



Fifth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	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	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley, Hon.	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, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 31, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

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

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flood Conditions

Hon. Frank Pitura (Acting Minister of Natural Resources): I have a ministerial statement on behalf of the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings).

Unfortunately, heavy rain again struck the Souris River watershed over the weekend with 25 to 35 millimetres of precipitation reported in most regions of the watershed including adjoining areas of Saskatchewan and North Dakota. The additional precipitation will cause the tributaries of the Souris River to rise somewhat but will only slow the rate of fall of the river. The additional heavy rain will also delay the drying of flooded fields and saturated soils in the watershed by a week to 10 days. Meanwhile, the Pembina River received close to 25 millimetres of rain in the area from Turtle Mountain to Rock Lake. This will increase tributary flows but will only reduce the rate of fall in the flooded area from Rock Lake to Swan Lake. Some flooding of lower areas is likely from Swan Lake to Windygates.

The Assiniboine River watershed downstream from St. Lazare received almost 25 millimetres of rain on the weekend. This additional precipitation will reduce the rate of fall of the Assiniboine from Miniota to Portage la Prairie, but rises are not expected. As well, substantial rainfall on the weekend in the Red River watershed from Grand Forks to Emerson is likely to reduce the rate of fall of the Red River in Manitoba during the next 10 days.

Weather conditions remain unstable. Unfortunately, the weather forecast is calling for further precipitation later this week. Thank you.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): I want to thank the Minister for Government Services for presenting us with this update on the flood conditions in several parts of our province on behalf of the Minister of Natural Resources. So I thank him for updating us.

Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House join with the minister in wishing all the best to those communities lying along the Souris River watershed and the Assiniboine River watershed, those people living along the Pembina River who are going through a very tough spring. Also, we want to wish well the farmers who are still trying to scratch their way onto the land, trying to find some places on their quarter sections that are dry enough to actually get some seeding done. We are hoping that Mother Nature will co-operate with their efforts to get out and do their seeding this spring.

This presented a number of problems for farmers, in terms of deadlines for crop insurance, which we are hoping the government can move on, and also it presents some problems and some challenges for this government to work cooperatively with the local officials to co-ordinate the immediate drainage of farm areas in the southwest and other parts of our province which right now are experiencing very wet, saturated conditions.

So we thank the minister for this update, and we hope for all the best in these areas, in these watersheds that are very wet this spring. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1335)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the Supplementary Information, 1999-2000, for the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Winnipeg Hospital Authority Stretcher Services—Patient Transfers

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, at committee we heard about the stress on ambulance staff in the city of Winnipeg, the tremendous pressure a number of people working in our ambulance services are under. Mr. Fotti has written the government about another potential safety and health concern in that the WHA is apparently now using stretcher car companies to transport patients. I would like to ask the minister: are stretcher car companies being utilized? I would like to ask the Premier: are stretcher car companies now being utilized to transport urgent patients in Winnipeg?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I am sure the Leader of the Opposition is aware that recently the City of Winnipeg indicated that they wanted to be out of the interfacility transfer within 90 days, the transfers between hospitals in Winnipeg and the transfers from the airport to hospitals in Winnipeg. The WHA has agreed to have discussions about that important issue with the City of Winnipeg in terms of how that can be done and the most effective means. Obviously, there are situations where ambulances are required to transport patients. There can also be situations where ambulances are not necessarily required, and there can be a more cost-effective way to provide that transport for the patient. So those discussions are ongoing right now between the WHA and the City of Winnipeg. I think a

timeline of 90 days was set on those discussions, and we will wait for them to conclude.

Mr. Doer: Well, Madam Speaker, maybe we need less than seven vice-presidents of the WHA and more ambulances dealing with urgent patients in Winnipeg.

The definition of "urgent patients" is acute deterioration not anticipated but intervention may be required en route. Is the minister now saying or the Premier now agreeing that it is the government policy to allow urgent patients to be transported in Winnipeg by stretcher car companies, not by ambulances?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, we are saying no such thing. In fact, one of the reasons given by the City of Winnipeg to want to enter these negotiations with the WHA is the whole issue that they believe that it can free up two ambulances from within their existing complement to provide the more urgent services to individuals in the city of Winnipeg. So the view of the city is certainly to provide additional resources for the urgent need by taking advantage of the opportunity to transport patients who do not require an ambulance-type vehicle or ambulance service to transfer between facilities or between the airport and facilities. So it is clearly being done with a view to enhancing the capacity and services of urgent requirements here in the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the people on the front lines, Mr. Fotti has written the minister and indicated that stretcher car companies are transporting patients under urgent category. I would like to ask the minister: will he investigate this concern, and will he clearly state that it is absolutely unacceptable for stretcher car companies to transport urgent patients in Manitoba? Our loved ones deserve to have ambulance services and trained ambulance staff transporting urgent patients with the adequate training and equipment. I would ask the minister to take charge of this issue and ensure that that is happening at the community level.

Mr. Stefanson: I will do just that. I will look into this issue in further detail because the whole premise and basis of it is exactly what I have outlined in this House. The discussions between

the City of Winnipeg and the WHA are on the basis of freeing up two ambulance units within the city of Winnipeg to meet urgent requirements in the city of Winnipeg and to transport patients between facilities and between the airport and facilities where a more cost-effective way can do it without in any way jeopardizing the safety or care for that patient. That is the fundamental principle behind any changes. Those changes have not taken place. That discussion is ongoing. I think a 90-day time frame was put on those negotiations between the City of Winnipeg and the WHA. But certainly the fundamental objective is where an ambulance is the most appropriate type of vehicle that should be providing services, that should be done. If it can be done where it is merely a transfer on a nonurgent or a non-emergent basis where there is no risk whatsoever to the patient, then I think we would all agree that we should be looking at doing that in the most cost-effective way possible.

* (1340)

Rehabilitation Centre Mice Infestation

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, it is very unfortunate in our health care system, when, at a public forum on Saturday attended by representatives from all three parties, a woman had to stand up and ask the representative of the Conservative Party what the government will do about vermin infestation at the rehab centre in the city of Winnipeg.

You know, it is unfortunate, Madam Speaker, we have millions of dollars for executives in regional health authorities; we have \$500,000 for an advertising campaign, and a woman has to stand up at a public meeting and ask the minister what are you going to do about the vermin at the rehab centre. Now I understand that there has been exterminators there this morning as a result.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the honourable member please pose his question.

Mr. Chomiak: My question to the minister is: why does it take months for people to get a response to an issue like this when the

government has hundreds of thousands of dollars for advertising and millions of dollars for executives, but a woman has to stand up and go public with an issue like this, Madam Speaker?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I usually give the member for Kildonan more credit for doing some research, and I know he has been on the phone this morning. That is why I am surprised with the tone and nature of his question, because this issue, the issue of mice being discovered at the rehab centre at HSC, occurred over a month ago. It is, I am told, as a result of the construction that is taking place on the facility. In fact, it is related, I believe, to the construction for the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation, some \$47-million construction. Immediately the HSC took action. They called in exterminators on contract to deal with the issue. They have continued to work with the exterminators. I have been told that in the events of the last week there has been no evidence of mice of any nature. So, again, I am told it relates to the construction, the degree of activity taking place on the site, and immediately upon being made aware of it, I am told, the HSC took the appropriate steps to deal with the issue.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, how is it that after 11 years of Conservative government, our health facilities can deteriorate to such a state that we have to raise the issue of fruit flies in the operating room, a woman had to go to a public meeting to raise the high profile and get exterminators in today to deal with the issue of vermin at the Health Sciences Centre?

Will the minister not recognize the deteriorating conditions in our health care system and outline for us how they deal with these procedures so people do not have to have their loved ones experience what this woman's loved ones experienced?

Mr. Stefanson: Again, Madam Speaker, I have outlined for the member for Kildonan what I am told was the sequence of events. When it came to the attention of HSC, as a result of extensive construction that is taking place onsite, they took immediate action to deal with the situation. They called in exterminators. They are dealing with the situation; they are monitoring the

situation. The reality is, unfortunately, in our climate in our province, whenever we have activities taking place in our homes, in our buildings, and so on, this is one of the risks that we all face, and we are all well aware of. But I am told that immediate action was taken to deal with the situation at HSC.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, I would like the minister to table in this House an outline for the members of this Legislature and the public, what the conditions are in the facilities in Winnipeg and around the province with respect to infestations. Will the minister not agree that it is, in fact, a result of the deterioration and the failure of this government to upgrade our facilities and the broken promises for the past 11 years?

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, again, I usually give the member for Kildonan more credit for the research he does on an issue and his appreciation and understanding of why things happen. I have outlined for him on two occasions here this afternoon what happened in this particular case at the HSC as a result of significant—and I hear the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) suggesting rats and so on.

Again, it is typical desperation on their part to completely exaggerate, overstate, not come here with facts or whatever, even though I know the member for Kildonan this morning was provided with some information, was provided with some facts, again, to come to this House and try to scare people. That is classic time and time and time again. Those members opposite try to do just that. I say shame to them, shame.

* (1345)

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: A point of order, Madam Speaker. The minister knows full well that it is against Beauchesne to impute motives to a member of this Legislature. I would like to remind the minister that it was we who raised the issue of Holiday Haven in this Chamber, and they denied it. We raised the issue of fruit flies, and they denied it.

To this very point, a woman was forced to stand up at a public forum and say why has nothing been done for months about vermin at the rehab centre, and the representative for the Conservative Party said that is an operational issue, that is an operational issue. So we said we would raise it on their behalf for the people of Manitoba, as we have done for 11 years.

I ask you to call the minister to order and not impute motives to members on this side of the House who have been right 99.9 percent of the time.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind all honourable members when stating a point of order, it is not a time for debate. It is a time to put what the violation of the rule is on the record.

The honourable Minister of Health, on the same point of order.

Mr. Stefanson: On the same point of order, Madam Speaker. I do not believe the member for Kildonan has a point of order whatsoever.

He is correct that this matter was raised, I am told, at a forum, a public forum on Saturday at which he was in attendance. I am also told this morning that he had discussions with officials, which he should be doing when an issue is brought to his attention. I would expect him to follow up on it and so on. Again, various information has been provided in terms of what is being done at Health Sciences Centre, and again that is the appropriate thing to do. But to come here and try to exaggerate a situation and start to make all kinds of accusations, that are not the case, from his Leader and others across is absolutely irresponsible.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson, on the same point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Madam Speaker. In his comments on the point of order raised by the member for Kildonan, the Minister of Health reinforced, once again, the fact that his

comments were unparliamentary when he said that the member for Kildonan was exaggerating.

The fact is that you have a situation where you have vermin in a medical facility, we have had fruit flies in operating rooms, we have raised these issues, and after 11 years for this Minister of Health to get up and accuse us of scaring people, I would say to this Minister of Health, what scares people is having rats and fruit flies in our medical facilities.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Kildonan, I will indeed take the matter under advisement and report back to the Chamber.

* * *

Madam Speaker: [interjection] New question? The honourable member for Kildonan, with a new question.

Urban Shared Services Corporation CEO Resignation

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Yes, Madam Speaker, it has just been brought to my attention, and I will ask the minister to confirm whether or not in fact the CEO of the Urban Shared Services has resigned.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, on May 28 a news release was put out by Urban Shared Services: Management Change Announced. It is a one-page release that I can certainly table here in this House today. I just have one copy, but: "Urban Shared Services Corporation today announced that Joe Sheil, Chief Executive Officer has tendered his resignation. He has agreed to continue in his present position until July 16, 1999 to provide the USSC Board of Directors time to implement the necessary transition and to incorporate changes that may be required." There is then a comment from the chair of the board. I will not read the entire release, but I will certainly table it here right now.

*(1350)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the minister can use this opportunity and can advise

this House whether or not the resignation of the chief officer only points to the fact that this entire episode is a failure on the part of the government, the whole frozen food initiative, and whether or not the government will use this opportunity to perhaps rethink the entire concept for the benefit of all Manitobans with respect to frozen food.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, no, I do not agree with the preamble from the member opposite. I have tabled a copy of the release that outlines some of the rationale Mr. Sheil is moving on. I also have a copy of some additional correspondence from him. It was not a simple decision for him. However, for personal and career reasons, he feels that it is important to explore other opportunities.

In terms of dealing with all of the staff and the board, Mr. John Bulman, the chairman of the corporation, went on to say that in the weeks ahead it is important we work together to ensure USSC continues to move forward through a smooth transition and on to further development. Because the operation is already running smoothly, I do not foresee any operational problems in the near future.

So, again, we have a competent board in place. It is a board representing all nine hospitals plus citizen representation. I am sure that they will be moving forward to ultimately fill Mr. Sheil's very important position.

CEO Resignation-Severance Package

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my final supplementary to the minister: will the minister table in this House, given our experience with Connie Curran and other hiring fiascos of the government, the severance package and all that information related to Mr. Sheil, and his contract, because it is public money and we deserve to know?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Well, Madam Speaker, I will certainly look into that entire matter and return with as much information as I can. The member knows we are in Estimates process. We have been in Estimates process the last two weeks. I believe we will be back into it probably again today.

We can certainly get into this issue in more detail, but I will look into that entire matter and provide as much information on the ultimate final settlement with Mr. Sheil as I can.

Western Opinion Research Government Grant

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, on Thursday of last week the Premier of this province shamefully blamed his staff for failing to put out a press release in regard to a \$100,000 grant to Western Opinion Research. There is a file box full of press releases put out during the time his staffperson was on maternity leave—hundreds of them. Will this Premier finally take responsibility for the fact that no press release was ever intended, and not blame his staff in front of the media? Shame.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I know that the member opposite is hungry for any kind of publicity that he can get. He sits there in the back row languishing away. So—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, Beuchesne 417, deal with the matter raised, and also a member's answer should not impute motives. The minister clearly is imputing motives. I am not hungry for press, I am hungry for justice.

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

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I would not want to hurt the feelings of the member opposite, so if there was anything in what I said about languishing that imputed motives, I will withdraw that.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable First Minister, and that deals with the point of order.

* * *

*(1355)

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

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the member opposite knows that governments have to have terms and conditions for policies that apply to anybody who might apply for support. But what really irks the member opposite is the fact that we are creating jobs in this province, that jobs are being created because of the policies of this government. We have given similar forgivable loans to 14 different call centre operations in this province. Overall, the call centre industry has created over 8,000 jobs since 1990. I might say that the smallest amount of public support of all of those 14 operations was to Western Opinion Research. They are creating 78 jobs.

