This government is so afraid of simply taking a process motion, which does not commit it to a single dollar if it wants to be so parsimonious that it will not extend any compensation. There is nothing in here that commits it to further compensation. The request here is to do the honourable thing and recognize that the first conclusion was flawed, that there were not sufficient, careful discussions with those affected one way or the other, and that there was a need to review what was obviously a flawed decision in the first place.

* (1730)

It is quite astounding that a provincial government as long in the tooth as this one, 10 years old, is unable to

even come to a conclusion on a process motion. This is not a motion calling for them to put forward many millions of dollars or to take a definitive stance policy one way or the other. It simply says, sit down and review the decision you have already made and take another look at it. This government is so fearful of public pressure and of the justice that is being demanded by those who are suffering, it is afraid to pass a motion on process. This is astounding.

The minister sitting opposite, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Mr. Toews), the Chair of this committee, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) representing the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) at this moment, knows full well that an opposition motion which caused the government to spend any money whatsoever would be out of order, would be completely out of order. It would have been ruled out of order by our esteemed Chair in a moment.

This motion was ruled in order, so this motion does not require the government to do anything except sit down and think about the decision again—reflect. I am astounded that a government with as much experience as this one can be so fearful of a process of reconsideration that it will hold up the business of this Legislature and the debate on Estimates for days and days and days while ministers beat their gums in futile attempts to blame the federal government, attempt to put us in a position which we have never taken and simply say: we are fearful of your motion. Why do you not just admit that? You are afraid of the public consequences of this motion and, instead, you want to talk and talk and talk about whether or not you should talk. That is all the motion says. Sit down with your colleagues and talk.

It appears that as of this afternoon, that indeed is what is going to happen. So over the last week or so, wiser views both in governments and in opposition parties and in the public across the country have persuaded fearful governments that they ought to reopen discussions, they ought to rethink their position. Apparently, as of this afternoon, that is what is going to happen, and we are still debating this motion.

Why in the world is this motion not simply adopted and we get on with the business of the House? I can only conclude, Mr. Chairperson, that it is because we

have got a group of people across the House in government who have not got a clue where they are going and are afraid of thinking through this decision again, and so they will hold up debate and hold it up and hold it up until somebody tells them what it is they are going to do.

I have never seen such a simple decision be circled and viewed from as many angles, and I have never seen so many opportunities to talk about so many irrelevant issues on such a simple matter. It simply says: go and sit down with your colleagues and think it through again. If, for some reason, you come to the same conclusion, then tell us. We think you will not come to the same conclusion. We hope on behalf of victims you will not come to the same conclusion, but all this motion says is: sit down and talk it through again. Think it through again. Take a little more time and a little more compassion and think it through again. If you come to the same conclusion, tell us and tell all Canadians, and we will be interested in those views, but you know as well as I do, Mr. Chairperson, that the opposition in any Legislative Assembly in this country cannot move a motion requiring a government to spend money, so the government need have no fear that that is the content of this motion or it would have been ruled out of order.

So I think it is time that we came to an end of this debate, that the government took a position in favour of consultation and reopening or opposed to consultation and reopening. It is a pretty simple matter, and I think if we were in a public meeting, I would call for the question. Unfortunately, that is not a procedural motion open to me at this point, I suppose. But I sense that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) wants to talk about injustice again, as he has done before in this setting, so with those few remarks I hope that I have helped to clarify for the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) the content of the motion.

It is not complex. It is simply a motion to meet. It is not a motion to take a position for or against compensation, it is a motion to meet and reconsider with compassion the needs of people infected before 1986. If the member for Emerson cannot figure that one out from the wording of this motion, then perhaps it is time that he took a remedial reading course.

Mr. Chairperson: Before I recognize or as I recognize the honourable Minister of Justice, I want the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) to know that calling the question was open to him when he had the floor.

Mr. Toews: I know that the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) does not want debate to continue. In fact, he wants to stifle debate without having given members an opportunity to discuss this. I have not yet had an opportunity to debate this particular motion, and I think this committee is an important place for us, not as ministers, but as members representing our constituents, to express our views, our concerns in order to let our constituents know some of our concerns.

Let us not take a pious attitude here, and say that one person has less compassion than another person. Let us look at this issue. Let us look at the ramifications of this issue and determine what is the best way to proceed.

It is all well and good to say we should think and reflect, but think and reflect on what? Certainly, I have not heard anything of substance coming from the other side that would give me anything to think and reflect upon. So, at the risk of running the same comment from members opposite, I want to put a few thoughts on the record.

I do not think any member here is saying we are fearful of this particular motion. It is ludicrous to suggest that we are holding up debate by wanting to debate. It just shows you the inconsistency and the—

Mr. Ashton: You have not taken a position on the resolution yet. Not one person.

Mr. Toews: Well, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says I have not taken a position.

Mr. Ashton: You as a collective caucus. Not one person has said how they are going to vote on this. Are you for it or against it?

Mr. Toews: Well, Mr. Chair, I want to put some of my thoughts on the record so that—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask all honourable members to allow the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) to continue?

Mr. Toews: So, rather than holding up debate, I view that I am contributing to the debate, so indeed it will give all members something to think and reflect on. To be accused of having no compassion is simply not correct. The example I always like to use, the difference, perhaps, between socialist compassion and what I consider progressive compassion is the example of the workers compensation boards in this country.

Now, I think it is important for those members who did not hear this particular example. During the 1980s and early 1990s, when the NDP were in government in Ontario, they always spoke about how compassionate they were and how caring they were, and do you know, Mr. Chair—

An Honourable Member: It was not the 1980s, Vic.

Mr. Toews: Well, when the Ontario NDP were in power in the early 1990s, they basically ran their Workers Compensation Board into the ground. At one time, they were losing \$100 million a month—a month. I know the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) thinks \$100 million a month is not anything, with all his facetious comments.

The other point I would like to make is that I was silent, I think, while I heard the member for Crescentwood speak, yet he continues to interrupt. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) continues to interrupt. Again, they ask me to contribute to the debate. They say we are holding up debate by talking, and then when I talk, they interrupt. But anyway—[interjection]

* (1740)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I would say to the honourable minister and the other members who wish to speak that today and most days I allow a reasonable amount of—I guess you could call it heckling, but to happen as long as it does not interfere with the words that the honourable members are speaking. So I ask the honourable members on both sides to show good

judgment and allow all honourable members to get their words on the record.

Mr. Toews: So here they were, the NDP government, losing \$100 million a month at the Workers Compensation Board. This was not general taxpayers' money, it was specific funds levied against employers to fund essentially an insurance plan—but \$100 million a month. At the end of their tenure, the board was somewhere and still is \$12 billion to \$15 billion in debt, a staggering amount, twice our provincial debt here in Manitoba, that the NDP ran up in Ontario in five years—staggering, staggering, staggering.

On the other hand, when the Conservative government came into power here in Manitoba, we were met with a deficit of \$250 million by the NDP. Fortunately, they did not have the chance to blow more money. They did not have more chance to blow money. So \$250 million, and we said we will ensure that that board is there to ensure that when workers are injured there is a fund to go to. So we reformed the Workers Compensation Board so that workers who were injured on the job did receive compensation.

You know, I ask you, Mr. Chair, who shows compassion, the Tories here in Manitoba who put the board back on its feet so that injured workers now and in the future have a fund to go to when they are injured, or the NDP government in Ontario that bankrupted the Workers Compensation Board there because they did not care where the money was coming from? They drove business out of Ontario and, to that extent, we have to be thankful, because I know some of that business came here. So to that extent we have to thank the NDP government from Ontario.

But what I want to say is compassion can be viewed in many ways, and I think compassion also has an element of fiscal responsibility. I want to make sure to all members here that we are here to find a workable, sustainable solution to this particular issue. This is not an issue about where one member can say about another member, he is not as compassionate and another one is. What I am saying is, look at programs, look at sustainability, look at feasibility. I think it is all very important because, ultimately, we owe that duty for a sustained medical coverage system not to simply

one group of people but, in fact, to a large group of citizens who require that help from time to time.

What I sort of see the NDP saying is do not worry right now about the bird you have in your hand. I am referring to the package that has been agreed to by all governments, including NDP governments. Do not worry about that. Let that bird fly and see if you can scour the bush and come up with a nicer, bigger bird.

Well, Mr. Chair, if I could be assured that there was a bigger bird and a better bird that would assist these victims, I would be the first to agree with them. But do we let go of what we have and then return to the taxpayers and victims in Manitoba and say, I am sorry, we let go what we already had, and, you know, on a flier, on an irresponsible flier, we said we thought that there was something in those bushes, but we scoured those bushes and there is not anything there, so I am sorry, there is nothing left.

Now, I could not face the victims in my constituency with that kind of irresponsible attitude, and so I want to say let us find a solution again that is sustainable, that is fair, and in pursuit of that, I want to know what members opposite are actually saying. One of my concerns is that there be a national program, a national program from coast to coast, not a two-tiered system that I know the NDP are advocating, but a national program which involves the federal government and the provincial government working together co-operatively as federalism was intended to work.

This national program cannot have any one province offside, because if there is a province offside, indeed, if Manitoba was offside, let us say we took that irresponsible view, threw away the package offered and said, let us extend without thinking about what the consequences are. People from other provinces could come to Manitoba, indeed all victims could come to Manitoba to take advantage in a positive way of that system that the Manitoba taxpayer funded. And so we know because of the mobility rights in our Charter that we cannot keep people out of Manitoba; they would be entitled to those kinds of programs.

So what we want to say is how do we work together with the federal government in order to ensure that no one province is overwhelmed by the program? Clearly

that is the direction, I know, of the prior motion that the NDP wanted us to do, and I am not so sure that it is not their position on this one.

One of the things that I have learned over a number of years in dealing with the federal government as a constitutional lawyer on behalf of the provincial government, I remember the CAP fight and the agreement and the reference. Mr. Chair, in that particular situation we had an agreement with the federal government on funding of health care and other social programs. We did not only have an agreement, we had a statute that protected that funding, and the federal government unilaterally broke that agreement and repealed the legislation, and our government, along with other governments, went to the Supreme Court of Canada and said this is wrong. How can another government that has entered into an agreement with our government and bound that agreement with a statute, how can they do this?

* (1750)

The situation was compared to the Churchill Falls case. Now, some of you may recall the Churchill Falls case where the Newfoundland government and Quebec entered into an agreement for the sale of hydro power, and it was a bad deal for Newfoundland. But Newfoundland, when it tried to break the agreement, the Supreme Court of Canada said to it: because you have contracted with another constitutional jurisdiction in Canada, you cannot unilaterally amend that contract or repeal the agreement by legislation.