We are proud of our record of job creation. It is only the duke of despair over there who would complain about job creation, opportunity creation and a better economy for this province. Only the member for Crescentwood and his colleagues would continually try and paint it black.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, only the Premier after apologizing earlier on in his question would again break our rules. It is not parliamentary to call someone by any name of that nature. Members should be called by their constituency names. I would ask the First Minister if maybe he can apologize one more time.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson did indeed have a point of order. All members in this Chamber are honourable members. I would therefore ask that the honourable First Minister withdraw his comments.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I would certainly withdraw the offensive comments.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable First Minister.

* * *

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the Premier would confirm that Mr. Jules Benson

was the head of Treasury Board at the time of this grant, and will he tell the House what the communication strategy required on the Treasury Board submission was?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I do not have the Treasury Board submission, and I am not on Treasury Board, so I could not confirm either one of those assertions. The member opposite knows because I recall him coming to Treasury Board inadequately prepared, as he always was, and I remember him coming to Treasury Board in the days when he remained a politically appointed public servant from the New Democratic days, so he knows that the process is that the board makes the decision, not the secretary of Treasury Board.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the Premier simply table for this House a certified copy of the Treasury Board submission showing the communication strategy that was required for this grant? Simple question. Will he do it?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, Orders-in-Council are public information. That is the basis on which he has the information that he has parlayed into all of these questions. Treasury Board submissions are not public information and so I am unable to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

* (1400)

Political Donations Out-of-Province Campaigns

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier. According to the documents that I will table, the Manitoba NDP donated \$3,200 to a campaign of a Nova Scotia NDP candidate, Errol Gaum.

Can the Premier indicate whether or not these types of political donations are illegal in Manitoba, given that 75 percent tax rebate is offered to Manitobans who donate money to political parties with the expectation that that money would be used in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I am not certain as to whether or not there is any breach of the law, but I am prepared to refer this to the Elections Manitoba people for review. Clearly this borders on ethical conduct that is questionable, given that the—

An Honourable Member: You are an expert on ethics, Gary.

Mr. Filmon: The New Democrats think it is funny, Madam Speaker, to take money that was legitimately donated to them in Manitoba, for which a tax receipt was obviously issued, and then to contribute it to an out-of-province campaign. I know that we do not have an Election Finances Act in Manitoba that covers municipal-level candidates, and they have been using the act to provide for municipal and federal coverage in the past. I know that the members opposite will use any loophole that they can for their purposes. I will refer the matter to Elections Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: We in the Liberal Party do not believe that it is indeed appropriate, and we would ask the Premier to make it very clear if he believes this type of donation on the part of a political party is in fact appropriate.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I do not find it appropriate, but I cannot say at this point whether or not it is legal. So that is why I will refer the matter to Elections Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: Given the importance of perception, will the Premier bring forth legislation to assure Manitoba taxpayers are not subsidizing political activities in other provinces through the Manitoba political tax credit?

Mr. Filmon: That is an excellent suggestion. I will take the matter under advisement and determine what course of action is necessary in order to accomplish that.

Crop Insurance Late Seeding Deadline

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): My question is for the Premier. I want to table a letter from Mr. Clifford Kutzan, who is the reeve of the R.M. of Grandview. Mr. Kutzan and his council are

dealing with problems in the Grandview area having to do with excessive amounts of moisture. Last fall the area received almost 40 inches of rain and another seven inches of rain this spring. Their land is saturated.

Can the Premier explain whether his government is prepared to extend the crop insurance deadline for the farmers in this area, in Grandview and Gilbert Plains, so that they can have a chance to put in their crops this year, and can he indicate whether he is prepared to waive the late seeding penalty?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Subsequent to the flood on the Red River in 1997, Crop Insurance made available an opportunity for late seeding beyond the crop insurance deadline date. My understanding is that will provide up to 80 percent coverage for that circumstance. Obviously, our first preference is that the weather conditions change for the better and that all of the people get the opportunity to seed their crops and to harvest their crops this year. We believe that the farm producers would prefer that option too.

I remember very well in this House, back in 1997, when members opposite were talking about extension of those deadlines and urging all of those things. We had something like a half million acres at risk at that time in the Red River Valley. In the end, it was, I believe, less than 3,000 acres that did not get seeded. So our first preference, and I would think the first preference of the farm producers, would be to get that seeding done, and that is certainly what we are all hoping for.

AIDA Program Assistance Criteria—Flooding

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, given that the first crop deadline is later this week and that some of these farmers are just getting on their fields today, can the First Minister indicate whether the AIDA process can be speeded up to help these farmers at Grandview and Gilbert Plains, farmers who are in a real bind this week?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns),

I know, was in touch with the federal officials after discussions last week that we had in cabinet. I understand that the federal Minister Vanclief was favourably disposed towards doing whatever he could to support our efforts to support our farmers here. Final details about all of these things are not able to be announced at the moment as the federal officials are going through the various possible opportunities that they have to address the situation.

I do know that I heard this morning the federal member of Parliament, Rick Borotsik, talking about his discussions with Minister Vanclief and Minister Goodale. There is a desire on the part of everybody concerned to exercise good will and to try and make available programs to support the farmers throughout the western part of our province and the southern part of our province, who are obviously having difficulty with extreme moisture conditions that are unusual, if not unprecedented, in recent times in the area. So we will certainly work co-operatively towards that goal.

As the member knows, this government, in anticipating that AIDA would not produce immediate payouts, brought in loans and loan guarantees to try and ensure that farmers did have money available to get seeding in this year. We obviously have a concern then about bridging over to next year if some of them end up not being able to seed at all, which of course nobody hopes for but is a possibility that is being faced by some, particularly in the southwest.

Municipal Officials Meeting Requests

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, will the Premier assure the House that along with contacting the councils and farmers in the southwest corner of the province, that councils in Gilbert Plains and Grandview will be contacted and notified of what this government is prepared to do to help these farmers who are facing a crunch this seeding time?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, we are certainly open to discussions, consultations, with people involved. I am meeting with a number of rural municipal

officials from the southwest corner tomorrow who called in today and asked for a meeting.

If he has any of his friends and colleagues from that area of Grandview and surrounding area that are looking for answers, then certainly I will make sure that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) and his staff are able to respond to them and give them as much information as we have available to us on any and all of these potential programs or responses.

Cervical Cancer Screening Program Status Report

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, neither past questions nor a private member's resolution have moved this Health minister nor any of his predecessors to open the much-awaited and much-announced central cervical cancer registry, despite the fact that each year 20 Manitoba women die from this highly treatable disease.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health today, who well knows the unhappy statistics, when or if he intends to initiate this lifesaving program.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Well, Madam Speaker, since the member last asked about this very important program, there have been ongoing discussions with the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation in terms of the implementation of the program. There have been some outstanding issues that still had to be addressed. I believe that all of the issues have now been addressed, and I would expect that we will be coming forward very, very shortly outlining this very important cervical cancer screening program for the province of Manitoba.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister then if he could give us dates and places and if he could assure us that when the registry is indeed in place, if women from rural and northern Manitoba will have the opportunity to participate.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, again, I think the member should wait for all of the details which will be outlined as soon as the program is announced.

Madam Speaker, I do want to indicate that we are very close to being able to come forward with all of the details of the program, I would hope as early as this week if everything can be put together for that. As I have indicated, there have been some outstanding issues that had to be addressed. Certainly one very important issue is the whole issue of personal privacy which I think we can all respect in this House. I believe the issues have now all been addressed and will be coming forward very shortly.

* (1410)

Swan River Hospital Capital Project—Community Contribution

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, people in the Swan River area are very concerned with some of the plans of this government for the Swan River hospital facility. I would like to ask the Minister of Health: why does this government continue to insist that the community must pay 20 percent of the financing for the project when it is known that the problem is caused, in part, by the fact that this government cancelled renovation projects to the Swan River facility which could have helped to prevent the mould buildup problem that we have in the facility?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Well, to the best of my knowledge the member is wrong. In terms of reviewing department background, I cannot find any evidence of cancellation of programs for the Swan River hospital, in fact, quite the opposite. Over the last several years there have been hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on maintenance, on renovations for that facility, and again, as the member knows, the community contribution policy, of which there has been a policy in place of one type or another for many decades in Manitoba, does allow for the opportunity of a 10 percent contribution up front.

As the member knows, she was at a meeting that I was at a week ago Friday where we met with the hospital board, we met with the regional health authority, we met with many of the municipal leaders, we talked about the significant investment that the taxpayers of Manitoba are going to make in a temporary

facility which will be covered 100 percent by the provincial government in Swan River. We talked about the state-of-the-art facility that is going to be built in Swan River, maintaining all of the existing health care services and probably expanding on some services like ambulatory care and so on, and we talked about the whole issue of the community contribution not in any way being an impediment, because there is a unique situation here.

We are prepared to start the project immediately, and we will continue to work with the communities on that issue as well. So, in terms of the meetings I had with municipal leaders, people on the health boards, the staff, the doctors, the nurses, and other staff, it was very well received by all of the people we came in contact with that day in Swan River.

Ms. Wowchuk: How can the minister say there was no cancellation of a project when there was an announcement where the previous, previous Minister of Health was in Swan River, unveiling a picture of all the renovations that were going to take place to the Swan River facility that were cancelled after the last election? How can you say there was no promise for renovations?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I will gladly send the member a summary of the many renovations that were done to the facility. Just to give her an example of a couple, there were major roof repairs, \$184,000 just in April of 1997, a number of other initiatives with money being spent back in 1996, renovation and upgrades of \$485,000. I have had the department go back in the records, and they have not come forward with any evidence of that. In speaking to members of the board, they did not point to anything either. As well, the board itself had a surplus position. They had trust funds set aside, and if they felt there was an important issue that needed to be addressed in terms of the well-being of that facility, they also had the opportunity, so again there was nothing to point to that shows there was any neglect on anybody's part. Unfortunately, mould can happen in our province and it did happen in this facility, but the important thing is we are taking immediate steps to put in place a \$2-million to \$2.5-million temporary facility, paid for by the government of Manitoba to commit to a state-of-the-art hospital

facility that will serve Swan River and the entire region at a capital cost probably of \$20 million, and we are taking the necessary steps to move forward in that community.

Swan River Hospital Temporary Facility

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Speaking of a temporary facility, Madam Speaker, can the minister tell this House why he has approved funding for only a 20-bed temporary facility that will serve the region for up to three years when he has been told by staff, by the doctors and other people on the board that they would require a 40-bed temporary facility to provide the services? Why are you cutting half the beds?

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

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Well, Madam Speaker, I think what the member fails to either acknowledge or recognize, I hope it is just to acknowledge, I hope she recognizes that there have been extensive discussions with the hospital board, with the management of the hospital, with the board itself, with the regional health authority in terms of the kind of temporary facility that should be in place. It is not being done in isolation by the government of Manitoba. It is being done in co-operation with the community, with the people that are delivering the health care services in that community.

I did indicate that we would take one more look at that whole issue in terms of being sure that the temporary facility is of the right size, but I want to remind her that it is being done after extensive involvement from the people in the hospital, from the hospital board, from the regional health board and so on, who are having input into this important facility. The good news for the community is that we are moving forward immediately with that temporary facility, expected to be opened by the end of September of this year, and we are moving forward immediately, moving into design for a state-of-the-art new hospital to meet the needs not only of Swan River but the entire region.

Troy Baird
Bail Hearing—Transcript Review

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, last month I asked the Justice minister to review the transcript of the decision of Judge Newcombe where he released Troy Baird on bail while facing charges of attempted murder, forcible confinement, uttering threats and suicide aiding. Mr. Baird was then charged within a few days of his release of sexually assaulting his wife causing bodily harm. I asked the minister to get back to me and get back to the House with his position because of the very disturbing views, in my opinion, that are found in that transcript. The minister has had several weeks, and I wonder—I have not heard back—has the minister now reviewed the transcript.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Madam Speaker, the matter of reviewing that particular transcript is a matter which my department is responsible for, and if there is any specific issue that the member would specifically want them to consider and then to advise me, I would certainly be prepared to do that.

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, he could have just said no. I asked the minister a very, very serious question a number of weeks ago, one of the most serious issues I have come across in my experience here in this Legislature. I asked the minister to come back to either myself or to the House or both with his views of the judge's comments on that transcript, which in my view essentially was a blame-the-victim attitude. I ask the minister: would he please, now, finally, after all these weeks, look at the transcript, and I refer him particularly to page 47, and get back to me and this House and tell us what he is going to do and if he has concerns at all?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, I know the member knows that I have concerns about that particular case. It is not quite as simple as the matter is put by the member. I certainly believe that this government has taken every appropriate step to ensure that victims are represented in the justice system, to ensure that their voices are heard in the justice system. I know that the member sometimes wants to have answers to

questions before those answers can be properly given, but we will ensure that the matter is considered. If there is any additional information I can bring back to the House, I will.

Cross Lake, Manitoba
Bridge Construction

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): The events this past weekend with the forest fire in Cross Lake brought attention once again to the fact that there are many communities in northern Manitoba that still do not have all-weather road access or, in the case of Cross Lake, a bridge. In fact, the bridge has been subject to numerous arbitrations under the Northern Flood Agreement.

I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Energy and Mines whether, given the obvious events of the past weekend, he will be now prepared to reconsider the long-standing efforts of the people of Cross Lake First Nation to have a bridge constructed into their community, a bridge that is absolutely vital when you are dealing with lifesaving situations such as forest fires.

Hon. David Newman (Minister responsible for Native Affairs): Madam Speaker, pursuant to the already accomplished task of having 80 percent of the Northern Flood Agreement bands having settled, with respect to Cross Lake, there is a process underway at a working group level, and one of the items that is part of that process will be the all-season road, and in particular the Pipestone bridge.

* (1420)

Highway Construction Projects
All-Weather Roads

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I am wondering, in a further question to the Minister of Highways and Transportation, whether the minister will consider his position as minister and refusing to consider the efforts of other communities such as Thicket Portage for all-weather-road access, refusing to even consider it under the capital budget, whether indeed the Minister of Highways will now undertake a study of all the communities that do not have

roads in northern Manitoba and make that a priority of the capital construction budget, giving road access to northern communities?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Highways and Transportation): The member for Thompson puts his question in a manner that leaves the impression that these are not issues that are under consideration by this administration. They are, and the difficulty, of course, is we have some \$1.4 billion in possible road projects and requests for road projects, and we fund about \$110 million a year annually in our capital budget. At the same time, the national government is levying some \$147-million worth of gas taxes in this province and not putting one penny back into roads.

So those projects are important. There are many projects that are important. Canadians, I believe it is time to engage in that debate over the role of the national government who collects gas taxes into funding capital projects for roads to provide access ways that the member has referenced.

Mr. Ashton: A supplementary. Will the minister drop his position and state it in writing to residents of Thicket Portage, and once again look at the fact that people in communities such as Thicket Portage, Pikwitonei, Ilford, York Landing, many other communities throughout northern Manitoba, have no road access, and they should be included as part of the capital—they are equivalent to many of the areas of southern Manitoba where the minister's department has been repaving shoulders that are already paved. When are you going to get fairness for northerners on highways?