Yet the same Supreme Court of Canada, when the provincial government, an equal partner in Confederation with the federal government, came with the same Churchill Falls argument, the Supreme Court of Canada said: oh, well, the federal government can do what it wants.

That is the tragedy of modern day federalism, not only that a federal government was brazen enough to destroy co-operative federalism in our country, but that the Supreme Court of Canada would allow them to get away with it. They did not allow Newfoundland to do it because it was simply a dispute with another province; but, when it came to the arguments between the province and the federal government, who are equal

partners in our Confederation, then the Supreme Court of Canada said the federal government could override that and destroy the agreement and destroy the statute, destroy those underpinnings of co-operative federalism. That truly was a shameful decision.

Now, the reason I bring that to the committee's attention is that, when we are dealing with the federal government, we have to be very careful. It is not simply saying: oh, let us reopen this package and see what we can get. Under our system of federalism, it has degenerated to the point where if the federal government wants to take retribution against a province, they have the full backing of the Supreme Court of Canada to do that. So what I want to say is let us be careful. We have an agreement, and there may well be certain issues that we want to continue to discuss, but we need to discuss those issues co-operatively with the federal government because the federal government has the hammer, not only in respect to the Supreme Court of Canada, but in respect to the taxing power.

You know, that leads me to another issue, and it was referred to by one of the other speakers. Mr. Chairman, \$200 million a year the federal government takes out of our coffers on account of health care.

An Honourable Member: Vic, 240.

Mr. Toews: Mr. Chairman, 240, the Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) advises me, every year. A staggering amount of money that our provincial government has had to backfill, and has every year.

In respect of our First Nations communities here, the constitutional jurisdiction of the federal government is, in the words of the BNA Act, or the Constitution Act, 1867, in respect of Indians and lands reserved for Indians. Yet, as our First Nations people leave the reserve and come to the city, the constitutional responsibility does not change, but who walks away from their responsibilities and leaves it on the provincial government's shoulders? The federal government, at the tune of \$20 million a year. Who pays for that? I will tell you, the provincial government pays for that. [interjection] Do you know, the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) says why do you not sue

them? Well, we have to think about it long and hard because I know, as in the CAP situation, the federal government can be very, very vindictive. If we win a case, they simply exercise their taxing power and their spending power to punish us. So, in fact, as members may know, government is looking at suing the federal government in the justice area, in the area of the Young Offenders Act, where, in 1984, the Young Offenders Act was passed and 50-50 funding was agreed to.

Now, this is a remarkable situation. The Young Offenders Act is a federal responsibility. We administer it on behalf of the federal government. Yet, for some reason, back in '84, the NDP agreed to pay 50 percent of running a federal program. Wonderful. In their area of responsibility, the province agreed to pay the fed's ticket. So now, when the federal government came to me and said, we have already reduced our contribution to 33 percent, you know what we are going to do next year, Mr. Minister? We are going to reduce it to 30 percent, and we are going to strip all of the funding out of our youth institutions. This is their program that we are running on their behalf, and they are saying you had better make do with what we give you, and not only is it inadequate, but we will tell you how to spend it.

So the issue in respect of hepatitis C is what I want to—[interjection] I mean, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says, how is this relevant? Well, what they are asking us to do is to walk away from this agreement unilaterally and just say forget about the \$800 million on the table, try for something more. Simply irresponsibility. The irresponsibility of that kind of a position I cannot accept. I think even the NDP governments in other provinces recognize they cannot do that. So what we need to do, whatever the solution we have here, we have to do it very, very carefully.

I want to leave some time for my colleague to address this issue as well.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Mr. Chairman, I do not get an opportunity very often to come to committee and put my views forward, but I did want to come and speak to this issue, because it is one that I have a lot of feelings about. I have only a couple

of minutes today, so I hope I can come back tomorrow and finish or enter into this debate again.

The proposition that the opposition has brought forward, I would like to thank him in the first place for bringing it up. I think it is an important issue, and I think this is the way we can have these types of debates, at committees. So thank you for bringing this forward. But I do have to say, and you keep saying that we have not been speaking to it or saying where we stand on it. Well, seeing as I only have a minute left, I will say that I do not agree with your motion. I would not be able to support your motion. I will be very up front about that. The reason that I could not support it is, very clearly, that you are asking us to reopen the negotiations of something that was done across the country.

We have a deal that has already been struck. Whatever deal we strike in the future has to be a deal that is struck across the country. Do I agree that we have to open negotiations on another deal? Yes, I do believe we should. I believe that they should all be compensated, and I believe that we have to work towards that in the future. But I do not believe we should reopen the existing one which you are asking for today. So I would vote against your resolution, because this is asking exactly that. Tomorrow I will finish my—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. When this subject is again before this committee, the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) will have 28 minutes remaining. Committee rise.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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

We are on Resolution 16.2. School Programs (c) Assessment and Evaluations (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Chairman, I have joining us at the table

today, in addition to the staff that we have already met, Mr. Norman Mayer, who is director of Assessment and Evaluation for the Department of Education. As well, I have some tablings that were requested at our last session on the summary of desktop management costs for the Manitoba School for the Deaf. I have three copies for the House.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): I thank the minister for tabling the desktop management costs for the Manitoba School for the Deaf. I wanted to ask why this was put under the Desktop Management Services, which I understood from earlier responses to questions I had raised, I think, on a number of lines at the beginning of the department, that all of the desktop management cost lines were Systemhouse contract. This one is quite different obviously. Could the minister explain why those costs were not separated out in the Estimates?

Mrs. McIntosh: Because of its uniqueness at the School for the Deaf, Systemhouse will not be doing all of the work there, so that is the explanation.

Ms. Friesen: I understand the explanation. My question is: why was it put under the Desktop Management Services line, when everywhere else in the budget, I was assured at the beginning of Estimates that line represented the Systemhouse budget? So I am not asking about the allocation. I am asking: why is it listed under that line and not separated out when the indication earlier was that that line represented the Systemhouse budget?

Mrs. McIntosh: I want to reiterate that the contract for Systemhouse does not rest with the Department of Education. It is with another government department, but that it would apply to the Department of Education in all instances except for one aspect, that being the portion of the School for the Deaf.

When the Estimates book was first drawn up, it was indicated that we would be using Systemhouse and that is good, because we are pleased with the services there, but as they develop the specific contract for the School for the Deaf, the desktop management contract that fits for all other aspects of the department was for the School for the Deaf better addressed through MERLIN, which is what we are going to be using. Had the Estimates book been printed a bit later, it probably

would have been reflected there. We have indicated that Systemhouse is the desktop management that we will be using for the department, and that is true for the whole department except for this one area which is the School for the Deaf, which is an exception because of its unique requirements which do not fit with other aspects of the department but rather stand alone for that particular need.

* (1450)

As I had indicated, Mr. Chairman, when our staffperson, Mr. Greg Baylis was here and we were talking about Systemhouse, that there are still areas that we are continuing to negotiate. This is one in fact where we now indicate that we will be going with MERLIN. The rest will be negotiated for the rest of the department. I think that will clarify for the member the question that she asked.

Ms. Friesen: To some extent it does clarify it. I understand there is an issue of timing here, but it still leaves me with two questions. One is the minister says that they have negotiated a piece of this for MERLIN now, and I understood her to say that she was continuing negotiations with MERLIN. Does that mean that other parts—wherever I see this line now in the department, I should be ensuring a question that says is this Systemhouse or is it Systemhouse plus?

My second question is at the end of last time, the minister told me that \$10,000—and she said do not hold us to that; that is ballpark, fair enough. I would like to know where that \$10,000 fits in. I assume it is part of the \$76,000 in capital that she has allocated here in the piece that she tabled, but there is a big difference between \$76,000 and \$10,000. Although I recognize the minister was saying ballpark last time, it is a bit of a different ballpark. I am wondering what the reason for that difference is.

Mrs. McIntosh: We have identified that not all of the work stations in the department will necessarily be covered by the contract. Basically everything except two areas, and those two areas that will likely be excluded will be the Manitoba School for the Deaf, and we will be using MERLIN because of their unique circumstances; and also support for the transferred employees under the Labour Market Development

Agreement. It is currently under discussion with the federal government, so it has not been determined. But with the exception of the above two items, the cost for desktop management, as identified in the Estimates supplement, are based consistently on all the information we have previously provided. So the member does not have to ask with each one if it is going to be Systemhouse or MERLIN. Those are the only two exceptions, the first one, School for the Deaf, we know will be done by MERLIN, and the other we are currently discussing with the federal government because it is a matter of devolution. It still has some time left to complete in terms of implementation.

The member had also asked about the costs of capital. Last Thursday we had said that the costs of capital included a server, and the member is correct to have said the ballpark costs would be around \$10,000. I was not sure, but in that vicinity. In fact, it is closer to \$15,000. This \$15,000 is part of the figure shown today of 76.8 that the member referred to. Last day, we only referenced the server when I said \$10,000 or thereabouts, which is actually closer to \$15,000. It was in reference to the server, but there also is money for other computer upgrades and you will see that in that 76.8. All the computers and the equipment and everything, of course, is owned by the Manitoba School for the Deaf.

* (1500)

Ms. Friesen: I do not have any more questions on that. I think we are looking at 16.2. Had we moved to 16.2.(c)? Can you remember formerly whether we had or not?

This is the one section of the department that seems to be expanding at a rapid rate. Some of the percentage increases over the last three years are quite enormous—196 percent, 219 percent, 140 percent, 330 percent. I wonder if the minister could tell us how many new staff she has hired; how many more she intends to hire in this coming year, and what their qualifications are and where they have come from in the sense of academic preparation.

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, in terms of the increase in staff in Assessment and Evaluation, last year

we had 45.5, and by the end of this year we will have 61.5, for an increase of 16 staff people, staff positions. In '97-98, we hired seven what we call CRCs, curriculum consultants, but in this case they are in fact assessment consultants hired under that category. We hired seven of those as project leaders. Their general background, I do not have it broken down specifically in terms of who has what degree, and that is what is taking us a bit of time here. For general background, they have graduate level training in assessment and testing. They have previous experience working on testing projects from Manitoba and from outside of Manitoba.

We also have hired, in terms of the total number, some analysts, clerks and programmers. For example, we have hired a statistical analyst. We have hired four people who are skilled at word processing, and we are looking to have in this by the end of the '99 year an additional 16 people working in the branch. They will break down this way. We will have one under a managerial function; we will have in total, by that point, including the people that we used to have—for example, we used to have in '96-97—for example, we had 23 people. Those are there; we are talking about building to 61. So we will have one managerial, 37 people in the professional-technical area, 23 in the support area, and that will give us our total of 61. That is how we see it breaking down. As I indicate, they are mostly graduate level in the assessment, consultant category.

* (1510)

The details for the end of the year I have in front of me now. We will have, specifically now broken down to the exact number, one co-ordinator, a senior consultant, 16 curriculum consultants, five statistical analysts, one financial analyst, eight people to do program planning, PM2s program planning analysts and three administrative secretarial support. Those are AY3s and one AY2, four computer programmers, 10 people doing word processing and 10 clerks to assist. They will come under the various headings of test development, test administration, document production, et cetera.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell me how many of these have been practicing teachers?

Mrs. McIntosh: As indicated, from the list of people that we have here, the clerks, the computer programmers, those who are skilled in word processing or who are administrative secretarial support or financial analysts or statistical analysts clearly do not require an education degree for the duties which they perform. So they are hired for their expertise in the areas for which they were hired to perform.

Having said that, of course, we do have need for teachers. She asked how many are currently practicing teachers, which is people who are in the field. Of those who are practising—

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: Well, actually to clarify for the minister, what I had asked was how many had been practising teachers, not how many are practising, but had been practising.

* * *

* (1520)

Mrs. McIntosh: I appreciate the clarification. We have eight who are in lead positions who are educators; we have three others who have worked in the school board offices, at that level in administration; eight who were in the classroom; three who were in the school board, bringing 11 to the number of those who hold education degrees or higher. They serve in the lead categories.

The others, as I indicate, we do not feel that they need to have an education degree to be a clerk or a computer programmer or a statistical analyst but, for those areas where we feel we have needed the education degree, we have 11.

Ms. Friesen: Well, just to clarify then, of the 16 curriculum co-ordinators, does that mean then that only eight have had classroom experience?

Mrs. McIntosh: Sorry, Mr. Chairman, I have said 11 have the experience. I had indicated that eight had classroom experience only and 11 had also administrative experience in a school board office. So 11 have classroom experience. Three of those have

also had administrative experience at the school board office level, at the school divisional level. So 11 of the 16.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell me what backgrounds the other curriculum consultants have who have not had classroom experience?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mrs. McIntosh: I had indicated in my first response, and it is an important distinction, that is why I made the clarification, that while we had some people hired under the curriculum consultant category, they were being hired as assessment people, not as curriculum people. That was the only category under which they fit, so we had hired assessment consultants in that curriculum consultant category, because that fit for pegging them on the scale, but they are assessment experts not curriculum people. The staff is just getting the specific response that the member was looking for which I will have momentarily.

The 11 positions that are educator positions are people who have classroom experience and/or administrative experience. Those 11 are in test development, and they are across the whole branch, not just in one specific portion of it. We will be hiring seven more, which will give us a total of 18 positions in test development.

The other qualifications, the member asked if they were not teachers, then what were they trained as? They are either experts in assessment or in psychometrics and have degrees in those areas, and we will be hiring some more people in psychometrics, with psychometrics training. So those are the three areas which are sought: either educator or assessment or psychometrics, as the three areas of expertise required in test development and test administration.

Just to sum it up then, there are 11 who are former teachers not currently practising but who have recent experience practising in the field—eight of them in test development and three of them in test administration, and they work with colleagues who have background expertise in assessment and psychometrics.

* (1530)

Ms. Friesen: I am assuming by assessment that the minister means statistics. I am not sure if that is the case. I wonder if the minister could clarify that, and if she could also tell us what psychometrics is. I assume it means the measurement of psyche, which to me sounds like I.Q. tests. Is that the direction the government is going in, and how does psychometrics apply to the kind of exams and tests the government has been developing? So if the minister could answer that. If she could also tell me, how many of the people she has hired are from visible minorities including aboriginal.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I first want to clarify, the member asked three things. She asked for a definition of psychometrics and what does a psychometrician do, and for a definition of assessment and how we apply it. Then she said: I assume you mean something about I.Q. tests. I did not quite get it, but I need to emphasize again because it seems to be difficult to get through to members opposite the difference between standards and standardized. We are not talking about I.Q. tests, I wish to emphasize that. We have never mentioned I.Q. tests. The member has mentioned I.Q. tests; we have not. We are not talking about I.Q. tests. I.Q. tests will be used in connection with standardized testing which we do not do.

We do standards tests, and to assume that psychometrics refers to I.Q. tests is not correct. We do not use I.Q. tests. We do not use standardized tests. We use standards tests, and that is quite different. I think we have been through this before and I have explained it on numerous occasions. I just wish the record to show that the reference to I.Q. was from the member's assumptions, and it is not a correct assumption. It is important the record show that, because it is an implication that those opposed to standards tests try to leave—and it does a disservice to the whole concept of proper assessment and evaluation to imply that it is back to the old days when you buy a test off the shelf that was standardized, test someone's I.Q. and assume that you had done something significant. If divisions wish to use standardized tests and I.Q. tests, we are certainly not forbidding them. They can do that, but our provincial standards tests are something quite different, and we have been through that before.

In terms of the definitions, by assessment we mean someone who is an expert in assessment would be trained in developing different types of questions, trained in developing scoring keys, trained in the analysis of curriculum and the development of test specifications from that curriculum. It is a very specialized skill. To take a curriculum and draw from it correctly worded questions that will draw from the person being assessed a true indication of how well that curriculum is understood is a very high skill not able to be done by just anyone but needed to be done by someone trained in this area.

Psychometrics is the statistical analysis of test results to see where areas of improvement are necessary, far different from the assumption of an I.Q. test that the member indicated. It is, and I repeat, the statistical analysis of test results to see where areas of improvement are necessary. Psychometricians are experts in identifying techniques that can be applied to any type of test, and that is why those two experts combined with the pedagogical expertise of the trained educator make the three skills required to develop proper standards tests that will be able to serve as effective diagnostic tools. That is quite different from a standardized test that measures an I.Q.

We have 45 staff presently, as I indicated earlier. Six of those are visible minorities; one is aboriginal; 10 are bilingual—French, English.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I think the record will show that my reference to I.Q. tests was a request for clarification. I said: is this the direction the department is going? [interjection] No, the record will show.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Could we wait until one is recognized prior to putting some words on the record so we have everything for Hansard.

The honourable member for Wolseley has the floor at this time.

* (1540)

Ms. Friesen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to ask the minister about the cost of moving this section of the department. I understand it is moving to I think it is an

area on Dublin, and I wonder if the minister could tell me what the cost of expansion of buildings or offices is.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, Government Services is doing renovation readying the premises for the move, and we do not have that cost here. I do not know if Government Services would have it, but we will not know our final costs until the end of September when the renovations are complete.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, well, could the minister tell me how much the renovations are estimated at? There must be an estimate in the department's records. Could she tell us what the ongoing rent will be for that area?

Mrs. McIntosh: We do not have an estimate of the renovation costs because it is not our department. We can go, if the member wishes, to Government Services and get the information from them to bring to the Education Estimates. They would probably be better done, though, under the proper government department which is Government Services. So we do not have that information, and we will not probably have it until all the renovations are complete. We will not know that until the net costs are known because the Department of Government Services is looking at overall space use, overall cost, et cetera. For example, in moving Assessment out of 1181 Portage, somebody else will be moving in, and where they will have come from and what cost savings, we do not know. Government Services will know, but we do not.

So the net savings and/or the net cost, depending which way it goes, will be determined by the overall picture, who moves in to take our place, how much they are going to pay, et cetera, et cetera. We do not know that. They do.

The new space will also include some space for marking exams, so we are changing functions as well. We will go over there and have the same functions as we had at 1181, plus we will have permanent marking space, and that is something that the member, I think, will probably be pleased about because before we were renting hotel space, et cetera. This will give us marking space plus storage space for housing exam booklets, and that, for security purposes, is a much improved situation. So if the member wishes us to go to the

Department of Government Services to get their financial Estimates to bring to the Estimates of Education, which is slightly unusual and rather bizarre nonetheless, we can do it if that is what she would like us to do. We do not have it here without doing that.

In terms of the rental costs, it is about the same per square foot we estimate, although the square foot costs again would be with Government Services. As I indicated, we are having more space added. There will be approximately an increase of about 240,000, we estimate, for that increased space and for the whole thing, for the existing and for the new space. Again, that is an approximate. We do not know for certain, but that is the ballpark for that, which is something that Education would be paying—that is why we have a ballpark figure for it—but again that will all depend, the final amount that is indicated to us by Government Services when that time comes.

* (1550)

We can get those answers for the member by the end of this afternoon if she would like us to do that. It might spare Government Services having to answer some questions in their Estimates to do some of their Estimates here, and we are quite willing to get them within the next couple of hours if she wishes.

Ms. Friesen: Yes, I would like those, and I am interested in the cost of renovation. The minister, I think, wanted to introduce some other elements, cost benefit and net savings, as other departments move in to 1181. But I am specifically interested in what the cost of the new is.

So the two questions I am asking of Government Services then, through the minister, in fact is the cost of the renovation of the new space; and, secondly, the continuing rental for the new space. The minister gave me a square footage relationship. I would like to have the dollar amount. What is the rental cost to the department, the estimated cost that will be in these Estimates, presumably in Government Services Estimates, for the coming year?

I assume if it does not take place until September, that that will not be a full year. It will be a partial year, so, if the request could also include the months for

which that is effective, that would help us to determine what the overall cost of the expansion of this section of the department has been.

I wanted to ask about the evaluations of the exams. So far we have had a number of, including January events, both mathematics and English exams. I wonder if the minister could table the results, the evaluations I should say, departmental evaluations of the most recent set of exams.

Mrs. McIntosh: You want the departmental evaluations of what?

Ms. Friesen: Sorry, Mr. Chairman, yes, of the exams. I do not mean the results. The minister has published the results, and she has published the provincial means and the provincial averages and breakdown by school division.

What I am interested in is how the department has evaluated those results. The minister said she is hiring or has hired a number of people whose job it is to look at the statistical results of tests. What are those tests telling the department? For example, in mathematics, what has the most recent round of tests told the department about the teaching of mathematics across the province?

* (1600)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, we had noted again that there is still work that needs to be done on problem solving. Just to give the member an example of what we mean by that, problem solving has many components, but we have been able to pull out specific components of problem solving that need extra work in a number of schools.