Mr. Praznik: One of the projects now that this department is working on is to provide all-weather-road access to communities on the eastern side of Lake Winnipeg to extend that road. That is a major project that would bring road access over a period of years to some 16,000 residents who today do not have that road access. So, yes, this ministry is engaged in those projects, but one has to appreciate again, as long as some \$147 million a year is collected by the national government in gasoline taxes in this province, with zero dollars coming back, it will be very difficult to be able to take on all of those

projects in the immediate future. They are projects I would like to see this province be able to engage in.

Madam Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Track and Field Championship

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): This past weekend I had the pleasure of attending and participating in the senior high school and junior Manitoba rural provincial track and field championships. The championship was hosted by the Garden Valley Collegiate in Winkler. I must say that the competition was fierce, and the sense of sportsmanship was admirable. After two days of events, all participants came out winners. Hosting the event did not stop students at Garden Valley Collegiate from giving their all and coming out on top. GVC finished first in the two-day championship, followed by Treherne and Warren. I congratulate all the schools who participated in the championship.

I would also like to acknowledge a few students for their individual success on the weekend: Lenore Friesen, junior girls individual title for most points; Jennifer Towes, senior girls individual title for most points; Blane Pohl, junior boys individual title for most points; and Ryan Billington, senior boys individual title for most points. This weekend competition—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if I might ask those members carrying on private meetings if they would do quietly in the loge or outside the Chamber. I am experiencing difficulty hearing the honourable member for Pembina.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The weekend competition was a combination of hard work and commitment by students, staff and parents. Each and every one of you deserves a gold medal for your efforts in making this day memorable and fun for all. The students, staff and numerous volunteers at GVC were gracious hosts of the track and field championship. Your facility with a new \$250,000 track was a worthy venue to host the event. I thank you and commend you for your efforts.

I ask all honourable members to join me in congratulating all of the participants of the Rural Manitoba Track and Field Championships and in thanking GVC for hosting it. Thank you.

City Centre Community Volunteerism

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, earlier this spring, along with about 150 people, including Mayor Murray and City Councillors Jenny Gerbasi and Harvey Smith, I attended the City Centre Community Board's annual volunteer recognition awards evening. This is an evening designed to honour individuals from our city centre communities who have made important contributions to their community centres. Several industrious, creative, committed volunteers were acknowledged.

This year's Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Larry Schenkeweld, first vice-president of Lord Roberts Community Centre and chair of the City Centre Community Board. Larry received the award because of his long involvement with Lord Roberts at many levels and because of his instrumental role in founding the Lord Roberts Youth Drop-in Centre, one of the most successful in the city. He spent countless hours in creating the drop-in centre and continues to spend countless hours to ensure its sustainability. In fact, his wife assures me, if she cannot find him, she simply phones Lord Roberts.

Larry Schenkeweld is the kind of person who spots a problem and takes action to solve it. He felt that youth in Lord Roberts needed help in focusing their lives and needed direction and an opportunity to test themselves in a safe environment. He set to work and established the drop-in centre. Lord Roberts' people describe Larry as a wonderful, wonderful person. They say kids love him because, though he may take a hard line here and there, he is always fair.

Personally, I want to say that Larry has made a big difference in the lives of many kids and young people. For this reason, I ask members of the House to join me in congratulating Larry Schenkeweld for a job well done.

Campus Manitoba

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): Madam Speaker, this morning I had the privilege of representing the Province of Manitoba and the respective ministers, past and present, of the Education and Training ministry of this province at a launch of Campus Manitoba programming at Southport Aerospace facilities south of Portage la Prairie.

The Campus Manitoba programming is a collaborative effort by all three Manitoba universities, the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg and the university of Brandon in course offerings by interactive telecommunications that offer first-, second- and third-year programming to students outside of the cities of Brandon and Winnipeg.

I would like to congratulate all those persons involved in making this announcement possible; certainly, the involvement of Mr. Dick Dawson, chair of the Council on Post-Secondary Education through his executive director, Leo LeTourneau, as well as Kathleen Mathias [phonetic] from Campus Manitoba under the direction of Dr. T. Patrick Carrabre, senior university officer of Campus Manitoba programming.

Madam Speaker, Campus Manitoba will be operating out of the Southport Aerospace facilities this September, offering young people of central Manitoba the opportunity to pursue their post-secondary education. This will not be limited to those persons just graduating this year. However, I encourage all those who are wanting to pursue their post-secondary education to consider this offering of the course material in Portage la Prairie.

I am immensely proud of the co-operation that I have received from the Southport Aerospace facilities as well as the school division located in Portage la Prairie. The Portage la Prairie School Division in co-operation with Campus Manitoba will provide—

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

Philippine Heritage Week

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, the Philippine Heritage Week is a schedule of events starting with the traditional flag-raising ceremony on June 6, 1999, at the Winnipeg City Hall quadrangle, 510 Main Street, with many organizations and groups displaying their banners and later participating in cultural activities. The 1999 Heritage Week is being co-ordinated by a Philippine Heritage Week co-ordinating committee presided over by our honorary Consul-General Dr. Rolando Guzman.

Among the participating organizations are the Knights and Ladies of Rizal, the United Filipino Canadian Seniors, the Original Filipino Seniors of Manitoba, Timpuyog Ti Ilocano Dito Manitoba, Filipino Seniors Groups of Euclid Street, Filipino Veterans Association and many other groups and associations.

On Thursday, June 10, about 6 p.m., the Association of Filipino Teachers Incorporated will be hosting a cultural presentation about the Philippines, its country and its people at Wellington School, 690 Beverley Street, corner of Wellington Avenue. On Friday, June 11, starting at 6 p.m., the Bulacan Association of Winnipeg will be celebrating their third founding anniversary at the International Inn.

On Saturday, June 12, at the Convention Centre, the Philippine community will be hosting the Philippine Independence Commemoration Ball at 375 York Avenue, Winnipeg Convention Centre, to start about 6 p.m.

On Sunday, June 13, there will be a Filipino picnic at the Assiniboine Park, 2255 Corydon Avenue, in the Tuxedo area.

The Filipino-Canadians will be joined by many other Canadians represented by all political parties and groups, for this cultural group is truly becoming an integral part of our multicultural province.

Prairie Production Centre

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I am very pleased that construction of Manitoba's first all-season film studio, the Prairie Production

Centre, has begun. The Prairie Production Centre, a \$7.7-million facility, will bring together all aspects of production under one roof and be accessible year round to local, Canadian, and foreign production companies.

The studio will be adaptable to accommodate three separate productions simultaneously or one large production. The second and third floors will house permanent tenants including production companies, post-production firms or other groups. The new studio will also attract a wide variety of television series, documentaries, TV dramas and movies of the week to the province and will help build a larger local production crew base.

Phase one involves the construction of a 15,000 square foot sound stage with 3,500 square feet of production office space to be opened this September. Phase two will be complete in September 2000. Construction is being assisted with \$1.5 million from the provincial government. This initiative is one of a series of steps, including Manitoba's 35 percent Film and Video Production Tax Credit, to build film making into a \$100-million industry in the province by the end of the year 2000.

Our government is pleased to take part in this initiative which will help make Manitoba the Hollywood of the Prairies and ensure our film industry grows and prospers. This new studio will not only benefit the film industry but other related industries as well. It is an investment in the future of the Canadian film industry and Manitoba's economy.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to the continued growth of the province's film industry, an industry that will not only tap into the great creative potential of Manitobans but also contribute to the overall health and diversification of our economy. Thank you.

* (1430)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, a number of things.

First of all, it is our intention to call Bill 27 for third reading, The Essential Services Amendment Act. Should that be completed, I would then be asking the House to go into Committee of Supply to continue with Estimates.

I would ask, as well, if there is a willingness of the House to waive private members' hour for today on the understanding, of course, we will be using the Thursday morning sitting for private members' hour.

Madam Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to waive private members' hour?

An Honourable Member: No.

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

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I ask then if you would call Bill 27, The Essential Services Amendment Act, for third reading, and if that is completed, then I would ask if you could then call for the motion for Supply.

THIRD READINGS

Bill 27—The Essential Services Amendment Act

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer), that Bill 27, The Essential Services Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services essentiels), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to speak on Bill 27 third reading, the government's attempt to legislate the paramedics situation here in Winnipeg. I do note, listening to several of the presenters when this bill was before committee, that many of the presenters drew to the government's attention that there were shortcomings with the government's intent to implement or to put paramedics under The Essential Services Act.

Even though the government indicates that this was not an attempt to influence the

negotiations between the paramedics and the City of Winnipeg, I see it as a direct interference in that process. It is interesting to note too that, while the Minister of Health says in his comments about report stage of this bill, he only had a very short period of time. He did have several days that this House was sitting, and he waited until we were in the very day that the potential election call was going to be made. Despite his attempt here to say that that is not the case, he did have the opportunity the day before that to table the bill. You chose not to do it. [interjection]

An Honourable Member: You met with them the week before. Daryl is right; you are wrong.

Mr. Reid: I know. I know when the minister met, Madam Speaker. I know when the minister was involved. We saw in the letters that the minister has received. We have copies of those letters. We know that you had a number of days to table that piece of legislation and that you chose not to do that and that you wanted to go ahead with tabling this on the day the election was going to be called. I am not sure what your motive was with respect to this, but obviously you backed off from that election call. I guess there are reasons that you have, and I guess the other question I have in mind here is with respect to the issue. I mean, when we were dealing with the essential services Bill 17 here a couple of years ago, it is interesting to note that it was the Minister of Labour that tabled that piece of legislation. Yet we have the Minister of Health now tabling an amendment to that same act, and I have to wonder about whether or not there is a motive with respect to the Minister of Health tabling this amendment to The Essential Services Act versus the more appropriate area that the Minister of Labour would normally be responsible for such a piece of legislation.

So I am not sure why the Minister of Health would deal with that, except that perhaps he wanted to pit one group against another and to try and make his government look good with respect to health-related issues. It is interesting to note too that, while we have a number of jurisdictions in the province of Manitoba that have binding arbitration, this government has chosen to ignore our efforts to bring in binding legislation as a dispute-settling mechanism

dealing with the paramedics and the City of Winnipeg, and the government has left it to their own devices. While they have interfered directly in the process of negotiations by bringing this essential services legislation amendment before us, they have not put forward a mechanism to allow for negotiations to proceed smoothly and to bring about a peaceful or satisfactory resolution for both parties that are involved.

We do note that the government has, as of Thursday, appointed a mediator, Mr. Teskey, to be involved in these matters. I believe that the parties had asked for Mr. Wally Fox-Decent, but of course his schedule is quite full in dealing with other negotiation matters and that the government has, after consulting with the City of Winnipeg—even though they had the request from the paramedics, chose to consult with the city before appointing Mr. Teskey—and now Mr. Teskey is working with the two parties to try and resolve the contractual impasse that had been lingering for some time.

It is interesting to note, too, that we have in place in this province binding arbitration for a number of other services, critical services in our province more directly dealing with the firefighters. The Fire Departments Arbitration Act has been in place for some time. It does need amendment. I guess we will have to wait to see what the government does with respect to the bill that we have before this House, dealing with that particular piece of legislation, because it is not in keeping with the times. It has not moved into the 1990s with respect to nongender-specific language, and it has not dealt with the binding arbitration issue for firefighters. It would include paramedics, as we would propose and have proposed in this House through the committee and for report stage of this bill. We have binding arbitration for the firefighters of this province which keeps those crucial services available to the residents of Winnipeg and for other communities where they have full-time firefighting forces.

It is interesting to note we have binding arbitration for the police force, and we would not want to see an interruption of those services. We saw in the newspaper just again today of problems with the delivery of service and how residents are quite distressed at the inability of

some of the police services to respond in what the residents term to be an appropriate, timely fashion. If police were not covered under the binding arbitration process, then of course there is some potential for them to have an interruption of their services to the residents of Winnipeg. We would not want to see that take place, and that is why we have the binding arbitration process in place for the police as well as the firefighters.

It is interesting to note too that the government, while they did interfere in the collective bargaining process and involved themselves very directly—by the way, I believe it was Bill 72 back in the earlier 1990s, where they rolled back teachers' wages and benefits, that the teachers themselves are still covered by binding arbitration in this process. Governments of all political stripe recognize the importance of teachers being in the classroom and not on the picket line, so therefore they have binding arbitration as a means of resolving any contractual disagreements or issues that are in dispute. We think that has worked reasonably well for quite a number of years now. It has worked well for the firefighters, it has worked well for the police and it has worked well for the teachers.

We do know the government is involved in, I believe, binding arbitration with the doctors of this province. So you do recognize that medical services are crucial and that you are trying to resolve the contractual arrangements between the doctors and their negotiating representatives and the provincial government, and we recognize that binding arbitration can play a role in that process.

* (1440)

I guess the question remains: if you can have binding arbitration for those four groups, why is it that you cannot have binding arbitration for the paramedics who provide emergency lifesaving services right into our very living rooms when we call or dial 911 and the paramedics respond to those calls?

We do know that the paramedics are there working alongside of the firefighting force in this city. When the firefighters are called for fire

suppression where there are buildings involved, the paramedics are there on standby in case someone becomes injured, whether it be a firefighter or a member of the public who would unfortunately be involved in sustaining any injuries as a result of the fire. So the paramedics work alongside of the firefighters, and yet the paramedics are treated differently than the firefighters when it comes to the contractual arrangements. The firefighters have binding arbitration, and yet the paramedics do not, in this government's estimation, deserve or warrant to have binding arbitration to resolve those disputes.

It is interesting to note, when we listen to the comments that were made in Question Period here today, when the question was raised by my Leader the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) dealing with the government's use of stretcher car services to move what would be termed more emergency type of cases, why the government would have stretcher car services to undertake to move those patients between facilities. Now, I guess you could look at the options the government has available, and perhaps this is a way of the government to send a message through their health authority, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, to the ambulance paramedics, that stretcher cars will be used as a means of contracting out the services of the work normally done by the ambulance staff, the paramedics in the city of Winnipeg here. That would be the only way that I could see the government would want to have this, is if their intent was to undermine or to contract out those particular services.

Now, I can tell the minister that it would not be, to the people of the community that I represent, in the best public interest to have stretcher car services moving emergency cases between hospital facilities. It is my understanding that these stretcher car services do not have the skilled or the trained people like we would have in our ambulances, and that, should any problems be encountered during the transport of that patient, the patient could be put at risk. I am sure that the families and the patients themselves would not want to have their family members or themselves placed at risk by a stretcher car providing those transportation services when an ambulance would be more

appropriate to move patients between facilities where we have critical or crucial cases that would require treatment in other hospital facilities.

I listened to the comments that were made during the public presentations by the members that came before committee. I remember thinking back to Mr. Shoemaker in his presentation, responding to questions that were posed by members of the committee, when he said that under The Essential Services Act, it was the intention of the City of Winnipeg not to have all ambulance and paramedic staff deemed as essential service, so that would mean that, under the current system where we have 10 ambulances on service to the residents of the city of Winnipeg, less than 10 ambulances would be available, and I have to question the government's intent with respect to full ambulance service. Why is it so crucial to the government to have less than 10 ambulances on the street when that is deemed to be probably less than what would be the minimum required, judging by the waiting time and the way ambulances are moved about and pulled out of communities like Transcona, like I know they are? They are pulled from their station in Transcona closer to the core of the city, and perhaps some of my colleagues are experiencing similar problems with ambulance service being withdrawn when ambulances in the core are pressed into service, leaving at risk. So I have to question the government's intent when Mr. Shoemaker says that not all ambulance service personnel are going to be deemed essential, and that we are going to have less than a full complement of ambulance paramedics on duty and on call available for emergency situations under The Essential Services Act.

Our proposal with respect to binding arbitration will put in place binding arbitration process or mechanism to resolve the contract impasse that is currently in effect and give a mechanism with which to deal with the issues that are in dispute. What the government is proposing through its essential services inclusion of the paramedics does not propose any way to resolve the dispute between the two parties and, in fact, interferes, I might add, quite directly in that dispute.

Now I know the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) has given an assurance that his government will not implement this legislation and will not proclaim it until such time as a full and thorough discussion is held between the paramedics and the City of Winnipeg. We hold the minister to that. We take him at his word, but we do hold him to that commitment with respect to that undertaking that he has made, but we still think it is in the best public interest to have the dispute-settlement mechanism in place to deal with the dispute itself.

We think that the paramedic service, the ambulance services, are crucial. They are critical to the well-being of our community, and that if there is some way that we can put in place a settlement mechanism that will prevent any possibility or likelihood of ambulance service interruption in the future, that would be the way to go, just as we have with our firefighters and our police and our teachers and now our doctors. We would think paramedics would fall into that same umbrella as crucial services, and we would hope the government would have supported binding arbitration as a mechanism to protect the public.

There are other issues with respect to this bill. We hope that the government will consider that, when we do go to debate on the bill that we have before us dealing with The Fire Departments Arbitration Act, where we moved to change the outdated language that is in the original act, and that when we come forward, Madam Speaker, with our amendment dealing with binding arbitration for firefighters, the government will recognize that we should put in place a mechanism to solve this issue well into the future and to prevent the likelihood of any future service interruptions. So we hope that the government will look very seriously at supporting that particular bill. We think that our amendment dealing with binding arbitration is the way to go, and we had hoped that the government would have come to their senses and would have allowed for that process to occur, that they would be more interested in the public interest than they are with respect to their own public profile with respect to bringing paramedics under the essential services.

The paramedics themselves are calling for binding arbitration. We hope the government

would at least, at the process they are at right now, open some discussions with the City of Winnipeg to have some consideration undertaken with respect to binding arbitration. Then we can move in that direction to prevent the likelihood of future service interruptions.

We have ambulance services in Brandon and Thompson that have the benefit. We know there are Natural Resources officers in the Whiteshell that have the opportunity to have them covered under the act itself. We would hope the same situation would apply for the city of Winnipeg residents. We hope the government will listen to the comments that were made by the members of the public and the members of this House commenting on Bill 27, because we think there are other solutions other than the ones that they have proposed through Bill 27.

So with those few words, Madam Speaker, we are prepared to vote on Bill 27.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I will have a number of words that I want to put on the record with respect to this particular bill. As I have indicated on a number of different occasions prior, whether it was in second reading or more so, I should say, at committee stage, the emotion that was presented by the official opposition is that we are quite disappointed both in the government and the official opposition. I am going to take some time to comment as to why that disappointment is there.

* (1450)

There are all sorts of strategic moves that quite often are used in order to prevent the government from taking actions that are not in the best interests of Manitobans. We, as a rather small political party inside the Chamber, have attempted to convince the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) and the official opposition to recognize the injustice that they are doing by passing this legislation today.

Well, that is what the official opposition critic did indicate, that he was going to be the last speaker. As I say, I will comment on this aspect in terms of responsibility for opposition members and government members in doing

what is right, but I wanted first to talk about some of the things that we had thought.

In going through our rule book, there is the one clause which I have seen so effectively used in the past. In fact, it was the former MLA Jay Cowan that spoke at great length, and it was a labour bill, final offer selection. There was a reason why Jay Cowan spoke on that bill at great length. It is because at the time the third party did not care for what the government of the day was doing with this particular piece of labour legislation.

What they did is they looked into the rule book and came up with many different ways in which one can prevent the government of the day from proceeding ahead. In this particular case, I do not know the actual rule number then, but in essence the same rule that I would cite right now is Rule 37.(2), where the Leader of a government, the Leader of an opposition party, or the Leader of a recognized opposition party may each designate one member to speak in debate for such time as the member desires. That member may speak in the debate for such a period as he or she desires if, and then it lists on.

The bottom line, Madam Speaker, is that then Jay Cowan was provided the opportunity to speak indefinitely on final offer selection. By doing that, the former member Jay Cowan was able to ensure that that bill was not going to pass as long as he was prepared to stand on his feet and address that bill.

I remember it quite well. The hours and the hours went on, and there was a lot of frustration that was being created inside this Chamber, primarily from the government side, I must say. I sat back, because I had some very solid thoughts on final offer selection, and I admired what the then member was doing.

You know, if we had the opportunity to have that particular designation, the Liberal Party would use that designation today, and I would do what I could as a representative of the party to ensure that this particular piece of legislation does not or would not pass third reading. I do not know how long I would have been able to go, Madam Speaker, but I do believe that at the very least it would have been for a few days,

given our current rules, but it is a very important rule.

We look at other aspects of how this Chamber operates. If we look at the committee room, and had there been due time or notification of the government indicating what it was going to do, it would have allowed others to be able to participate in the process. Again, I will go back to final offer selection, where in final offer selection in a committee room we saw hours and hours of presentation, and I tell you that, again, served a purpose. At the end of it, we actually thought we had a motion in which we, being combined opposition, would have seen final offer selection continue. Well, it went on, as I say, for a great length. Why? Because there was due time that was given of notification, which allowed opposition parties, which allowed members of the public, to participate in voicing their concerns at the committee level in order to ensure that the government was listening and the government was not given an easy ride in passing that particular legislation.

So you have rules of that nature, Madam Speaker, and then you have what I classify, as I say, rules that can be used in order to prevent the debate to occur. They can be somewhat mischievous. You know, one could stand up no doubt on a matter of privilege, as an example, and speak at great length as to why the government, by doing or taking the actions that they are doing, is, in fact, infringing on my rights as an MLA to give good, solid representation on this particular issue because of the manner in which the government has brought it in and taking also into consideration that the government is not prepared to do what is right, given the fact that we are now into that mediation. So it could have been a matter of privilege.

Madam Speaker, earlier today, it could have been an emergency debate. We could have stood up on a matter of urgent public importance and talked about why it is that this government should not be passing this legislation because there is a valid argument to be made that we knew the government House leader (Mr. Praznik) was again going to be introducing this bill, and it is not in the public's best interest to

have this bill pass. It is a valid argument. Who knows what would have happened? But, unfortunately, because of rulings that we have seen in the past, it is something that likely would have been ruled out. At one time, you would be able to challenge the Speaker's ruling and let the bells ring.

There are also issues or rules such as grievances. For 15 minutes, I could have used a grievance in order to attempt to prolong the debate. Well, I say this because, as an individual MLA and talking with my colleague for The Maples and talking with the Leader of the Liberal Party, there are some limitations that we have and we have to acknowledge inside this Chamber. Those limitations will change in the future. I think that what we need to do is to reflect on the good old days in the first two years of this government's administration, in the first two years where we saw a minority government. If this was a minority government today, this bill would not be passing. This government would have been forced to be more co-operative. The official opposition would have been forced to behave in a more responsible fashion in dealing with this particular bill. I really and truly believe that to be the case.

Madam Speaker, the issue of the rules and what can be done in order to cause frustration of the legislative process is a very positive thing. That is a part of the parliamentary practices that are absolutely essential in order to allow this Chamber to work. Having gone over in great detail some of the rules that I would have as an individual MLA, or the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) would have been able to use in order to prevent this bill from passing, the conclusion was drawn that we might be able to put it off for a day where this debate would end come tomorrow. We might have been able to do that. But there is no doubt that by the end of tomorrow, it is abundantly clear that this legislation was in fact going to pass. The reason why that became very transparent is because we believed that the New Democrats were not prepared to go to bat for the paramedics. That really disappoints us tremendously, especially if you take a look at the comments and the things that they have said. Their record of talk is so high, but when it comes to action, they really disappoint many of the people who they say that

they represent. It is because of that, Madam Speaker, that we believe that this bill will ultimately pass.

But it is important that our paramedics and others who think that the NDP are friendly to the actual worker, the union worker—it just is not the case. This is an excellent example of that, because here the official opposition has a chance, has an opportunity to do something constructive, something creative in terms of providing a better atmosphere for those negotiations, and what has it done? It has completely, 100 percent, caved in to the demands of this government—absolutely amazed to the degree that they have caved in. This is something which Jay Cowan would never have supported, I believe. I do not believe for a moment that if Jay Cowan was sitting around that caucus table that Jay Cowan would have allowed this opposition party to have been sucked in by the government of the day.

* (1500)

This is a young session, you know. What are we, day 30 or whatever day it is. We already have the official opposition being sucked in twice. One was on a vote on the budget, and the next one is on this legislation. There is absolutely no urgency at all to see this legislation pass. That is what really amazes me in terms of why it is that the official opposition does not see that. Why I want to concentrate some thoughts on that area is because I believe that the official opposition is being grossly negligent in providing legitimate opposition on issues that are important to Manitoba. I really believe that, and I say that because if there were four Liberal MLAs, I could guarantee you this legislation would not be passed. I could guarantee it because the rules—unless, of course, the government was prepared to bring in closure, and I do not think they would have gone to that degree in order to please City Hall. [interjection]

One member says: Remember MTS. Well, another debate for another time. I do not believe that, if we the Liberals had four members inside this Chamber, this bill would, in fact, not pass, because the opportunities to prevent its passage are there. The official opposition has 23 members inside this Chamber. [interjection] One

of those members says good members. No doubt every caucus has some good people, but I would challenge any one of the 23 to stand in his place or her place and tell me that they are doing the public a service by passing this legislation today. It is just not possible. I do not believe you can say it with credibility.

I believe I could sit down with any group of constituents pulled at random in my constituency and articulate as to why this legislation should not pass today, and I believe I would get the majority of that group supporting the arguments as I articulate because the key has to be the issue of mediation. There is no threat of a strike that is going to happen tomorrow. We are using a sledge hammer here to swat at a mosquito. That is the essence of it. We have a mediation system. Why are we not prepared to show some confidence, to show some trust in some of our health care workers? Why are we not prepared to start working with our health care professionals? It could be very easily done.

The New Democrats can change their mind. The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) can stand up and follow me and speak it out until five o'clock, private members' hour comes by and this is not going to pass today. If every member stood up and spoke on this bill, their 40 minutes, as I will do, you will find that this bill would not pass for a long time, especially if one of them had the courage, as Jay Cowan had, and stand up at great length in terms of time and prevent this bill from its passage, because the urgency is not there. It really and truly is not there, and, for the life of me, I do not understand why the official opposition has let down, I believe, a very important profession in our health care field.

I think, Madam Speaker, if we take a look at words versus actions, actions speak a lot louder than words. Look at the health care, the NDP in Saskatchewan and the nurses, how the nurses were legislated to go back to work under an NDP administration and then the nurses illegally continued because of the treatment from the NDP government. [interjection]

Well, Madam Speaker, then you look at it and here you have the New Democrats in opposition sending the same sort of message. I

do not understand why they are doing it. I really and truly do not understand why they are doing it.

I tell you, I really believe if the official opposition wanted to do it, they could even make some headlines doing it. They could generate some attention. They could show their support of our health care workers. That is something which I would love to see in terms of happening the moment that I sit down. I would love to see the official opposition show some of the vigour that the former member Jay Cowan showed on the final offer selection legislation, to see some of the passion that he used, not only in words but in actions.

I have heard the official opposition rattle on in committee, in second reading, very, very briefly in third reading, and a little bit on the motion that they introduced in terms of the amendment, when the Liberal Party supported the binding arbitration. A lot of words, but when it comes to action, they disappeared. That is the type of message where I will be saying, when I go out and I talk to members of my constituency, that actions speak a lot louder than words. I tell you, when it comes to good government, you want to see good government? You had better go back to the days of '88 to '90 when there was more accountability because it was a minority government. Those were the days. You know, in two years, we sat close to 300 days. In the last year, I think we sat, what, 31 days?

Well, Madam Speaker, I think accountability is needed in this Chamber again, and I believe that it is going to be Jon Gerrard who is going to bring more accountability to this Chamber. I really and truly believe that to be the case.

Well, Madam Speaker--

An Honourable Member: You want more water, Kevin? More water for Kevin.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, I would be more than happy to have more water if I would be given leave to continue indefinitely on my speech.

* (1510)

An Honourable Member: No. You are lucky that we are going to give you 15 more minutes, Kevin.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, I wanted leave, Madam Speaker, but the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) says no to allowing me leave.

But, Madam Speaker, I believe it is a point that is worth making in terms of the neglect that we have seen from the official opposition, gross negligence. I believe it is equally negative for the government to not recognize the achievements, that our paramedics have been very successful and responsible in their actions, in particular in committee and their comments to alleviate the concerns of a possible strike. Today, we actually have mediation that is going on. That is why we do not believe that the government should be trying to rush through this legislation.

We believe what the government should be doing is allowing this bill to continue to rest on the Order Paper. Let us wait at the very least until the mediation has come to an end. Because what happens in mediation if both sides agree to binding arbitration? Well, this legislation that I am debating today, this legislation that the government is overly eager to pass—the NDP, I am sure, if they were in government, would probably have brought in closure on it by now—this legislation would not even be required, would not even be needed. If the mediators come back in with binding arbitration, are we then going to see the legislation repealed?

You know, the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) raised an excellent point in committee. The minister acknowledged it, that being what happens if there is some sort of a settlement between now and the passage of the bill. The minister did, at the very least, imply that it is something which would be of interest to him, and quite possibly would prevent its passage.