For example, problem solving that requires multiple steps seems to confuse a number of students. Explaining why a particular course of action has been taken—and this is not a linguistic problem, because these can be shown through pictographs as well as through words. That is an area that we noticed. These are mathematical issues in moving from one step to another that we have noticed is a problem. So if they are having trouble moving from one step to another or in following a logical line of thinking, these are very

fundamental to the art and the science of problem solving. We were able to identify that these are problem areas that continue. The failure to elaborate on responses when required was something that we also noticed.

So what we do then and we have begun to do with this particular one is that we have said, having identified a problem which the standards tests allow us to do, we now move into identifying solutions to fit with the correcting of that problem. We developed, in response to this particular issue, a support document which is called the Thinking Framework, and that has been made available to school divisions to assist in that deductive reasoning, logical thinking, multistep problem, solution to a problem that requires multisteps. We have put a much greater emphasis in the curriculum in the teaching of problem solving. We noticed as well and have talked about the fact that we see problem solving as a weakness last year and this, but we also saw that strengths were beginning to build in the testing of mathematics, strengths in patterns, relationships, the way in which patterns evolve, the relationship between items and articles in a pattern. Those were strengths. We noticed weaknesses in shapes and space. Again, strengthening spatial relations, et cetera, will add overall strength to all mathematical understandings including problem solving, so we continue to build on the strengths, identify area of weaknesses and begin to put in solutions for those areas of weakness.

In the English language arts in Senior 4, we noted that students in Manitoba do much better on narrative pieces, stories, that type of thing than on nonnarrative pieces. They do better in narrative than nonnarrative in understanding the material. Students in Manitoba, we noted, have some difficulty in understanding technical language. The understanding of technical language has become very important in the world outside of school, so we need to renew our efforts to help students understand that aspect of communication which had never been previously emphasized in earlier curricula.

We noted as well that, in the Senior 4 Language Arts, in some areas there is difficulty with evaluating and interpreting information that is read. Again, the interpretation is another area that we need to continue working on, although, by and large, students in language arts in Manitoba do very well. You do not

have to be sick to get better, and so, while we notice that in language arts students do generally extremely well, we are still able to point out areas of weakness that we can improve in. Of course, we are reaching more and more for perfection.

Specifically we note, for example, that students did better in the mechanics of writing than they did in content, organization or style. These are good things to note. They are helpful for classroom teachers to have, and they continue helping students build towards excellence. In English/Language Arts, we emphasize that, in any workshops that we provide, the area of weaknesses be identified and ideas and helpful hints for teachers be provided to assist them in building strength into the area of weakness.

The Thinking Framework that I mentioned earlier in reference to mathematics is also a very good framework that goes across subject areas. It is useful not just for mathematics but for all subject areas, so that is one that has sort of general application.

Any time, of course, that you improve writing skills, you improve the ability to problem-solve because you are able to better understand the written problem, and any time you improve your ability to solve problems and think logically and have deductive reasoning and so on, you also improve your writing and thinking skills. So the testing in both of those two critical areas, just as A Thinking Framework crosses subject areas, so, too, do the various skills cross backwards and forwards between language arts and mathematics.

But, in short, those are some of the things that we noticed in marking, some of the strengths, some of the weaknesses and some of the corrective measures that are being put in place to address weaknesses. In terms of areas where strength is shown, we encourage continuing with the methodology that is in place to keep that strength strong and to keep building on it and to keep growing.

* (1610)

Those are also useful for us. Those pieces of knowledge are useful for us, not just in professional development or the documents we prepare for the field, but it also guides us in terms of the things that need to

be emphasized and the curriculum in any given year. It guides us as well in the preparation of the examination itself in that we will look if we notice in one year that problem solving was an area of difficulty, then we would make sure in the next set of exams that we did a really thorough assessment of that area to see if improvement had occurred and if the diagnostic offerings had resulted in methodology and other things in the classroom that improved understandings, because the tests measure what is understood and able to be applied.

In that sense, then, we wish to build increased understandings so that greater knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge in the world is created in the classroom.

Ms. Friesen: I wonder if the minister could table the document A Thinking Framework. I am sure she does not have it here, but certainly at the next time. The kind of evaluation that the minister was speaking about in general terms in mathematics and English language arts, could the minister also table the evaluation of each of the exams that has been done so far?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, Mr. Chairman, we can table the Thinking Framework, and we will table the interpretation, or what we call the interpretive comments for the tests written in 1997. We do not have all of the '98 ones, obviously, but we will table three sets of each.

Now, the only thing I cannot provide the member is the pupil-by-pupil interpretive. We have a very detailed pupil-by-pupil interpretive comment that goes through the exam, and question by question for every student that has written the exam we identify what we call a student profile. It outlines specifically how every student has done on every question in the exam, outlining areas of weakness, areas that needed improvement. We would prefer not to table the student-by-student profile because it identifies people, et cetera, but we can certainly give her all the other interpretive comments that go school by school, et cetera, and that shows the breakdown, as the member has asked, of our analysis of—pardon me, the deputy has just indicated it would not be school by school. It would be our own analysis here on the interpretive comments on the division, on the province-wide, what

we have noticed from the exam, the kinds of things I have just read but the specific detail that the department has done in its analysis, and we can provide that to the member. Those others do exist, as I say, the student-by-student profile which is very fine detail, but this interpretive commentary for 1997, which we will provide, addresses the same things. It says what the overall provincial problems were, where the strengths were in the province, where the areas of weakness occur, and spells it out pretty clearly. I will bring three copies of that next day.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell me where the pupil-by-pupil comments go? Do they go to the classroom teacher, to the school, to the principal, to the superintendent? What is the end result of those? They appear to be extremely detailed. Are they simply kept in the department?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, this is one of the features of the exams that is well known and one of the integral pieces. It is to be used for diagnostic purposes. It is critical that students know how they did, and every child has a student profile. When those tests are marked, those standards exams are marked, a student profile for every single student who wrote the exam is prepared saying, question by question, where John Smith and Mary Jones on their test got question one correct and showed a very good understanding of spacial relations. Question 2 would be: did not succeed in explaining step 3 of the problem solving. Step 1 and step 2 were explained, while step 3 showed an inability to move easily from one step to the other. Extra work needed on such and such in order to ensure that this skill is picked up. Question by question, in detail, student by student, every exam is analyzed, a diagnostic paper is written called a student profile, which is sent to every school so that every classroom teacher can share it with the parents.

We have heard that some schools have not shared it with the parents. Most schools do, and that is why, I think, most parents strongly support standards tests, because they can see it as the excellent diagnostic tool that it is, but we have heard feedback from the field that some schools, for whatever reason, have chosen not to share those student profiles with the families. These are usually school divisions that do not believe in standards tests and may not do as well because of

whatever reason, I do not know, but the profile does go to the school principal to share with the teachers and the parents.

* (1620)

We have copies in our records, but the main purpose of these is to be diagnostic for the sake of the student. Like the question surprises me. It just does because we have said it so often. I have said it I do not know how many times in Question Period. I have said it every time I have spoken on standards exams. The student profiles go to the schools. Like, the question really surprises me. It is simple. It is almost as obvious as saying do you mark the exam? Well, of course we mark the exam. Well, what do you do with the marks?

The member keeps referring to the fact that we publish the marks as if that is kind of the only reason we have standards exams. The member will say you have standards exams and you mark them and you publish the marks. Publishing the marks is incidental. We only publish the marks because Brandon School Division put us in the position where in order to respond to reporters without having to end up in an FOI request, we had to release results. The upshot of that is that we now release all the results all the time because they are available under Freedom of Information. We know we are going to get asked every year. So the publishing of the results is something now the public seems to like. They see it as an accountability measure and we are pleased to do it because there is nothing to hide here.

But the member constantly says you mark the exams and you publish the results as if that is the reason for marking. The reason for marking is to diagnose how people are able to absorb and apply knowledge. It would be fruitless to do that if you did not provide that information back to the field for use to improve learning as they go through the system or to understand as they exit the system where they may still have areas of learning that they need to work on and areas that they know they can apply with comfort in the world of work or at post-secondary learning.

Teachers get the profile. Parents should get the profile which gives them the data topic by topic as to how the students did. It is not a report card. It is just

simply a profile identifying all of these things. It is an excellent diagnostic tool for families and for teachers. Divisions that withhold that information from their students because they do not believe in the principle of testing and therefore they do not want to use any useful information that comes from it will have to be accountable to their public at school board election time. But I think fewer and fewer of them are withholding those student profiles because more and more people understand that is a very integral part of the assessment.

I am really quite surprised the member did not know that because I have said it so often and because it is such an integral part of the whole assessment process. But then again it comes back to the member's lack of support for standards testing, and I believe maybe the lack of understanding of standards testing because the member still thinks it is a standardized test to which an I.Q. test and so on are all part of it when it is completely not. I hope this information that I am providing her about the student profiles which have been there since standards tests came in that maybe at this late date she can understand the significance of that just by knowing that it exists and it has since the beginning.

I have talked to many parents who have gone through their students' profiles, and it has given them an incredibly good insight into the types of things they should be doing at home, the types of stimulation they should be providing at home. I have had parents scooting by the bookstore and picking up those little quizzes and puzzles and so on that are listed as games for students, but are really mathematical understandings that they can use at home to help a teacher by filling in some of the things that were noticed on the student profile as needing work.

Parents have a right to know about the growth and progress of their children, and at the Manitoba Teachers' Society assessment workshop, for that third workshop, the parents talked about the topic "what parents want to know about their children's achievement." The panel felt the teachers were doing an excellent job, but that parents needed to be more involved with their children's education. One common thing expressed in their comments was that parents would like to have four report cards per year instead of

three, and that teachers, parents wish, would make more effort to open up the dialogue with parents. Those parents were overwhelmingly in favour of standards tests, as we know most parents are.

Some of the comments expressed were that parents value an absolute standard as opposed to comparison with peers. That is really what we are working on by the student profile; it is an absolute standard, students measuring their own progress against what is attainable. Now members opposite and detractors from standards exams consistently want to say comparing student to student, when we know it is student against the achievable. It is too bad that they keep trying to put it into that context because it is not the right context in which to view these.

So they value this absolute standard against which students can measure themselves. Where their peers are in the measurement is interesting but irrelevant because in a standards exam everybody could get 100 percent. It is not measured on a bell curve the way the old tests are that the member keeps thinking we are doing and keeps implying in the field. The NDP consistently imply in the field that things are still marked on a bell curve, and that some are automatically going to fail, when indeed with our method every student can achieve the gold. Again, it is either a lack of understanding or a conscious decision to misrepresent. I would prefer to think it is an honest misunderstanding, but I do not know how many times we can explain it to get it clear to the detractors.