Madam Speaker, what are the chances of a binding arbitration? I would suggest to you that the chances are very great for binding arbitration. All you have to do is look at what is happening around us. If people would have listened as we in the Liberal Party did in the

committee stage, you would have heard that the Fire Department and our police service have binding arbitration. They are an essential service.

Madam Speaker, the official opposition and the government would also have heard that there are very strong arguments for binding arbitration for our other essential service in that area, being our ambulance or paramedic services. If you take a look at what has actually happened, back in I believe it was in '94 when they started the movement towards amalgamating, you saw that the fire and the paramedics, the firemen, and I do not know if there is—is it fire person? I am not 100 percent sure.

An Honourable Member: Firefighter.

Mr. Lamoureux: Firefighter is the gender-neutral terminology for that. Firefighters and the paramedics are going to be working side by side. Already today they are working side by side. How can you have one receiving binding arbitration and the other not receiving binding arbitration?

We asked the question, and I think that people have to respect the fact. Put yourselves in the shoes of being a paramedic, where you are going to a fire station and your colleagues on the fire side are having their contracts negotiated and, ultimately, if need be, going through binding arbitration, whereas you have essential services legislation or whatever else might be there. Is that fair or appropriate to see? I would argue not.

I tried to approach this whole issue with an open mind, as I did in second reading. In second reading we were prepared to see this bill go into the committee stage, because we wanted to listen to what was being said. What very quickly became apparent, we were the only ones who were really listening, at least in its entirety. Not 100 percent factual, quite possibly; yesterday the government did bring in an amendment. They did bring in an amendment, but let us—

An Honourable Member: That is because we listened.

Mr. Lamoureux: Because you listened in part, not because you listened in its entirety.

The amendment, think about the amendment. The government says, look, we will pass the legislation through but, instead of making it effective the moment that it gets Royal Assent, we are going to make it effective when the government of the day says we want to make it effective. Well, I would speculate, I have not canvassed all the paramedics, but I do not think that gave a warm, fuzzy feeling inside the minds of our paramedics.

An Honourable Member: A fuzzy feeling is in the heart, not the mind, Kevin.

Mr. Lamoureux: A warm, fuzzy feeling in the heart too. I am sorry, did I say mind? Heart. I would ask Hansard to replace the word "heart" with "mind," but I do not think they will do that, quite frankly, but that was what was meant.

Madam Speaker, I do not believe that the government recognized that their amendment albeit improved the legislation, but I do not think it made our hearts a little bit warmer or fuzzier.

Then you have the New Democrats, who were quite keen on listening or giving the perception that they were listening. They talked a fine line but, as I pointed out earlier, their lack of actions on the bill are in fact going to allow the bill to pass. That is why I would argue that they too were not listening, so you have both the government and the official opposition that were not listening to what people were really saying inside the committee.

Well, with all modesty, I think—[interjection] You know, the Leader of the Liberal Party did come before the committee and indicated very clearly: what is the rush; why are we doing this? [interjection] Well, again, members from both sides are saying what did he say. Madam Speaker, I rest my case. I told you they were not listening.

They are asking me what the Leader said. Well, if you read Hansard, you will find out what he said. But, Madam Speaker, you proved my case. You were not listening. So that you know, I will reinforce what the Leader of the Liberal Party was saying, and it can be summed up in a very short concise statement: What is the urgency? Why are we doing it today? Listen to

what the union was saying. Listen to what other members of the committee were saying. There was no urgency then, and there is definitely no urgency today, because we even have a mediator in place.

So, Madam Speaker, I do not necessarily want to digress too much. For those who want to know, I encourage them strongly to read Hansard, and you will find exactly what the Leader of the Liberal Party's position is, along with the party's position. The difference is we are at least prepared to do what we can to at least try to bring a little bit more common sense to the issue that we have before us.

As I indicated, we need to put ourselves in the mind of the paramedic—before others had gotten me a little bit off track—that paramedic who wakes up in the morning, who goes into that fire-hall and realizes that there are two totally different mechanisms in terms of how labour resolutions are going to be resolved. You know, I posed the question in committee as to what impact does that have on morale? I did that because I believe that it does have a negative impact. You are not just talking about a negative impact on our paramedics. You are talking about a negative impact on our Fire Department personnel also, because these individuals work side by side. How is it possible for one not to be sympathetic to what is happening with their paramedic colleagues or vice versa on different issues?

* (1520)

It was made very clear from our paramedics in terms of the some of the cross-training that is done, Madam Speaker, that there is a special bond that has been developed between this particular emergency service. We need to respect that fact. We need to respect the fact that the paramedic is, in fact, not being or has not been treated appropriately in this area of binding arbitration. I, and I know the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), wanted to get more first-hand information at the committee stage as to why it is that we had the legislation, because of the way in which it came out. It seemed to have come from nowhere. We found out one day, and then it is in second reading that particular day, and then we are in committee before you know it. The government said it did

not know about it until then. Well, you know, it was May 11 in the Winnipeg Sun, the subheadline was: Strike looms unless workload is reduced.

The government should have had an idea of what was happening in this area. I do not think anyone was surprised. I think the biggest surprise was just the size of the strike vote that occurred. I believe, and I am going by memory from committee, it was indicated that 94 percent were in favour. They wanted to demonstrate very clearly to the city to take them seriously because they felt that they were not being treated fairly, that the negotiations were going nowhere awfully quickly.

So you have to put everything into some form of a perspective in which we understand what was happening at the time, and the time that I think that we really have to focus on, more than any other, quite frankly, is the committee meetings that we had on it, or committee meeting, because we only had—no, actually, we had the two. But that is where we should be focusing in on: what the situation of the day or the situation of the issue really was.

There was no real threat of a strike. Some union representatives indicated that the mayor was out of town, and they had felt that it would be, in fact, inappropriate for it, that it is something which they would not necessarily support. I am being very mild in my words, and it is because I do not want to put words in the mouths of the presenters, but that, I think, was the essence of it.

Well, if you take a look at the committee meeting and then you take a look at the facts since then, that we now have a mediator that has been appointed, well, I would argue and articulate that there is no urgency, that there is no need for the Minister of Health to have this bill pass. You know, whether it was in second reading or—I should not say second reading—whether it was in committee stage or through the amendment, there were questions or concerns expressed to the Minister of Health. We have not seen those issues addressed.

I would like to hear from the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) or the Minister of Labour

(Mr. Radcliffe) what they really believe the impact of passing this legislation today is going to have on negotiations for which we have a mediator. Does the Minister of Labour and does the Minister of Health believe that its passage today will have absolutely no impact? I think that is a valid question. That is something that the government should be addressing. I said earlier what about the issue of the binding arbitration in the mediation process. Does this have an impact on the union's ability to negotiate in good faith the binding arbitration through mediation? What impact does it have?

There is nothing that is positive in passing this legislation today that is going to have a positive impact for Manitobans and their safety, something in which we, in the Liberal Party, do place as our first priority. That is the reason why we did have some discussions in a limited way with some of the union representatives.

I see that I only have two minutes left. With such limited time it is likely a good thing I did not come with speaking notes. Had I come with detailed speaking notes, I would have wanted to continue on at length. As the member for St. Norbert said: I do not think I would have been given leave to continue on.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) indicates that he would have given leave. Before I wind up, I would ask if in fact there is leave for me to be able to continue on with my speech. I do have a lot more that I would like to say.

An Honourable Member: I do not think so.

Mr. Lamoureux: Can I ask if I do have leave?

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Inkster have leave to speak beyond his 40 minutes? Yes or no.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: No. Leave has been denied.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, you cannot blame a person for asking. But I can blame the government for its actions on passing this bill. I will definitely blame the New Democrats in their gross negligence in not standing up, debating,

and protecting the interests of our health care workers. Talk is cheap. I am very disappointed. It should be made very clear in conclusion, it is because of the official opposition that this bill is passing. They have been sucked in by the government. It is sad to see that this has in fact occurred.

* (1530)

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I have spoken on this bill before. I was in the committee and I wish to speak on the bill.

I just want to indicate on the record that the member for Inkster should not lecture anyone about his position or the Liberal Party's position on labour legislation, particularly on final offer selection. For those members who were not here at the time, it was the classic Liberal, their fence strategy, because they were firmly on both sides of the issue. What was interesting is that we opposed final offer selection being taken out of legislation. The government was pretty clear on the other side. So the Liberals brought in an amendment to extend it by another six months. They were against it but not as much against it. They wanted to get rid of it in a slower fashion.

It was quite a picture when in committee we supported the amendment, then in the House the combined Conservative and New Democratic party positions for two opposite reasons voted against the unprincipled position of the Liberals and defeated the legislation. Quite frankly, I will never forget the shock on the look of the Liberals' faces. For the Liberals now to suggest they are friends of working people, it was not just on final offer selection. When it came to Filmon Fridays, when it came to the wage freeze, you remember on those issues, it was a pretty clear distinction. You know where the Conservatives were. You knew where the New Democrats were, on the opposite side. When it came to the Liberals, where were they?

I notice the member for Inkster, maybe a little bit concerned about the Inkster constituency now, but if he wants to go with his record and the Liberal record when it comes to working people in the constituency of Inkster, I suggest to him he better start with the fact that ever since he has been in this Legislature he has

consistently supported the Conservatives in antilabour legislation, consistently supported, particularly when it came to final offer selection.

I want to say, their position—

An Honourable Member: Can you imagine my surprise when the Leader of the Liberal Party came back to my office the next morning?

Mr. Ashton: It is interesting, because the member for Riel, I have heard about his surprise when he learned of what had happened. I think it showed again the difficulty the Liberal Party has had for quite some time in this province. This sort of position, we saw it on this bill. We saw it on this bill. Now the member for Inkster comes in and says, well, you know, like, other parties are not taking a definitive position, and we are representing the paramedics and working people. We are dealing with it. You know what their position was on arbitration when we said the proper approach to arbitration was? Well, we are not sure and we should not have arbitration unless both parties agree. They did not agree with it. That was their first position. Then I remember sitting in that committee when the Liberal Leader came up. Now, members in the House were there when the Liberal Leader came up. I could sense the ghost of Mackenzie King's and Jon Gerrard's statements, because it was sort of arbitration if necessary but not necessarily arbitration.

I mean, you know, the minister asked various questions. Our Leader asked questions, and the more he spoke the more he put himself firmly on both sides of the issue. Now, to the Conservatives' credit, we know where they stood. They wanted this legislation, the essential services legislation. We have indicated we felt the appropriate way was to deal with it the same way that you deal with firefighters.

You know when the Liberals made up their minds on the issue of arbitration, when we moved the amendment to report stage, it took the New Democrats to focus their thinking to get Mr. Gerrard, sitting as he often does from the gallery I assume phoning in directions to his caucus member to actually figure out which side of the issue he was on. I tell you that my experience with the Liberal Party in this

Legislature is if there was another way they could have voted, they would have probably voted to abstain.

What we still remember on MTS, one of the critical votes, when one voted for, one voted against and the other one abstained. Only the Liberal Party could be on all sides of the issue. I just say to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), now thanks to our amendment the Liberal Party has made up its mind which side of the issue it was on. He might want to put on the record some thanks to those of us who did not have to wait and sit there and toss coins or however else the Liberal Party decides things.

Now we know it is a matter of principle. What was fair for firefighters was fair for paramedics. That is why we made the particular proposal. I say to members, I say to the Liberal member as well, because it is going to be interesting in terms of this particular legislation, what is the member saying here? Is he now opposed to this legislation? Because I will be interested to see how the Liberals react in terms of that. We are not sure where they are at. Once again, I say to the Liberals, they have discovered parliamentary tactics and I think that is fair, but when you have a tactic, you normally have a clear strategy attached to it.

When it comes to this Legislature, there are all sorts of opportunities to involve oneself in debate, and I have on occasion spoken at length on issues with a tactical aspect to it, but with a strategic reason. I say to members of—well, the member of the Liberal Party on this particular one, that I appreciate that he is now saying I think on the public record here what we all know to be a fact and that is in the next election in Inkster there is going to be a very clear two-way choice for people between the Liberal Party and the New Democrats. The people of Inkster will have a choice on issues such as this involving working people between the Liberals who are on both sides of the issue and the New Democrats who are very clear up front and in favour of arbitration who have consistently, in government and in opposition, we have always been willing to place our position on the table, speak clearly and not rely on another party to make up our mind for us.

I say to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and to the Liberal Party, because I believe that politics is about standing for something, it is about principles. I often say, well, to members of the Conservative Party, I may not agree with where they do show principles on issues, principled decisions, but when it comes to a lot of issues I say to members of the Conservative Party, I understand where they are coming from on a lot of issues. I do not agree with it. They have labour issues. They have distinctly had a bias, clearly. How many times have they amended The Labour Relations Act, two, three, four times? You know, Workers Compensation. I think it is criminal in this province that we are running a surplus on Workers Compensation while injured workers go without the kind of coverage they should be receiving in this province.

I understand where they are coming from, but I say to the Liberals, and I notice by the way, I think the member for Inkster kind of put up on this, because most of his 40 minutes was spent attacking us in terms of now the member for Inkster being the self-proclaimed opposition. I notice Mr. Gerrard.

I want to say to the member for Inkster the choice we are going to be taking to constituencies throughout the province, including Inkster, is a choice. In this particular case, he may be saying that the Liberals will—I do not know if we should get into plural but certainly the Liberal, because we do not know how people will choose on this. I will say to the member for Inkster, our message in Inkster is that the New Democratic Party is running for government and the people in Inkster will have the choice of electing a member of the next NDP government. That is going to be our campaign message in this election.

I respect the member for Inkster in saying that because I do believe he certainly is a very lively person in this Chamber, and I enjoy working with him as a member of the Legislature. It is not anything personal, but I think that is the point. One of the factors is that if you want to be considered as a party for government, you have to be in a position of saying to people, here is what we stand for, and in this particular case on this bill, from day one,

what we indicated, we were prepared to debate this. Unlike the Liberals, we did recognize the urgency of the situation, and I say to the Liberal member, the urgency of the situation is, you know, he says, well, the mediator has been put in place, but we were not prepared to sit back and hide behind tactics without recognizing the fact that we needed to have a debate on this. We did have a debate, and we put on the record our position and, in fact, amazingly enough, the Liberals supported what we had said.

An Honourable Member: Reluctantly.