Provincial tests, standards exams allow teachers to concentrate on what they do best, and that is helping the students do their best. If there were more regular testing in classrooms, standards tests would be perceived by students just like any other activity. In classes where teachers are always assessing and stopping just to check and test and see how things are going, students do not view testing as something very frightening. Where the adults in children's lives encourage them to worry themselves into little knots about tests, then the students will experience anxiety. But students can be taught to study for tests in a positive way that does not produce anxiety, and parents have expressed this. Parents have said they felt that teaching the curriculum so that the tests can do a proper measurement is a positive thing. Teaching to the test,

they said, is a positive thing because the test, if properly developed, will assess a student's ability to understand and apply the curricula. The curriculum, presumably, and we know, is developed by master teachers and experts in subject area, carefully worked out.

The member has asked many questions about how curriculum is produced, wanting to assure a highest quality in the curriculum. Having produced a high-quality curriculum, then it seems natural that it would be taught, and the way to determine whether or not it has been taught would be to assess how much the students understand in the curriculum at the end of the learning period. So teaching to the test in this sense, parents said, was a very positive thing because it meant that the test was based on the curriculum, and that the curriculum, which was carefully developed, was being taught. That is what they wanted—that assurance—and we want to provide them with that assurance.

* (1630)

Just back for a minute on the assessment to Dublin, I have a note just handed to me on the project cost of the move to Dublin, which is \$934,000. Now that is for the whole project cost. I do not know what other things come in there in terms of savings or what they are saving by the move, by virtue of where the recycling occurs in terms of who moves into 1181 Portage and what rent they are able to charge there, et cetera. We do know that the '97 rent at 1181 Portage was \$58,000; in 1988-89, \$258,700. There is an increase in space of 1,400 square metres that we will see when they move the existing operations, plus they add the other functions that have been identified to be housed with Assessment and Evaluation. They will be housed together; whereas previously there was just the one entity, there will now be more than one entity. As we get more information we will provide it on that topic, but I just thought while I had that I would put it in before I forgot it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to ask the minister about the students who are not passing the standards exams. In mathematics, I think, we are looking at an average number of students passing. I think across the province, the pass rate is 56.4 percent. In English language arts, it is something like 79.6 percent are passing across the province. Which means

that obviously 50 percent are not passing in math and 20 percent are not passing in the English language arts.

What are the minister's plans for this group of students? How do we ensure that this group of students stays in school, remains attached to education and makes improvements? Does the minister have a plan for that? The assumption is that in some of these areas, a group of those students will stay. They will take a second exam. A portion of those will pass. A further portion will fail. The concerns that I am hearing, and I am sure the minister has heard—her report on at-risk students tells her exactly this—the concern is for the students who at the moment cannot pass those exams may stay to take a second time but may not stay for a third time, and that these are the students, 10 to 15 percent perhaps, that we are going to lose from the educational system. So presumably the minister has some plans and some advice for school divisions who are facing this problem over the next couple of years. Could she tell us what those plans are?

Mrs. Shirley Render, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. McIntosh: The member asks the question that is right at the heart of this whole issue. She wants to know what will happen to students who now are identified at the end of the year as not knowing enough to pass an exam. I would point out to the member a couple of things. First of all, the curriculum upon which most of these exams are currently based is the same curriculum that has been in place for many, many years. In fact, the member herself has complained about how slow we have been to change curriculum in certain areas. For example, the music curriculum has not changed since 1983. We are soundly criticized for not having upgraded it sooner, et cetera. The Grade 9 curriculum that is currently being brought in is new but, up until now, the testing that occurred on that has been the curriculum that was in place when the New Democrats were in power.

Similarly, the other curriculums, as we are in the process of introducing new curriculum, many of these tests were based upon the old curriculum. The answer is, well, there are several thoughts, maybe just go through them. First, why is it that students taking that same curriculum without a test were passing and, when they were tested, were found to be somewhat lacking in understanding? The question that begs is: is it the

provincial exam that caused them to fail by identifying the amount of knowledge they had?

It is a very basic question. Same curriculum, same kinds of students, same teachers, passing the course before without an exam, being given an exam and not passing the exam. What does that say? Is the exam causing the students to fail or is the exam identifying the students who have been graduating in great numbers without knowing their course content? This is what brought us into the whole area of examination of assessment. Because the member knows absolutely—the member is a university professor—the member knows what university professors think and say about the Grade 12 certificate and what it means, has to have heard what they have told me, probably more frequently than I have heard, that students coming in, as Professor Woods said in the math department, if you can guarantee me, Linda, that students could pass this Grade 12 math exam, then I would know at long last that I could begin teaching my first year mathematics at university secure in the knowledge the students did have the necessary information to begin studying at this level. Prior to this, of course, it was all over the map.

We have said all along that time is the variable, learning is the constant. Some students will need more time to absorb and apply the knowledge than others, and that time should be taken. You do nobody a service if you pass them from one grade to another without being ready to learn the stuff that is going to take place in the next grade. You do nobody a service if you graduate them when they do not know the information and they go out into the world with a Grade 12 certificate that most people look at and say: this means nothing. What can you do? They go to university and have to take remedial courses. They go to the workforce, have to be trained by their employers in the fundamental things they should have learned in Grade 12 or Grade 10 or Grade 9 or Grade 6.

So the member has said: what do we do when the exams cause them to fail? I say to the member that the—

* (1640)

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: I did not say: when the exams cause them to fail. My question which the minister has been

attempting to answer is: what is your plan with those students who are failing now? Fifty percent of the students are not passing the math. Twenty percent of them are not passing the English. The minister must have a plan. What is the plan for those students? That was my question.

The Acting Chairperson (Mrs. Render): I thank the member for Wolseley. As the minister has said, she is correct. To the minister, to complete her answer.

* * *

Mrs. McIntosh: The member is correct. I am giving some background. I am addressing the implication; I should be addressing the actual words, but I do feel it is important in answering the question, and I will definitely put on the record the things that we are doing to indicate why it is important that there be testing, even if it means that some students fail the test because over and over and over we hear from the official opposition that children should not be allowed to fail tests because of what it does to their self esteem, what it does to their egos, what it does to how they feel. We should never allow children to fail. They should go through life believing that life does not have moments of failure and that there are never problems to overcome.

We know what their philosophy did to the standards that Manitoba is perceived to have in Canada and around the world, and they are not good. You can talk to almost anybody who suffered under them in terms of employers or post-secondary institutions to know that. We are changing that, and it is with great relief that the field is greeting this.

I also have to indicate, and we will talk about how to address the students that fail the exam and those who pass the exam with gaps in their knowledge, because we do know that students can get 69 and still have fundamental components that they do not understand. They, too, need work. That is why they get an individual student profile saying how they did and what needs correcting, pass or fail. The member should know that up until Grade 12, nowhere yet in the province are the marks on any of these exams worth 50 percent. Even yet today, in Grade 12, they are not worth 50 percent. The most they are worth is 30

percent, so if a student fails the test and as a result fails the year, then they are doing very poorly indeed because the test is not a stand-alone assessment tool. This is the other component that needs to be stressed anytime this topic is discussed.

There are so many aspects to assessment and evaluation, skills portfolios, daily teacher assessment, all of the things that happen in the classroom that teachers do with students, the weekly testing, all of those things will make up 70 percent or more of the final mark. So the member should realize that standards tests are only one part of a student's full evaluation, only one part of a student's final mark.

For those who on the standards tests we are able to identify area of weaknesses, we say that time is the variable, learning is the constant. Some children may take longer indeed to complete the Grade 3 curriculum, and teachers will need to take that extra time with them. Through their differentiated learning skills, they will have to work with that child in the next year to ensure those gaps are filled, and we will do the following things.

We will bring on stream the new curricula with the very general specific outcomes and standards. We are releasing the document that is differentiated instruction. We are doing regional inservices to teach teachers how to use that. We are releasing the profiles to empower school and parent partnerships so the family can work with the students at home as well as the teachers at school. We are requiring school plans. We are bringing in reading recovery. We are instilling a belief that this government has in the ability of children to learn. We are raising the expectations that children can achieve so that people will not say, well, they failed the test, let us give up and we will just by rote teach them the things from last year instead of actually trying to fill in the areas that are identified in the student profiles as needing the work. To go back and just repeat work is meaningless. We need to go and—because we will identify what exactly the areas are that need improvement and use differentiated teaching to get those areas taught. If it takes longer, it takes longer, but at the end of it, you will have somebody who really does understand. How can children believe in themselves if we do not believe in them?

We have seen and we have studies that show that teachers and schools who share the belief that all students are potentially effective learners, regardless of the amount of time it takes, they have a remarkable impact on students at risk. The bottom line, first of all: successful schools and teachers believe in the at-risk student's ability to learn. Despite the belief of many who say they are at risk, you have to change the system for them, they will never be able to learn they are at risk. Despite that, studies have shown that if the teachers and the schools and the parents believe in the at-risk student's ability to learn, they can have success. They can put in effective practices that will work.

Some things such as Reading Recovery, which is a program the member I am sure must be familiar with—I just visited this morning in a school, watching the Reading Recovery Program in progress and seeing a student whose progress was unbelievable since starting the program, just incredible, because Reading Recovery teachers are trained in using effective, individualized, instructional strategies, with the lowest achieving students in Grade 1, so we are starting early with this—trained to analyze, trained to adjust their instruction to ensure students' accelerated learning.

We have established—in terms of money, because the members feel money has a lot to do with things, we have put an extra \$10.25 million annually into Students At Risk support programs. We have put in another \$250,000 into early identification; another \$4.2 million into English Language Enrichment for Native Students. We have put more money into the Level I needs support; another \$42 million this past year, for this year that we are, '97-98; another \$12.7 million into co-ordinator and clinician support; another \$9.1 million into special needs supplementary support. As well, we have put another \$30 million into Level II and Level III in the special needs categorical support.

That is money. Money seems to be the thing the member likes to hear about. That is a lot of money we have put into Students At Risk. In addition to that, of course, in that Students At Risk support program, that \$10 million we put in specifically for Students At Risk of not being able to learn, that money is targeted to schools identified as having high complements of at risk students.

So we have got a number of those things. The Children and Youth Secretariat is working to develop holistic approaches of prevention, of treatment, rehabilitation and safety of care for children, youth and their families. So if there is a student who is struggling because they have societal problems and we can somehow ameliorate the effects of those problems so that the mind can be freed to concentrate on learning, then this is a very significant step towards improved performance.

We have now a co-ordinated and integrated system of services for children and youth and their families, where the needs of children and youth cross departmental mandates, cross departmental resources. Those are vital for improved learning in schools and for addressing some of the problems that those who may not do well on assessment tests may have.

* (1650)

We are looking now and we are putting in place full service schools. These are not things that appear on the surface to be directly related to improving a student's test score, but the member herself and the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) and the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) have all repeatedly said that students cannot do well if some of these other problems are not addressed for them.

Hence I am showing what we are doing with these other problems because the members opposite themselves say the only way you are going to help some of these students at risk is to bring in some of the things I am talking about, like the \$4 million for English Language Enrichment for Native Students. The members opposite have said that for English as a Second Language students the tests are unfair because that may not be their first language, so we bring in the money to address that. So I do not want the member coming back and saying these are not things that will directly answer the question about how students will improve on tests because the member opposite has told me repeatedly these are the types of things that are needed to ensure success on tests, and that in fact if we do not address them, testing will be unfair.

So we are addressing them with the co-ordinated service delivery, community ownership responsibility

resourcing structures developed around the needs of the child, schooling services initiative, shared services agreement and all of the money that I identified to all those categories. That, with the work that goes on in the classroom, with classroom teachers who have enhanced skills in differentiated instruction—and that is the one that is universally applauded by the Manitoba Teachers' Society, our handbook on differentiated instruction, which is helping teachers take a student who may have areas of difficulty on a standards exam, identified through the student profile, so the teacher could immediately begin to work with that student.

We have visualized this to the people of Manitoba through six priority areas: essential learning; educational standard and evaluation—accountability is critical to results and applies pressure to the education system, including through provincial standards tests; school effectiveness; parental-community involvement; distance education and technology; teacher education. The gap between the vision articulated by the province and current practices in Manitoba was wide in 1994 when the vision was unveiled. It is narrowing, but there is still an enormous system change that needs to occur, particularly when so many individuals hold beliefs vastly different from those underpinning society's vision and government's vision. That is, many still do not hold beliefs related to results and accountability and increased parental involvement.

But you talked about students who may not be able to pass standards exams. We believe that all students can learn. I said that earlier. We intend, and we are developing curriculum programming, school environments, instructional strategies, and learning resources that respond to the diversity of students in our schools. It is harder to teach this way, but it is more effective and more beneficial in the long run. Those who are skilled in it achieve great satisfaction, both for themselves and for their students.

We have teaching methodologies in place that support so that even the most reluctant learner can succeed. Students who are disabled, struggling, and at risk are a heterogeneous group of learners who do not learn as efficiently as their peers using traditional methodologies and practices. We know that, so we need to put in measures that will assist them. That is what we have been doing; that is what we continue to

do; and that is what we are planning for future in wider and wider areas of endeavour.

For adaptations we have, most children with learning difficulties are in the mainstream for a significant part of the day, and teachers have a major role in helping these students be successful in school. But there are some who need adaptations to be able to access information, and we are changing materials, we are changing methods, to allow a different mode of output by the student or allow a different mode of input to the students. We have made adaptations to test materials, adaptations to test procedures to provide more avenues for students who demonstrate their knowledge.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

We have, for example, allowed flexible time and flexible setting where we have said maybe a student needs more time to write the exam. Instead of a three-hour exam, maybe a student needs four hours and for various circumstances, maybe visual difficulties, maybe motor control, small muscle motor control problem. So we will extend the time allowed for that student, allow that student to take longer to write the exam. Maybe that person needs more frequent breaks. We will be allowed to stop the exam, start, continue, stop, continue and do the exam that way for various physical reasons or psychological reasons.

Maybe they need a flexible setting. Maybe they need to be tested in a small group setting. Maybe they need to be tested alone verbally rather than in a room written. Maybe they need a test in a special education or resource classroom. Maybe they need to have taped directions as opposed to written directions. Maybe they need Braille or large print or signing of directions. Maybe they need to use a computer, maybe they need to use a scribe. Maybe they need to have a teacher assist them with the interpretation of the language, if English is the second language on a math exam, for example.

These adaptations are useful to helping students succeed on the exams, if their problem is not one of lack of knowledge of the content but inability to use the assessment tool the way most people can use it. So this use of adaptations for assessment purposes does give special consideration to students who have behavioural

problems that impede learning. Maybe they cannot sit still, so they do need to get up and wander around and then come back and sit down under supervision. These are allowed in order to ensure fairness to students who may have certain disabilities or problems that require a different approach to the standards exam. It does not mean they are not going to take the standards exam, but it does mean they could get some kind of consideration in how they write it, and this I think is very important.

This process also reduces unnecessary exclusion of students from assessment as such exclusion can place severe limits on students' future opportunities and gives them all equal opportunity to demonstrate what they know, what they can do as part of a proper assessment process. We granted adaptations in June of '97 to 1,428 students in the Grade 3 mathematics standards test. Twenty-one students registered in the Senior 4 English language arts program, none in the Senior 4 provincial math program. That represents percentages in each of those courses of people who required adaptations and were provided them to ease the writing of the exam and make it more meaningful for them and to ensure that we get the content.

The school team may determine, after examining a student, that an exemption altogether from a provincial exam is what needs to happen for a particular student. If the signed consent of students and their parents and the school team are there, then that too can occur. That is a collaborative process that is granted by the school, by those who best know the student. Exemptions from writing standards tests and provincial exams are provided to students who are registered in the modified designated courses, who are in Grades 3 and 6 and require substantial modifications to grade level material, to students who due to their emotional and psychological state may be detrimentally affected by writing a formal test have English as a second language in Grades 3 and 6 and require substantial adaptations to curricula or Senior 1 and Senior 4 students in E-designated courses.

* (1700)

Those have been there since the beginning and that addresses students who have very unusual circumstances in their lives. We believe all other students have the ability to write standards exams, have

the right to be assessed and have the opportunity to have their knowledge assessed properly, so that at their next go-round in the learning situation the areas in which they were deficient can be enhanced, and the student can then learn as they should be learning as opposed to the way it has been, where they go through and to make them feel good, they get passed. They graduate and find, to their horror, that they cannot function in post-secondary education or in the workforce because nobody cared enough about them to find out where they had gaps and to fill in those gaps for them.

So they take the time to fill in the gaps, and while that may take more time, in answer to the member's question, what are we doing, will we take more time—yes. Will we fill in the blanks with differentiated instruction—yes.

They are not failing necessarily because they are incapable of learning or because they have severe learning difficulties. I have just indicated to the member the exemptions we put in place for people in those categories, but if you ask teachers how many of their students they think are not capable of writing a standards exam in Grade 3, for example—we asked that question. How many of your students do you think, teachers of Grade 3 mathematics, will not be able to successfully complete a provincial standards exam, and the answer that came back from the field from teachers currently teaching in the classroom was 5 percent. Five percent, indeed, is about the number that did not write the exam, and others had substantive adaptations made to assist them.

So the people we are talking about have not failed because they lacked the ability to pass; they have failed for other reasons. All of those measures I have written in about the societal things we are going to do, all those things, the differentiated teaching and all of those things are the types of corrective measures the member can see put in place, and I hope that she does not come back and say, well, those are all societal things, because that is what the member has said we need to do to ensure success in standards exams.

Mr. Chairperson: Could I ask the committee, does the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) have leave to ask questions from the front bench? [agreed]

The honourable member for St. James is in the Leader of the official opposition's seat. I said that just to identify it for Hansard.

The honourable member for St. James, with leave.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): I would like the ability to ask a few questions that relate specifically to assessment and evaluation. I will start maybe with a personal story I was sharing with colleagues, how I am having difficulty helping my son, who is in precalculus in Grade 10. This is after I was fairly successful in a university-educated math program, so I know that it is challenging, which is a positive, but there are other things which hamper his learning ability, and that could be because the curriculum, I understand, is fairly new.

Is the Grade 10 precalculus course being developed at the present time or just has recently been implemented?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, we are on Assessment and she is talking about Curriculum Development. Staff we have here are Assessment experts, not our developmental, but they all know a lot about each other's information. I just wanted to indicate that we are now off Assessment and on to Curriculum Development, which is a different topic, so just give us a minute. We are supposed to be doing Assessment and—

Mr. Chairperson: Assessment and Evaluation (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, but now we are talking about Curriculum Development.

Mr. Chairperson: Which line would that be on?

Mrs. McIntosh: Well, that is 16.2 or something like that—16.2.(d), but that is okay, we will go ahead. Just give us a minute because we do not have the Curriculum Development people here. She is asking about the development of the mathematic curriculum, and that is fine. I am just saying give us a bit of time here.

Some schools might have been piloting this year because we pilot everything the year before we bring it

in, so some schools may have been piloting it this year. The full system-wide implementation of new Senior 2 Mathematics will be at the 1998-99 year, which is next year, but it is being piloted. Precalculus math is being piloted in selected schools around the province. I do not know if that is one the member is with or not.

Ms. Mihychuk: This is where it leads into testing and evaluation, of course. This is probably a pilot program in this circumstance. He is at Daniel Mac, and I guess right now there is no textbook and even the answers to the questions for that curriculum have a very high degree of inaccurate responses at the back of the book when you look up the answers to help you go and solve the problem. So not only is there not the theoretical information so that he could refer to a textbook to then refer back, but the workbook that they are using to go through also needs considerable editing.

When the testing is now done on this pilot program, my concern is that perhaps there has not been sufficient preparation. Are certain considerations going to be given to these students because they are in this transition phase? I understand that there is considerable difficulty in this class. There are a couple of classes going through precalculus, and they find it extremely difficult going from the Grade 9 to this new program. Given that this is a test pilot, and given that assessment tools so far have indicated that they are having to struggle a great deal, is some help or provision going to be made for those students?

* (1710)

Mrs. McIntosh: I should indicate first of all there is no test for Senior 2, not in the pilot stage or in the off-pilot stage. Thus testing occurs at Grades 3, 6, 9, and 12. So there will be no test for this course that she is referring to, other than what the school division and, if it is Winnipeg School Division No. 1, they do divisional testing. At least I believe they were doing divisional testing at one point, but those would not be provincial tests.

The other information, staff is just preparing for me here. You had a question about textbooks and then about a workbook that had incorrect answers in the back. In terms of textual material, I have joining me at the table now, Mr. Chairman, Pat McDonald, Director

of Program Development, the staffperson here who deals with this type of question.