Mr. Ashton: Reluctantly. They were dragged kicking and screaming, supporting arbitration, but he should not now get up on the record and suggest that somehow the Liberal Party was speaking for the paramedics on this issue, because right from day one, we were the ones, not the government, not the Liberals, who contacted not only the city but also the paramedics as well. By the way, I think the fact that we were able to come up with a proposal of that nature is indicative of the kind of approach that is needed in this province to decision making, to government. You cannot simply, as the government did in this particular case, they got a letter, and they said, we will do it. Now, you notice, by the way—[interjection]

Yes, it is interesting, because how many other times has the city requested things from the provincial government? Many times. Usually they say no, but lo and behold, when this deals with labour relations, you know, the government, the only question they had when the city said, jump on this, was how high. We talked to the city. We talked to the paramedics, and you know, the end result, and we listened to the public. The public told us that what needed to happen in this case was a debate, which is what we have had, and also a specific proposal to bring in arbitration. It makes sense to the public, and I say to the member for Inkster who in his speech said, well, we can talk to members of the public out there. They said to us, if it is good enough for the firefighters, it is good enough for the paramedics.

* (1540)

We would have not got to that point if we had followed what the Liberals wanted to do

earlier on. They did not want to get to report stage where we did bring in that amendment, an amendment that was in order, that they actually supported. They wanted instead to avoid getting to that, and I really think that one of the problems here with the Liberals, I think they wanted to avoid having to make a decision on where they stood on arbitration. I really believe it came down to that. I heard Jon Gerrard, by the way, and I say to the member for Inkster, I listened, I heard, and all I could see was the same kind of being on both sides of an issue.

That is not good enough for the people of Manitoba. The people of Manitoba expect MLAs and they expect political parties to stand for something and also make responsible decisions.

An Honourable Member: It is the south-end Lexus Liberals you have got to watch for.

Mr. Ashton: There is some reference, I think, to the south-end Liberals. I do note that there seems to be a distinct focus on the Liberal Party, and I say, in conclusion on this particular bill, in terms of my comments, that we are very up front with our position. We spent a lot of time consulting with all sides. I give credit to our critic, our Labour critic, for bringing in a resolution. We brought in a number of amendments at committee that were ruled out of order at that time. We did a lot of work at getting matters that could be debated dealt with in scope.

I consider it an achievement on this particular case if we have at least forced the Liberal Party to come down from that fence and make up its mind that it was on our side of the issue. But for the member for Inkster, for 40 minutes to attack the New Democratic Party, the party that gave him and his leader and his colleague direction on this issue, I think it is highly disingenuous. If he wants to focus his attention on this issue, he should be doing not more than just giving lip service to our resolution and report stage, but in this debate on third reading I would have expected him, instead of getting into perhaps more local concerns, about running against the NDP in the next election, because we all know that that is what is going to be happening in many areas. The

Liberals are going to be fighting in Inkster, for example, against the New Democrats.

I suggest to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), if he talks to constituents, they will tell him two things. The first thing, by the way, is they will give us credit for taking a stand as compared to the Liberals who did not take the position. The second thing that I will say to the member for Inkster is that in his constituency what people are looking for in this particular case is a government alternative, one that is willing to take a stated position, not a party that will be on both sides of the issue. In this case people want a choice of a party that is clearly in favour in this particular case of a substantive proposal.

That is why I say in conclusion we are not only here in terms of debating at this point in time. We are sending a clear message to the people of Manitoba that what we are doing on this particular bill is the kind of thing that we would do in government: listening to both sides, making a clear alternative, putting it forward in a substantive way, and taking the responsible position of having this matter debated, as we have done quite extensively for a bill of this nature.

We are proud of that. We are prepared to go to the people anytime with that kind of responsible, balanced approach to government that will lead to principled government under New Democratic Party government after the next election. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading of Bill 27, The Essential Services Amendment Act.

Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Hon. David Newman (Deputy Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, is it the will of the House to waive private members' hour?

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of the House to waive private members' hour? [agreed]

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

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training. When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 16.2. School Programs (d) Program Development (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 48 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Chairman, at the end of last time, the minister was going to bring some information on information technology and, I believe, a number of other pieces of information about the Assiniboine Community College platform and the arrangements with school divisions that are proposed and may have been made within the southwest, and a few other things.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Chairman, further to our discussions related to the hosting of the

southwest consortium Web-based course on World Issues 40S, Assiniboine Community Colleges and the southwest consortium are working in partnership to pilot the delivery of the World Issues 40S course during the 1999-2000 school year.

As its contribution to the partnership, Assiniboine Community College has agreed to host the Web-based course on their server at no cost to the southwest consortium. The southwest consortium has agreed to pay Assiniboine Community College, based on an hourly rate, for any technical support that is required. With respect to the technical support, this is a matter that the department is still reviewing.

The honourable member asked about keyboarding and the implications for early, middle and senior years. I am advised by the Program Development Branch of the School Programs Division as follows: the government of Manitoba has initiated a process of educational renewal referenced in *Renewing Education: New Directions*, which identifies technology as one of the four foundation skill areas required for kindergarten to Senior 4. In August 1998, the department released the document *technology as a foundation skill A Journey Toward Information Technology Literacy* to support the integration of technology as a foundation skill into all curricula.

With the increased emphasis on information technology in schools and specifically on the use of computers as tools to enhance student learning at all grades, competency in keyboarding is essential. The department acknowledges the need to review the status of existing senior years keyboarding courses and to examine the options for ensuring that students develop keyboarding skills at an earlier age in their schooling. Existing keyboarding curricula Senior 1 Introductory Keyboarding 1993 and Senior 2 Advanced Keyboarding 1993 are being implemented much less frequently in the senior years classes. Rather, schools increasingly are focusing on middle years as the time to introduce keyboarding. This approach is consistent with the skills continuum in technology as a foundation skill, which identifies that introduction and mastery of keyboarding as an expectation for students in Grades 4 to 8.

The department will undertake to develop a teacher support document related to keyboarding skills, as well as, identify commercially produced multimedia learning resources for keyboarding as options to facilitate keyboarding instruction. Pertinent information will be communicated to schools in the near future.

I am tabling also, further to our discussions last week, a document entitled *Locally Developed Curricula: School-initiated Courses and Student-initiated Projects, A Handbook for Senior Years Schools*.

I am also tabling a document off our web. It is entitled *Implementing School-Initiated Courses (SICS) and Student-Initiated Projects (SIPS)*, along with frequently asked questions and the answers thereto.

I am also tabling a document for 1998-99 of *School-Initiated Courses Registrations*, and in here, I understand, are a few student-initiated projects as well, even though it is entitled *SIC Registrations*. This is for the information of the honourable member as well. That information is on the website.

Ms. Friesen: I thank the minister for tabling that material, but it does not actually take us very far.

The first question I had asked, which the minister was responding to, was the Assiniboine Community College issue and the exchange of contracts, or the exchange of money between school divisions and ACC. The minister said, as I understand it, that there is no cost to a school division in this pilot project. Does that mean, first of all, that there is going to be no cost to any school division who gets involved with the ACC platform? Then, secondly, the minister said: But there will be charges on an hourly basis for technical support.

Now I had also asked: were these contracts being—not necessarily submitted to the department—but was the department aware of the contents of the contracts, and did it foresee this as being part of a larger set of initiatives toward developing website programs in Manitoba high schools that were not overlapping, where we are not going to have every high school division

creating and working with different institutions on the same courses? It is the expenditure of effort in the same course that gives me concerns.

* (1600)

I am interested in what level of co-ordination there is in the department, if any, and the avenue for asking that was the role of ACC and what it is doing. I had asked for some discussion of where MERLIN fit into this, and the minister basically answered, I think, last time, that MERLIN is essentially the technical arm that negotiates technical agreements for particular kinds of equipment and for rates.

So I wonder if the minister can be a bit more specific on the Assiniboine Community College role in the development of the technical supports for high school programming. Is this the means to developing a broader program throughout the province?

Then, secondly, on the keyboarding, well, the minister essentially has answered: yes, we do a lot of keyboarding, and it is important to do a lot of keyboarding. Anything we do beyond the middle years is a school-initiated project, and he has tabled the material for how to create a school-initiated project. But what I had asked was: was the department compiling a compendium of school-initiated projects in the technology area or in the information technology area? Is there anywhere some kind of central record of what is being done in the high schools of Manitoba in school-initiated projects and information technology that takes us beyond keyboarding? I am interested in what standards are being set, which schools are participating, and what material we have at a provincial level. I would ask the minister to table that so we could have some sense of an overall perspective of what is happening in high schools.

Mr. McCrae: I am not sure that we have not been responsive to the honourable member, certainly not for lack of trying in any event. If we could get a really, I guess, clearer read on what it is the honourable member is asking or where she wants this to go, we might have a better idea.

As we understand it or as I understand it, the ACC role here is a project going with the

southwest Man. consortia, and it does not mean that other school divisions can or cannot get involved. What I know of it is that the ones that are involved got involved because that was something they wished to do and did so in partnership with ACC. Being a pilot project, it is not appropriate or possible at this point, at least, to say if this is any part of any larger scheme or broader program as I think the honourable member referred to it. ACC's role here is as a partner to provide the platform at no cost. There are certain costs with respect to technical support. As I understand it, that is a cost-recovery situation and not an unusual situation at that.

* (1610)

MERLIN is not a platform provider or a designer. I think we discussed MERLIN's part last time. This is a pilot, as I have stated, which is specific to divisions in the southwestern part of the province, and for the department we do not see it as anything more than a group of education institutions working together to achieve satisfactory mutually agreed upon objectives. The department is looking at the future as a whole of Web delivery, such things as other platforms and roles and responsibilities. So I do not know that we have not been responsive. I think that we have.

This type of thing, I do not know, recently, I have been finding that questions arise that call on a role to be played by the Department of Education and Training that in certain instances has not been seen to be an appropriate one. I know having met last week, I enjoyed an opportunity to spend some time with the delegates to the annual meeting of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, and Mr. MacIntyre presented me with a button to wear that said to say no to the YNN, the Athena proposal which, as I have said to the honourable member, I felt that this is a matter that can and should appropriately be reviewed at the division level. Indeed, in my own division, Brandon Division No. 40 reviewed it and decided they did not want to go with that; others may see it differently. But Mr. MacIntyre wants, as a former president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the government to get involved in something that is essentially the responsibility of school divisions.

I was reading the newspaper, and the newspaper basically made the point that Mr. MacIntyre had stepped down in order to run for the New Democratic Party in the River East constituency. Well, he did not step down; he was defeated in a broad election. The teachers of Manitoba—[interjection] Well, it is not the honourable member's fault or the honourable member for St. James' fault if the Winnipeg Free Press wants to say that Mr. MacIntyre stepped down.

I know people who have been defeated in elections, and they did not really describe their experience as a stepping down. Some people would use much stronger language to describe what happens to them when they have been defeated by their peers. The teachers of Manitoba made that decision, but I guess the reason I bring it up is because we are being asked a lot of questions about decisions being made, and rightly so, by other agencies in the education system. It is very good for the department to be up to date and knowledgeable about what is going on out there and learning all we can about the best practices in a rapidly changing world, so that any way the department can help out or any way any of our institutions can help out or help each other, these are laudable goals, I suggest.

But I think the example I use of the Athena proposal is simply to make a point. I mean, there have been other issues I have been asked to get involved in, and I have kind of tried to make the point that, you know, we have elected people at the school division level, elected by the people in those local division areas—well, another example is the music and phys ed issue in Brandon, where a proposal came out. I mean, divisions every year, as they address their planning, their operations and their budget, they look at all the various proposals that get made.

Now, in the case of the Brandon School Division, there was a proposal to reduce, or equalize, I guess is the way they put it, the amount of instruction time for things like music and phys ed. There was a proposal—[interjection] Well, the honourable member may editorialize about the kind of equalizing that they were talking about in Brandon, and that is fair ball, but that was an appropriate discussion at the school division level.

I know the honourable member wants to bring some matters to the Legislature, and the more that that happens, the more I get a little concerned that perhaps the NDP is moving toward getting rid of school boards. I know they will deny that, but when the questions repeatedly—

An Honourable Member: Can Hansard record raucous laughter? Get on with it.

Mr. McCrae: My honourable colleague wants the record to show that she is laughing hysterically about my comments.

An Honourable Member: No, I did not say hysterically. Raucously.

Mr. McCrae: Raucously, I am sorry. I guess I will shorten this because I think that may accord with the honourable member's wishes.

I just want to make the point that we do respect the rights of other institutions and divisions to work out issues that arise. We do respect that. I mean, if we are getting an overall movement in directions that are clearly just bad for the kids and bad for the system, well, sure, under The Public Schools Act there are responsibilities at the level of the government of Manitoba, and we would not shrink from responsibility to move if that were indicated. The department, along with others, is looking at the whole future of Web delivery, such things as other platforms and roles and responsibilities and funding, curriculum approvals, et cetera.

As to the future of the Web, we have already said that we are working with the southwest on its pilot project. We are seeking guidance and help and advice from the Council on Learning Technologies on the many important Web issues, such as ownership of curriculum and approval processes and platforms and the role of divisions and the department and funding issues. I think that we do that review as a matter of ongoing business.

The fact is, technology is making the world so different and is doing it so quickly that I think some of the things that are suggested tend to leave us in a situation where flexibility just goes out the window at a time when flexibility is

exactly what is needed in order for us to learn to identify what best practices are emerging and to make appropriate comparisons. I mean, goodness' sake, if we just allow nothing to happen, we will be so hidebound in our education system, our kids will be so poorly served and so unprepared to function in the society that we know is going to be different from the society we have seen, the big question mark for everyone is, well, what will society look like in another 10 years? I have been known to quote Bill Gates in this regard. Bill Gates has said—well, a lot of people have made comments about the future; Yogi Berra, for example. He said that predictions are always hard to make but especially about the future. [interjection]

I will tell you what. I think honourable members may have lost interest in the sage advice of the likes of Yogi Berra and Dwight Eisenhower and people like that who had some pretty forward-looking things to say, things like the future ain't like it used to be, or things are more like they are today than they have ever been before in history.

So with those profound comments, I will maybe stop and let the honourable member ask another question.

Ms. Friesen: It was not that we were losing interest, Mr. Chairman, it was that we were losing the thread, and I have a feeling the minister had lost the thread, too.

My question dealt with the government's coordinating role in senior years information technology curriculum. The minister said: we are looking at Web delivery, looking at the whole future of that, but what I am asking about is: what is being taught now and does the government have a compendium of the curriculum that it is prepared to table of the courses that are being taught now in senior high schools in Manitoba? The minister tabled a list of the 1,760 school-initiated courses in Manitoba. Several of these do deal with information technology courses. I would like to see whether the minister can table those courses for us, those outlines.

Mr. McCrae: I did table a long list of school-initiated course registrations. The specific

courses that the honourable member is asking are the following: the one at Cecil Rhodes School, Personal Applied Technology 11G; the one at Daniel McIntyre, Advanced Software Applications 41G; Daniel McIntyre, Desktop Publishing 31G; Gordon Bell High, Computer Awareness 11G; Sisler High School, Keyboarding 21G; St. John's High, Computer Animation 31G; St. John's High, Visual Basic 41G; St. John's High, Programming in C++Java, 41G. I hope the honourable member does not expect me to know the whole content of these courses.

* (1620)

St. John's High, Computer Research 21G; Tec Voc High School, Business Software 41G; Tec Voc High School, Recording Technology 21G; John Taylor Collegiate, Computer Applications 11G; Sturgeon Creek, Computer Awareness 11G; Oak Park High, Computer Applications 31G; College Beliveau, Computer Diagnostics/Repairs 31G; College Beliveau, Multimedia 31G; Pierre Radisson, Info Processing 21G; Pierre Radisson, Data Processing 21G; Pierre Radisson, Data Processing 31G; Arthur A. Leach, Computer Applications 11G; Vincent Massey, Fort Garry campus—you see, we have a Vincent Massey in Brandon too, so we will call it the Fort Garry campus—Computer Awareness 21G; Vincent Massey, Fort Garry again, Software Applications 31G; Vincent Massey, Fort Garry, Word Processing 41G; Glenlawn Collegiate, Computer Graphics 31G; Highbury School, Computer Applications 11G; Jeanne-Sauvé, Applications Multimedia 21G; Minnetonka, Intro to Computer Technology; Miles Macdonell, Multimedia Technology 41G.

Garden City, Computer Explorations 11G; Maples Collegiate, Computer Explorations 11G; West Kildonan, Computer Explorations 11G; West Kildonan, Computer Communications 41G; West Kildonan, Keyboarding Applications 21G, half a credit; West Kildonan, Advanced Software Applications 41G; West Kildonan, Computer Graphics and Animation 31G; West Kildonan, Computer Graphics and Animation 41G; Lord Selkirk Regional, Networking II, 31G; Lord Selkirk Regional, Networking I, 31G; Lord Selkirk Regional, Advanced Word

Processing 41G; Lord Selkirk Regional, Software Applications II, 41G; Lord Selkirk Regional, Advanced Program in Visual Basic 41G; Transcona Collegiate, Advanced Software 41G; Agassiz School Division No. 13, Computers and Accounting 41G. Then there is the Empower Project, Advanced Desktop Publishing 41G; Powerview Advanced Desktop Publishing 41G. Perhaps I can finish this list either in my next response or next time we get together.

Ms. Friesen: I was riveted.

Mr. McCrae: What is that? All that information.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, actually I was riveted. The reason is that I am trying to get the information all in one place. So for the minister to finish the list actually would be helpful for people to have that list all in one place.

Mr. McCrae: We will make the effort then. We will complete that this afternoon, and you can have a complete record in Hansard.

Ms. Friesen: Thank you, then. There is something I am not understanding. We have the list of all the school-initiated projects in front of us. I think you are up to Agassiz School Division. There is more beyond that. [interjection] No, it is here.

Mr. McCrae: What I was doing, Mr. Chairman, was of all these school-initiated and student-initiated courses and projects, I was extracting the technology ones for the honourable member to save her the trouble of having to go through every one. My staff are busily bringing that list up to date for me, so I can continue now. We left off at Agassiz. So then at St. Norbert Collegiate—this will not take very long, by the way—Desktop Publishing 41G; Green Valley School Computer Communications 31G; Steinbach Junior High Computer Communications 41G; Steinbach Junior High Intro to Computer Programming 21G; Steinbach Regional Secondary School Computer Programming 21G.

Sanford Collegiate, I think the honourable member has been reading about Sanford Collegiate recently, Intro Multimedia Tech-

nology 31G; Sanford Collegiate again, Advanced Multimedia Technology 41G; Sanford Collegiate Advanced Multimedia Design 41G; Sanford Collegiate Intro Multimedia Design 31G; Sanford Collegiate Computer Communications 41G; Stonewall Collegiate Advanced Software 41G; Arborg Collegiate Advanced Multimedia 31G; Gimli High School Desktop Publishing 31G; Riverton School Advanced Multimedia 31G, one credit; Riverton School Advanced Multimedia 31G, half a credit; Lundar School Computer Communications 11G; Lundar School Computer Research 31G; Lundar School Microcomputer Applications 41G.

Arthur Meighen High Computer Animation 41G; Arthur Meighen High Applied Publishing 31G; Arthur Meighen High Applied Publishing 21G; Portage Collegiate Microcomputer Applications 41G; Carman Collegiate Multimedia 31G; Elm Creek Multimedia 31G; Miami Collegiate Technical Communication/ Application 11G; Garden Valley Software Applications 41G; Garden Valley Keyboarding Speed 21G; Major Pratt Computer Communications 11G; Strathclair School Computers 11G; Elton Collegiate Computer Enrichment 21G; Elton Collegiate Integration of Computer 11G; Erickson Integration of Computer 11G; Minnedosa Integration of Computer 11G; Minnedosa Future and Computers 11G. That is a student-initiated project.

* (1630)

Rivers Integration of Computer 11G; Rivers Television Journalism 31G; Brandon Adult Education Centre Computer Applications 31G; Brandon Adult Education Centre Computer Applications 41G; Crocus Plains Advanced Word Processing, Vincent Massey—this would be the Brandon Vincent Massey, the one I attended and the one my kids all attended—Word Processing 41G; also Vincent Massey Brandon Advanced Computer Science 41G.

Virden Collegiate Advanced Computer Applications 41G; Souris Valley School Division No. 42 Multimedia Design 41G; Souris Valley School Division No. 42 Computer Communications 41G; Wawanesa School Business Maintenance 11G; Pierson School Advanced Computer 41G; Boissevain—down in

Jerry Storie country—Advanced Software Application. Did you know Jerry Storie's dad is from Baldur?

Jerry, I know he calls himself a Flin Flonner too, but he is also from south-central Manitoba basically. [interjection] Well, we do not know if he is still NDP. We suspect he has probably changed over now. [interjection] You started it.

Margaret Barbour, Advanced Word Processing 41G; Margaret Barbour, Desktop Publishing 41G; Margaret Barbour, Videography 31G; Margaret Barbour, Desktop Publishing 31G; Margaret Barbour, Videography 41G; Hapnot Collegiate, Word Processing Practicum 41G; Morden Collegiate, Formatting 21G; West Lynn Heights—Jerry Storie would know about this one probably—Technology 31G.

R.D. Parker, Auto CAD 31G—that is a student-initiated project; Auto Computer-Assisted Design 31G, that is at R.D. Parker; again, at R.D. Parker, Computer Applications 41G; at Pinawa Secondary School, Radio Broadcasting 31G. It is a student-initiated program and in brackets they have got Brian. So maybe Brian initiated that, I assume, Brian being a student. Ross L. Gray School, Secretarial Science 41G; Leaf Rapids Education Centre, Technology 41G; George Knott, Exploring Technology 21G; Calvin Christian—these may be independent schools—Computer Application 11G.

St. Boniface Diocesan, Advanced Desktop 41G; St. Boniface Diocesan, Advanced Desktop 31G; St. Boniface Diocesan, Publishing Internet 21G; St. Boniface Diocesan, Publishing Internet 11G; St. Boniface Diocesan, Introduction to Multimedia 21G, a student-initiated project.

St. Johns-Ravenscourt, Computer Studies 31G; St. John-Ravenscourt, Computer Studies 21G; St. John-Ravenscourt, Computer Studies 11G; South Winnipeg Tech, that is now called Winnipeg Technical College. I had the privilege of attending the changeover ceremony and was joined there by a number of people, including the brother of one of our MLAs in this place. Winnipeg Technical College, Networking III 41G; and Winnipeg Technical College, again,

Networking II 41G; Springs Christian School, Internet Communications 11G.

University of Winnipeg Collegiate, Word Processing 41G; University of Winnipeg Collegiate, Internet 41G; University of Winnipeg Collegiate, Internet Publishing 41G; University of Winnipeg Collegiate, Desktop Publishing 41G; University of Winnipeg Collegiate, MicroComputer Applications 41G; Western Christian School, Computer Applications 41G; Yellowquill College, Computer Applications 41G.

Manitoba School for the Deaf, Keyboarding II 21G; Manitoba School for the Deaf, Desktop Publishing 31G; Manitoba School for the Deaf, Writing Workshop 41G; and, Manitoba School for the Deaf, Corel Draw 31G.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, it is useful to have all of that in one place, and I wonder if the minister is able to table any of those curriculums.

Mr. McCrae: My having given her the information that I did, the honourable member then followed up by asking if we could make those curricula available to her, and the answer is that we cannot. They are not ours. The copyrights held on them are held by school divisions. What I would invite the honourable member to do in this case, since I do like to try to come forward with the information that is being asked for, and when I cannot do it, I can maybe offer an alternative approach.

The honourable member may wish to approach the school divisions themselves that have the copyright on these curricula. We have a set of criteria that I think school divisions use to develop and design curriculum. We also register them, but we do not own them. I think that is the best way for me to answer that.

We list the school-initiated courses on the Web. We list them on the Web so that, if people are interested in knowing more about these courses, they then can identify them on the Web and then contact divisions. I guess, by having it on the Web, divisions and citizens can, therefore, know that there are rights held by the

holder of the courses, and they can contact the divisions involved directly.

* (1640)

Ms. Friesen: Can the minister tell me how many students are enrolled in the information technology courses at the senior high school, the ones that we have just been listing?

Mr. McCrae: I am not sure I can obtain the answer to that question. We are aware with respect of the number of students involved with respect to department-developed courses, and those courses are Senior 1 Keyboarding and Senior 2 Keyboarding, Desktop Publishing, Software Applications, Data Management, Computer Awareness, and others, I understand.

Now we know about those ones, but the ones that are school-initiated, we do not have that kind of data available.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister then table the department's developed programs, curriculum and information technology at the senior high school? Can he tell me at some point, obviously not today, the number of students who are enrolled in those courses?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, Mr. Chairman, we could table a list of courses tomorrow. It will probably take us longer to determine the number of students enrolled in those courses, but we will table the courses tomorrow and then hold the rest of the undertaking until we follow through with it.

Ms. Friesen: The minister said that he had committee which was looking at—not a committee, but the department was looking at Web-based delivery, and I understand that there are also committees which are looking at information technology generally in schools in Manitoba. What I am interested in is what kinds of conclusions the minister has drawn from the list of school-initiated programs. There are obviously a great number in the information technology area. It sounds as though, without looking at the curriculum, there are two or three which are common, and I will be interested in looking at those to see how they are different from the departmentally initiated ones, but what

conclusion is the minister drawing from the number of other courses and their geographical distribution? Is he assured, for example, that Manitoba students across the province are getting the needed kind of access to information technology courses and tools? Is the regional distribution right, or are there parts of the province which are not getting what other parts are? Secondly, what is it that school initiation projects are telling us is missing?

Mr. McCrae: I am being asked in this question, Mr. Chairman, for my take or my level of comfort or confidence in information technology instruction, courses and curricula. I can say that I am given some level of comfort about this. In a changing world I hasten to add to that the fact that there is a departmental criterion that we are encouraging everybody to use as they develop the courses they are putting out as we have listed them and tabled them for the honourable member.

It has to be borne in mind that the school-initiated courses are not in existence simply for the purposes of dealing with technology. I mean, we are dealing of course with technology. This is an important thing to do. But we are talking about communications. We are talking about programming, multimedia, desktop, communications again, applications of technology, applied publishing, keyboarding. I mean, that is certainly part of the technology, but it is not the technology all by itself. Micro-computer applications, we are talking about enrichment, the overall integration of computers. So it is hard to describe technology very simply these days.

* (1650)

Television journalism: There is certainly technology involved in television journalism. It is not exactly what one conjures up when we hear the word "technology." We may not have in mind that there are different types of technology besides just computers. Word processing, of course, there is a lot more to word processing than knowing how to program your word processor. You have to—well, I was going to say you need to know how to spell, but I have talked to some people who do not allow their kids to use the spellcheck. Not a bad idea. We

still need to know some basics that go beyond technology.

Speaking of spelling, my mother used to be involved in the spelling bees. She always used to tell us as we were growing up to pay attention to our spelling because you never know when you might want to be in a spelling bee, but also it will be good to be able to spell all the rest of your life.

Now, my dad, who is gone now, could recite every word in his Grade 3 spelling book in the order that they appeared in the spelling book. Now, I pressed Dad on that. Why would you know, after all these years, every single word, not related? I mean, you try to do it. Try to list off virtually hundreds of words that are not joined in any way. Well, my dad could do that. I pressed him further about it, and I guess he had to write them on the blackboard a lot of times. I do not know if it was strictly so that he could remember how to spell them or if there was some other project being completed. But it was really quite amazing. I never knew anybody like that who could actually do that. You would wonder why anybody would want to recite every word in your Grade 3 spelling book in the order in which they appeared. I asked him that too, and he said that it really was not something that he had planned out or wanted to do. He was an amazing fellow though; his ability to remember things was unique, I thought, but I digress slightly.

The point is that technology is a very broad and all-encompassing kind of thing. Business maintenance, this is another area where technology assists but it is not the whole story. Formatting, I suppose you could say, is somewhat more technical, but it depends what it is you are formatting for. Videography, another perhaps good example of the point I am trying to make, secretarial science, radio broadcasting, publishing Internet. I think those examples give a flavour.

The other thing that needs to be said is that if you go through the list that I have put on the record a little while ago, you will see that virtually every part of the province is brought into that and every part of the system, including the public and independent part of the school

system. So these school-initiated courses, as I say, are not in existence simply and only to learn about technology. As I say, there is a fairly sound and even distribution of these courses. I am advised the school-initiated courses are of a much higher quality than in the past. Now, that is not to say that anybody should be faulted for that. It may well be that my predecessor is the one responsible for the higher quality that we see today, and as usual my predecessor was quick to pass on the accolades to other places, humble sort of person that she is, and I do appreciate that.

The fact is it may not simply be one person or one group of people that can be credited for this. The fact is that technology is becoming more and more a part of our everyday lives, and so therefore all of us are learning a little more all the time about quality and how to improve quality, and I think you see it. I was watching something on television, I did not know it existed and I do not have enough investments to really qualify for this, but if you are into the mutual funds or you are playing the stock market, you can do it directly now on the Internet from the comfort of your own home without even having a broker or an agent working for you. Maybe this has been around for a while, but each week or two I seem to learn something new that is available that simply was never dreamed of in the past.

In that kind of environment that the statement can be made that our courses are of a much higher quality than in the past, that is, I think, a generally held view in the education community. It is a positive thing to be able to say, something that we need to be able to say and to be able to prove so that our students can basically learn how to learn about technology, because if they simply took a course at school about a specific thing, and that was all they were going to learn for the rest of their lives about how to apply technology, they would soon fall behind.