In some cases, Mr. Chairman, and I will provide you with the answer to this one in just a moment, people have talked about certain new curricula not having new textual materials when, in effect, in some of those new curriculum we are talking about is a 3 percent to 5 percent adjustment in the curriculum. So you might have a course that is 95 percent the same as it was before, with an added module of information or an updating of information that changes the course content maybe quite dramatically in that one little area. Overall, it only changes the course context about 5 percent, in which case the existing textual material, with the addition of a CD-ROM or some notebooks or some other materials, will provide what is required.

Some people said, well, it is a new curriculum and there is no brand-new textbook when, in effect, the existing textbooks are quite adequate to cover the curriculum, when it is supplemented with the other materials that come in that may not be textbooks. They may be other forms of textual material, so I will just provide this other information to you in a moment here.

The precalculus that we referred to, as I mentioned earlier, is in pilot stage. It is voluntarily being implemented in selected schools. The schools asked to pilot it, so anywhere it is in place, it is in place because the school wishes to be a pilot. Those places have all received copies of the curricula, the cumulative exercises, distance courses, whether they are not a school that requires distance education, the full distance education course materials are made available to any school that is piloting. They do not have to be distance ed to use them.

The existing learning resources for the existing 20S Math curricula have an extremely close match to the new precalculus course and they can be used, as I indicated before, that sometimes the old text material can be used. New learning resources curriculum matched to the new Senior 2 courses reviewed this spring. They will be available in September '98 when the whole system-wide is in place. Those students who are taking the pilot course are taking—I mean, precalculus is precalculus, there are not many ways you can change calculus. There are different methods you

can use to teach it, there are different things you can emphasize, but essentially they can have the distance ed curricula, if they want it, and the existing text material are extremely close matched. I do not know if staff have anything else that they wish to have added to that for the member's benefit, but while there is not a particular precalculus text, the existing 20S text is a close match. Couple that with the other help I have cited, there is real resource help available, because departmental staff are also available in pilot stages for assistance, as they are all the time.

Ms. Mihychuk: I did not want to spend too much time on this, and I do not want to move off the line because it was really an evaluation. Our local high school does extensive testing, and I did not mean to imply provincial exams. Just that he was being tested on a regular basis and was concerned about perhaps the effect of that—not the effect of testing. But let us say if we had a group of students who went into that and were not particularly successful, would they be able to then go into the general stream? There used to be 300 Math for the university entrance, and then there used to be a general math, and you could move down so in Grade 11, or that would be S3, would be able to go from that one into the lower, or the general—math for dummies, we used to call it—so can students still do that, move down, let us say, from one to the other? But I know that is not evaluation either. So it is a general constituency, family concern.

* (1720)

Mrs. McIntosh: In answer to the question, because the courses are changing, there no longer will be a course in math that has the easy way to add, the regular way to add and the hard way to add, and you can move from various levels of difficulty. There are now three different courses in math: there is applied math, consumer math, precalculus. All of those are stand-alone courses. So you do not move down to any one of them, but you could move sideways. If you wanted, you could take them all.

When you get into senior high where you are allowed to specialize more and you want to load up on mathematics because you are going to take a degree in mathematics, you could take consumer math and applied math and precalculus math. They are not

considered one inferior to the other; they are measuring different things.

So they are measuring different things. Some are undoubtedly more difficult than others, like the precalculus, which is probably a very difficult course to take for most students. But, depending upon what a student wishes to be, if they wish to become an apprentice and if they wish to enter the trades and become a carpenter, for example, then the applied math, Grade 12 Applied Math, would be essential because it deals with measuring, with distance, with weights and measures and all of those things that would be applied mathematics, the way you would use mathematics in real-life situations. It would be essential for their purposes.

But it would also be a university entrance subject. The are all S courses. Where before when you would have Math S and Math G, they are now all S courses, but they measure different things. So you do not move down, but you can move sideways and take a different math.

Ms. Mihychuk: So, in layman's terms, laywoman's terms, a student would then be required to take a Grade 10 Applied Math, perhaps, in the next year, if he wished to change directions? Or could you go to Grade 11 Applied Math?

Mrs. McIntosh: They would not be required to, but they could if they wanted to. Mr. Chairman, I think if I go through a little example it might help clarify the way it will be working.

If a student did not pass, say, a student was taking 20S Precalculus and did not pass the test, then what? That person can either, if they wished to get credit in 20S Precalculus, they could repeat the course or, if they decided that they did not care to have that particular math class as a credit, they could take a different 20S Math course. They are all 20S Math courses: 20S Precalculus, 20S Applied. So they could either repeat the 20S Precalculus or they could take a different 20S course.

Some divisions will have policies that they put in place that would apply, but this is what the province is saying that the province will allow. The department

would allow students to move from any math course at Senior 2 or Senior 3 to a different math course at Senior 3 or Senior 4. The school divisions can set prerequisites if they wish. We are saying that if you did not pass Calculus 20S and you wanted to take Precalculus 30S, the province says you can do that. Your school division may say: no, we insist you get 20S first, but we are saying that you can. It is important to remember that our policy is that of a shared responsibility for assessment, so the province will administer standards exams, for example. We will develop the standards exams; we will develop the standards testing program. The local school has a very significant role. They can decide things like prerequisites, et cetera. We are saying that you can move, if you wish to, from any math course at Senior 2 and Senior 3 to a different math course at Senior 3 or Senior 4. For example, you could take 20S Applied Math and 30S Precalculus. You might have a very difficult time. Your school division may well insist you have a prerequisite there. You could reverse it. But most schools will probably set prerequisites. We are saying as well that you have to have mathematics to graduate and you have to have language arts to graduate at the senior level, at the uppermost level in order to graduate. What order you take them in, whether you load up on them and take all of them, I mean, your division will probably allow you more credits than are required for graduation.

We have students who have graduated with incredible numbers of credits, like almost unbelievable numbers of credits that you would not think a person could possibly squeeze in in three years of high school, or four years if they started at Grade 9. We are also saying that people can come back after they graduate and take an additional four credits if they wish to, if they feel they wished they had taken a certain course in high school that when they graduated they did not have at their fingertips for knowledge purposes. Is there another area there that they would like shown?

The department policy is that a student needs to earn a credit in one Senior 2 Math before moving into Senior 3 Math. So you have to have at least one of the Senior 2 Mathematics to move into the Senior 3 Math. Just to give an example, you could earn a Senior 2 Precalculus Math and then take Senior 3 Applied Math without ever having taken Senior 2 Applied Math. You could switch

back and forth, but most divisions will probably set prerequisites and many will probably say, in fact the vast majority I think will be saying, that in order to take Senior 4 precalculus, you should have Senior 3 precalculus because to do otherwise is to really challenge yourself.

Having said that, there are some very superbright kids in gifted categories who are loading up on certain specialty courses who may wish to be able to do this and challenge the exam. Our goal here is not to prohibit them from doing that. If, in their opinion and their teacher's opinion, they have the ability to it, we do not wish to prohibit them from that choice. So the system is designed to try and accommodate the struggling learner plus the superhigh achiever.

* (1730)

Ms. Mihychuk: I just wanted to continue on my colleague's questions about staffing in terms of this branch, and I am wondering if the minister could indicate if we anticipate to see further growth beyond '99, and when are we going to max out? I know that there is a number of provincial exams that are being developed, and as we continue with the program, when will we reach our maximum, I guess is my question, and how many staff would we anticipate will be needed when we are in a full provincial exam program for Manitoba?

Mrs. Shirley Render, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. McIntosh: We anticipate moving to 61 staff by the end of next year. That is not our full complement, however, because we are into the years, the early 2000s, before we reach our full complement. We know that we will have extra staff added en route to that. I do not have exact numbers, but I could probably get projections as to what is expected if that is acceptable because it is too early to say exactly. We may find out that we can do things with fewer people than projected or whatever. So maybe I could get that from staff what we project by the time we finally have everything fully up and running.

We expect by the years 2001, 2002, that we will likely have added close to another 20 staff. Again, it is just a projection, and we are finding that we are making

some adjustments. For example, with Grade 6 and Grade 9 now, we have decided that we will allow some local marking. We had said before that we wanted only central marking, because we know central marking gives greater consistency. But the field had indicated a number of arenas where there were some benefits to going to local marking that we felt had sufficient merit that they weighed, so that in the middle years, we felt we should do some.

If we go, say, to divisional marking on a rotating basis for math and language arts locally, we will enable more teachers to take part in the assessment process which has a professional development component to it, and we will have less time out of the classroom by teachers. Teachers had said they felt it was a very high professional development exercise, and that by having central marking, they were prohibiting some teachers from taking part. Parents had said—teachers as well—but primarily parents, that by having it centrally marked, we had to pull teachers out of the classroom for too long, send them into the city.

We felt those were good points. So science and math at Grades 6 and 9 will be marked centrally, but math and L.A. at Grades 6 and 9 will be done locally. As we make adjustments like those, it will impact the number of staff we are going to require in the department ultimately. So that is why I say we think about 20 more, but it could be a little less. Not sure.

Ms. Mihychuk: It seems to me that one of the advantages for taking an exam is having the ability to review that exam and going through the areas that you maybe had problems with. Is it possible to get the exams back and know how you did on those questions on a provincial exam?

Mrs. McIntosh: Several things here. We mail out to every school a full student profile for each student saying John Jones on the Grade 3 math test, on question 1 showed he really understood spatial relations; on question 2 showed he needs more help in problem solving, because he could not successfully move from one step to another. So they get a full student profile for every student who wrote the test saying where they did well, where they did poorly, and what things need to be done to improve that student's strengths or improve the student's weaknesses and build upon the

strengths. Well, I guess, we want to improve strengths, too.

Secondly, we do not mail the tests out for two reasons although any parent can certainly get a copy of the test if they want a photocopy. They can get a photocopy if they want one, but the tests themselves have no markings on them, so even mailing back the test does not tell the parent anything. The papers are not marked, they are not touched with marks in any way. The paper stays clean; the marking is done on a separate sheet. So it is marked by one tester, goes to another tester, marked again. The two marks are compared to see if the two testers marked the same. If they did not, then it goes to a third marker who then checks to see why there was disparity between the two.

* (1740)

So the marks or the comments about the questions are on separate pieces of paper, which are then compiled into the student profile and mailed to every school. So we can mail the paper back if the parents maybe want to take a look at the questions or whatever, but there is no writing on the paper from a marker's perspective. They could see what the questions were and what the answers were, but they will not see any marks or any other person's writing on it.

We keep them for a year, and the reason we keep them for a year is in case there is an appeal. We have the original paper there that people can appeal if they say, well, I do not think that sounds right, I do not think that is what Johnny did on his test or whatever, and so we keep them there, but we do provide the information that most people require. However, if parents or schools or anybody that is directly affected, like the teacher or the school division or the parents want a copy of the test, they can write in. We ask them to pay so much per page, just to keep the cost down. So they pay a nominal fee, essentially, to cover the cost of photocopying and postage, and we will mail them a photocopy of the whole thing so they can have access to it.

The whole field knows that they can get copies of their child's standards tests and the schools know as well that they could obtain them, as we said, for the

cost of photocopying and mailing, just the processing costs, but we have not had very many requests. We have had a few people request copies, but mostly the student profile satisfies the need. The student profile is the key, but they can get them and we have not had very many asked and it has not been a subject of concern, particularly, at least not that I am aware of.

So, in summary, marks and comments are not placed directly on the student's paper. We use a double blind system of marking so that it is conceivable that the paper might have to go to six or seven people before an actual determination is made. Hence that is why there is nothing written on the paper, because everything is done on separate sheets to ensure that double blind or triple blind security is there. I do not know if that answers your question or not.

Ms. Mihychuk: It is fairly common that after you take a test or an exam in a less formal setting that you would get your marked exam back and then have an opportunity to go through the questions one by one. Often teachers will go through the whole exam saying this is how you solve the problem. Is that the process now used on provincial exams? Do teachers have a copy of the test and would go through it with students, and do they then have the student evaluation or whatever it is called, student profile, so a teacher would be able to virtually figure out how the student did on that test? I guess, is there a follow-up to the exam? Do teachers go through the exam step by step so that at least students would have an understanding of where they maybe saw the shortfalls. I think that is an important part of the learning process. If that is not done, then we are really just doing a testing tool rather than a learning experience.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairman, that is, of course, the main purpose behind standards exams. The prime purpose is a diagnostic tool. The secondary purpose is to alert, at the exit level in Grade 12, post-secondary learning institutions and employers what understandings that student has. That is a very key component, as well, as the universities have told us. I mean we have year one in place at the University of Manitoba, because this problem was not addressed years ago. Everybody knows it and everybody is challenged by it.

But the way this would work, the way it is supposed to be working, the way in many places it is working, and the way it will be working in areas where it is not yet working this way, is that the student profiles go out to every school. The teachers are expected to sit down with the families and the student and say: Here is Joe; Joe has shown on this test, by virtue of this exclusive analysis of his exam and his exam alone, he has trouble with deductive reasoning; he does not understand.

Like if you say to Joe: all hoodlums wear black leather jackets; I wear a black leather jacket, therefore, I am a hoodlum, Joe does not understand what is wrong with that statement, because his deductive-reasoning powers need work. Because this will take place—the exam is written in May; the results come back in June—the family and Joe then can work on that over the summer at the next year.

This is where differentiated teaching comes in. It is why it is so critical that the handbook we sent out be utilized. It is why some teachers are upset about standards exams, and it is why some teachers embrace them. Because this means then for next year, that student profile goes to the receiving teacher, and that receiving teacher knows a lot more than that receiving teacher ever used to know, which is Johnny got 60 on math. That receiving teacher knows exactly what work that teacher has to do with Johnny to ensure a more full understanding of math. Using differentiated teaching techniques, that teacher may have to work on different things with different students in that class to meet the challenge of ensuring that Johnny goes through that year without gaps in learning, or Joe, or whatever the student's name is.

It is a big challenge, but it is extremely exciting, because it recognizes the uniqueness of each student; it individualizes an educational plan indirectly for each student. It gives high school students in many respects the kinds of opportunities that elementary students have had.

We found this when we started talking about differentiated instruction that with elementary teachers, many, if not most, have automatically been doing this for years. They put people into small groups; they work on extra things; they have individualized plans for students. They do it very well. At the high school level

where we have evolved into more of a lecture format, over time and over history at the high school level, we have approached in many ways a university-type model in some classes where it is a lecture, audience-type teaching method. We are saying that that is going to change with standards tests and that the senior years' teachers are going to have to operate with methodology more like the primary school teachers.

* (1750)

So it is a challenge. It is more work in the beginning, but I think that, once the techniques are comfortably in place, it will be much more satisfying because students will begin to do better. It is the detailed, analytical, synthesized piece of the student profile that is needed to meet and work meaningfully with the child and the parent in that fall period that starts when school starts in September. So the follow-up is critical. Without the follow-up, then all we have is a measurement that we can say: is this not interesting for information for the public in terms of accountability? The students have learned the desired outcomes by the end of Grade 9. That is interesting and it shows our accountability, but it does not do the important thing, which is to go on and use that as a diagnostic tool, which is the single most, main, important purpose of standards exams. The rest is the incidental part, although it is nice to be accountable and being accountable is important. The primary purpose is to enhance the students' ability to learn more, absorb more, and apply more knowledge to a measurable standard that will stand them well in the world outside of school.

These were things that were told us very loudly and very clearly in the first two Parents' Forums that were held by my predecessor. Five hundred parents at random said we need this in our system. It has been a long time to put in place. It is a slow, gruelling process, requires a lot of change. Change is always unsettling, but I believe it is good change. I believe that, as more and more people really understand the full impact and the benefits of it, it is a change that is being seen more and more as welcome, not just by parents who welcome it from the beginning, but also by educators.

There was a period—and we are just coming out of it—when educators were nervous about this. That was relayed in some school divisions. Boards were nervous

about it. Where boards were nervous and educators were nervous, that was passed on to parents who became nervous. Quite the opposite occurred in divisions where boards and educators embraced it. Parents were very positive. The high level of success in those divisions with those who embraced the change is really quite amazing compared to those who resisted it. We are now seeing that turning; those divisions that were saying that we do not think we can stomach this change are slowly coming around to saying: well, gee, yeah, we are seeing what is happening in other divisions and maybe we were overly cautious. Maybe we were overly frightened, and maybe we should rethink our position on this, because it seems to be working really well where it is working, and those kids are soaring, and ours are not. So it is coming around to acceptance, but it all came back in the beginning to parents' insistence that this occur, and we agreed with them. The more I see it, the more I agree.

Ms. Mihychuk: Just on the same topic, is it possible for a student to take a provincial exam, perhaps have a bad day for whatever reason—and that happens to all of us; at least it happens to me—and not be successful on the exam? Is it possible to retake that exam in a fairly short term, or do you have to go to the next semestered window or opportunity? Can you apply to the province to redo the exam?

Mrs. McIntosh: We do not have a rewrite policy. Our position right now is that in most of the cases, a student who gets a failing grade on a subject, the failing grade would be a combination of the standards exam and the year's work. The failing grade would normally imply that there is still bodies of knowledge or areas of knowledge that needed to be acquired, and therefore it would be worth resuming the studies until that knowledge was obtained.

Coming back to our time is the variable learning is the constant. You keep right on learning. It may take you a bit longer in some cases; you may be able to do it in a shorter period of time in others. But the other thing that is important to recognize that in no case, at the present time and even in the future, will a standards exam be worth more than half of the course. The most it might be on our present schedule will be that, ultimately, there will be two subjects where it would be worth 50 percent of the course, but the others are all

like 30 percent, et cetera, so even failing a standards exam does not mean failing the grade.

If you have been having a good year and just a bad day, then it is not likely that you would fail the grade or fail that course, because if you are having a good year the other assessment tools would kick in and promote you. It may lower your mark. Many students now who have marks that are lower than they would like on divisional exams, because a lot of divisions have had exams in the last 10 years, students graduate with a divisional mark that is based upon half exam and half the year's work. If they want to raise the mark, they will come back and repeat the exam at the next round of exams.

We could put in a rewrite exams, but that would again be an extra cost, and I think in very few exceptions, very rarely would there be an instance where more time should not be taken. In those events, students can appeal the mark, like, it can be appealed, but not rewritten.

The Acting Chairperson (Mrs. Render): The honourable member for St. James, and I caution her to keep an eye on the clock. We are just about out of time. A very quick question.

Ms. Mihychuk: I have a very quick question and that is: does the minister anticipate or plan to make the student profiles available to parents? These are discretionary, up to the school or the teacher or parents

have access, so, at a parent-teacher interview, you would get these profiles available?

Mrs. McIntosh: Right now the student profiles go to the schools, go to the teachers, and it is expected and encouraged that they would share those results with the parents. We have stopped short of ordering them simply because so many people have said you should not be ordering the schools to do this, do not order the teachers to do this, do not make the teachers do that. If they share the results with the parents, the parents might get mad at them, whatever, do not make them do it.

So we are assuming that they will because it is something that parents deserve to have. But having said that, parents have access to their children's file; they have that right, and this information is stuff that should be in the children's file. Now we can make it compulsory that they share. I think in most cases they do. It would be a very rare division that would not share that information with the child's parent. That would be most unusual and most unfair, I think.

The Acting Chairperson (Mrs. Render): The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 4, 1998

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Lamoureux; Praznik	2471
		Doer; Filmon	2474
Presenting Petitions			
Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization Martindale	2465	SHL Systemhouse Maloway; Pitura	2470
		Law Enforcement Review Agency Mackintosh; Toews	2473
Reading and Receiving Petitions			
Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization Martindale	2465	Brandon General Hospital L. Evans; Praznik	2473
		Students-At-Risk Report Friesen; McIntosh	2475
Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees		Members' Statements	
Committee of Supply Laurendeau	2465	Housing Starts Tweed	2476
Introduction of Bills		Gilbert and Sullivan Society Sale	2476
Bill 47, Brandon University Act	2465	Student Employment Centres Dyck	2476
Bill 48, Mennonite College Federation and Consequential Amendments Act	2466	Canada-Manitoba Flood-Proofing Program Wowchuk	2477
Bill 49, University of Winnipeg Act	2466	Crow Rate—Elimination Penner	2477
Bill 50, Universities Establishment Repeal and Consequential Amendments Act	2466		
Bill 51, Cooperatives and Consequential Amendments Act	2466	ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Bill 52, Health Services Insurance Amendment Act	2466	Committee of Supply (Concurrent Sections)	
Oral Questions		Civil Service Commission	
Personal Care Homes Doer; Praznik	2466	Barrett	2478
		Gilleshammer	2478
Hepatitis C Doer; Filmon	2467	Employee Benefits and Other Payments	
McGifford; Filmon	2469	Barrett	2489
		Gilleshammer	2490
		Family Services	

Mitchelson	2493	McAlpine	2527
Martindale	2498	Penner	2533
Health		Sale	2536
Tweed	2507	Laurendeau	2541
Ashton	2509		
Praznik	2515	Education and Training	
McGifford	2516	McIntosh	2541
Toews	2517	Friesen	2542
Enns	2525	Mihychuk	2556