I was a court reporter in my other life, and this is another example of technology, I learned to write on a stenograph machine which was arguably—I say arguably because I respect court reporters who use other methods to do their work, such as the steno mask or the pen

shorthand writers, there are still some of those around. The technology that I learned on a stenotype machine was sort of state of the art in the late '60s when I was learning this. Well, it was not that many years before we had the CAT, that is Computer Assisted Transcription, which was refined and refined and refined to the point where my daughter the court reporter still writes on the stenograph machine in exactly the same way I did, probably better though because her notes have to be computer compatible; in other words, I think that she needs to be even more accurate. In my time when I would read my notes, I could read through some of my shading and my errors in shading and so on, on the machine.

Well, the computer frankly picks up all the mistakes, so I do not think the court reporter of today makes as many mistakes as the court reporter of the past. And of course it is a marvel. There is no time spent dictating notes into a dictating machine, having it transcribed by a typist; those days are gone. So in the space of 10 or so, 15 years, we have seen a sea change, but at the end of it all is still a person writing the same things on the keyboard of a stenotype machine, but everything else after that is different. It has produced a faster product, the transcript is available so much faster than we were able to do it in the past. That is only one example out of probably thousands and thousands.

Ms. Friesen: We have little laptops here now. We did not before.

Mr. McCrae: Yes, you see laptops almost everywhere now in common use. You will see the laptop computer behind the desk of an office or behind the desk when you check in at a hotel. You see them on airplanes. You see them in airports, people doing their work or whatever they are doing on these things. I do not have one, but probably that will be part of my future too. So the application of technology is something we really have to think hard about. It seems to me that you could have a full-time job just thinking hard about different applications for technology, and you would never work yourself out of a job simply because, once you figure you got them all figured out, then there is technology change again. So then you have to

figure out how to apply the change to technology to all the different persuasions that you have spent the first part of your career discovering.

We see also, in the development of technology teaching in our school system, divisions develop courses that are more in concert with their broad community, the community to which they feel they are accountable, from which they draw some of their revenues, which is a whole other debate. Over the weekend, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) was raising the issue of school taxes again. This is not the first time, and I do not think it will be the last time. But he is going to have to answer some of his own questions before we are done with this discussion. They are important questions—there is no doubt about that—but people want to know some answers. They do not want to just hear what one person thinks is wrong all the time.

* (1700)

So I am going to be pressing the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) and his colleagues to give us some straight answers on some of these questions. They do not give straight answers. They give multianswers. I have been around quite a bit, and I notice that answer is different in one place than it is in another place. This is very confusing for taxpayers, because they need to know—I mean, they already have the teachers all riled up. The Teachers' Society is mad as heck, I assume at the NDP, for all of their talk about reducing taxes and all of the talk about property taxes. Maybe they are mad at the government too.

You would think so if you listened only to Mr. MacIntyre who, as I pointed out awhile ago, did not step down as president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society. He was defeated in an election. The teachers of Manitoba removed Mr. MacIntyre from that position. He did not step down. But the point is there is concern about this tax issue, and rightly so. I notice Jan Speelman, the new president, the one who was elected by the teachers across Manitoba, has singled out this concern. I mean, if we are talking about lower taxes, how much lower, and will this affect funding for schools, very good points to be making.

You can bet that I have to be accountable not only to my own constituents but to the Jan Speelmans of this world who are raising legitimate questions, and as has been pointed out by the throne speech and by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gilleshammer), there will be a tax commission, a Lower Tax Commission. I do not think Ms. Speelman need to be too concerned at this stage, because we have reduced taxes at this budget while increasing funding for education by 2.6 percent. So, you know, just simply talking about lower taxes need not be a frightening thing for anybody who is concerned about education funding.

We have cut taxes before, and we still see an overall improvement in the commitment of government to funding for education, and that includes technology which is the subject of this afternoon's discussion. We put—oh, I cannot remember the exact figure—an additional \$5 million this year in the budget for—and maybe this is why the honourable member for Wolseley supports this budget, because there is all that money in there for education. That is one of the reasons, but I think that there may be other reasons too. Frances Russell maybe got that one right. Maybe time will tell whether Frances Russell was right or the NDP was right, and I am not sure. Was it dishonest? That is Frances Russell's view. Was it tactically stupid? That is Frances Russell's view.

I do not suppose the NDP members are going to want to—Ian MacIntyre included—are going to want to go to the public saying that this decision on the part of the NDP was either dishonest or tactically stupid. So it will be an interesting debate. Interestingly, it will be very much the debate as we go forward to place our record and our proposals before the public for their judgment in a decision that will be made some time in the fall. It is at that time that the focus of these things becomes sharper and sharper, and if anybody out there is even contemplating, which I do not think there is much of this going on, but contemplating changing their support, they will sharpen their focus on that group to which it might be proposing to attach its support.

That is when it falls apart. It just does not stand up to the scrutiny that reason suggests has

to take place for that kind of a decision to be made. So in all of this, when I know that significant new dollars are being made available so that technology can become a more integral part of the everyday learning experience of Manitoba's children and Manitoba's students, it is nice to know that the government is doing the best it can within the resources that are available to lead in this matter, to lead and to encourage innovation in the area of technology, curriculum development, and course content. But I repeat that the department does have criteria that it wants divisions to look at when they are developing courses and when schools are developing courses.

I think that it is going to be an interesting number of years ahead. I do not think I actually—I mentioned Bill Gates before but I did not actually quote him. Bill Gates said that technology change will—there will be as much technology change in the next decade as there has been in the last five, which means, if you lay down too many rules and regulations, they might be, just like some computers, obsolete before their ink is dry on the regulations. So that is the challenge that seems to—well, seems to, does exist. I do not know for sure, but others have made the point that in the last 50 years civilization has changed more than throughout the whole history of humankind. So Bill Gates may have understated the situation, which makes you wonder. He must know something or he would not be so rich. But I think he may have understated the amount of technology change in the next decade.

We need some flexibility, but we also need some direction because this thing could just be all over the place, and we do not want to see precious public resources used to, I do not know, just go on a constant sort of fishing expedition. There needs to be some structure, I know that, but I do not know what it should look like. I think there are others who know more about this who could give us advice about that.

* (1710)

All I know is that the department is involved in this way, certainly through the funding part, but we need to be able to justify all that funding too, and that is why the member's questions are

on the point. They are appropriate questions because I am sure that she would like that the dollars be used wisely as well so that we get maximum benefit and have the smartest bunch of people anywhere just coming out of our Manitoba school system.

Ms. Friesen: I understand the department has been conducting an inventory of computer information technology, computers, number of schools, classrooms hooked into the Internet, et cetera. Is the government prepared to table that information?

Mr. McCrae: Such a compilation we think might exist, and if it does, we would like to make it available to the honourable member. It does not exist in the department itself, and that is why I worded my response in the way that I did. So, on this one, we will take it under advisement and perhaps make some information available to the honourable member.

Ms. Friesen: Well, if the minister is going to do that, let me clarify what it is I am looking for. I am not looking for or only for the Statistics Canada analysis which does have some information on computers per household, et cetera, and computers per school on different provincial bases. I would be interested if the department has more recent information than the latest Statistics Canada material. But, as I understand from the schools, there has been a survey done by the department, at least the schools understood it to have come from the Department of Education, asking for the number of computers, the age of the computers, the capability of the computers and their distribution per classroom or throughout the school, along with some information on attachments to the Internet.

Now, I may have read much more into that questionnaire than exists. Actually, one of the people who talked to me about it was concerned that in fact the government did not leave much space for details on the age of the computers, and they were concerned about the bias in the questions which might indicate a wide range of computers but did not actually give their age. That really does not give you a sense of what is being used in the classroom.

So it is that that I am interested in and if the department perhaps could give me an update. I am sure they do not have the information available at the moment, but could the minister under this line tell me what it is the government has been collecting, how long they have been collecting it and what form it will eventually be published in?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, if we can find out what data is available perhaps through the Council on Learning Technologies, perhaps through them. They have made recommendations to the department, or the other source we will check would be the Manitoba Association for Computing Educators, who may have some data. But I think the honourable member is right. There has to be some data around in order to be able to rationalize the expenditures that have been made in recent years, just very, very significant investments of money for the purpose of wiring and cabling and creating various little local area networks and different things like that, all of those, and computers and software and all of the things that go with it—just a tremendous commitment on the part of the government to the integration of technology, in this case, computer technology, in the curriculum of our public school system.

Having visited a few places since my appointment, the classroom of today has little resemblance to the ones in former days, for obvious reasons, but just the numbers of computers being made available for example through the direct monies made available for that but also through the Computers for Schools and Libraries program. This is taking computers—with the government changing over to new systems everywhere and new equipment everywhere—taking the former equipment and rather than disposing of it in some other way, bringing it up to a level where it is usable and useful for students in our school system. That seems like an excellent approach, rather than some other disposal that does not make as much sense. The children are getting the opportunity to have technology more than ever before, and that is probably what should be happening. I mean, it might be one thing to provide a bunch of computers to schools through allowing government computers to be given to the schools, but it is not much use to them if they cannot plug them

in. So that requires significant investment in getting the wiring.

If you go down to any of the offices in this building and check around, you will see wires that certainly when this building was designed, nobody ever thought we would need to be stringing all those wires that we are. That is happening in our schools too, and that is appropriate so that use can be had of all of the computers that are being made available in various ways but certainly through the Computers for Schools and Libraries program. I guess thousands of them are being made available across the province, and that requires a lot of wiring and cabling. That can be an expensive project too, depending on the layout of a school, depending on what other work has to go with it. I mean, sometimes as you are wiring and cabling, you find things that you do not necessarily want to find, but you do anyway. Then the Public Schools Finance Board has to go to work to address issues that arise just from things being discovered through going through the process of getting schools wired for all of this new technology or not so new, previously enjoyed technology, we could say, that the students need.

So with regard to this inventory, we will do the best we can to get this information for the honourable member. We think that it does exist in some form. The other thing, I am reminded that wiring and cabling and computers, they are all dandy, but they are not much good for anything unless the teachers have skill at using them and students skill at learning and demonstrating learning with them. So we have to assist to make sure that our teachers get the opportunity to have their skills developed to make technology a reality and a foundation skill in our students.

I really have been quite impressed, although I have not completed my total investigation here, about how these teachers out there have become such crackerjacks on technology. There are some very, very smart people out there when it comes to technology. They are needed, and they are very appreciated because they are doing a heck of a job. If you go into their classes and see what some of their students are doing with what they have been learning from these teachers, it is

quite astounding that, with young people not even the age of majority yet, there are so many things they can already do. There are students who are into profitable businesses. They have not even finished high school yet, and they are able to further their own businesses' interests, technologically speaking. Can you imagine the headstart that they have once they complete their education? They already have a going concern of a technology-based business.

* (1720)

This is partly due to the fact that some students are very adept at picking up the technology and running with it, but it had to start somewhere. I am sure some of the teachers I have met have had a lot to do with the success already being enjoyed by relatively young Manitobans in business interests that are technology based.

The honourable member has talked about, as I say, an inventory or a survey, and the next sitting I think I will be able to report to her about that.

Ms. Friesen: In the same vein, Mr. Chairman, the government has specific allotments for computer purchase in its grants to schools in part of its funding of public schools. What kind of reporting system is there back to the department on the use of those particular funds, and how are those records compiled? How have they been compiled, for example, over the course of the existence of that grant?

Mr. McCrae: When grants are made available to school divisions from the government, they then, through categorical granting, have to report on how the dollars that have been granted are spent, and the honourable member is familiar with the Financial Reporting and Accounting Manitoba Education Report, the FRAME Report, which touches on the spending of dollars that are made available by the government.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, what I was asking for was what information is returned to the government about the kinds of computers or networks or software that have been purchased with the money allocated in the FRAME Report. So what kind of information is returned to the

government? How does the government keep that information, and has there been a compilation since the initiation of these grants?

Mr. McCrae: All throughout the relationship between government and school divisions, Mr. Chairman, you will see that with accountability still being a key feature of the relationship, accountability by the province but also accountability by the school divisions or schools involved, the information the honourable member is talking about here, I suspect, I mean I could be wrong, is more detailed than that sort of relationship would suggest is appropriate. By that I mean to say, I am kind of going back a little bit to the other conversation we had about things like the Athena proposal or the music and phys ed in Brandon examples that I have given, where I simply believe that some decision making is appropriately made at the local level. To some extent, I do not need to know what make or model of a particular piece of equipment is. I do not think I need to know that, because the school division to which my department is granting money has to make available certain information in the form prescribed in the FRAME, or we have to make information in a way that is prescribed by the Provincial Auditor or by the financial administration act or whatever legislation—I do not even know if there is such an act—but whatever legislation we operate under, we have to obey those rules.

* (1730)

What I am thinking is that the honourable member is asking for information that gets into the kind of detail that you could probably get but not by asking the government. You could probably get it by asking a school division. If you are really wanting to get a breakdown, for example, of what types of equipment, what make or model, where it was purchased, under what kind of contractual arrangement it was purchased, whether it was all done appropriately or not, those are legitimate questions in a publicly funded system and I have no quarrel with that, but I think they need to be asked at the appropriate level. If I felt that it was necessary for the government of Manitoba to know this much detail, then I would probably direct that but I do not want to micromanage and I think we

have enough management going on as it without getting carried away with it.

I do agree with accountability and, you know, a transparent system so that everybody can know what is happening with their dollars. I do not mean to be unco-operative or anything like that. I am simply saying some of the information the honourable member asks about is appropriately available and if you ask in the right place. To what extent we should be required at this point to go to find out the finer detail that I think the honourable member is seeking, I do not know how much responsibility I have for that without maybe knowing more specifically. If there is a specific thing the honourable member needs to know, then we need to look at it and say, well, should I be the one providing that information, or should the honourable member go and correspond with the school division involved? Many, many boards, the comment has been made, they feel they are already micromanaged and too much reporting is required.

Well, if that argument is being made, if you can make that argument and still satisfy the taxpayer that you are not trying to escape accountability, then so be it. If governments are criticized, it is often because they have too many—I hope my staff do not mind these expressions—number crunchers and people like that. I mean no offence but that is what people call big government. We have been able to reduce the overall size of the government in the last few years, and we intend to carry on with that. We believe, I know this is an arguable point with the honourable member and her colleagues, but not only believe that we are doing better with less, we are doing as much as well. We are more effective and we are more efficient than we were when we started.

When I say efficient, that clearly implies a reduction in the overall size of the government, and that has happened. We remain committed to that because we think governments ought not to be doing what people should properly be doing for themselves. We do believe that some people legitimately need assistance from a publicly funded institution of some kind and we agree with that. That is appropriate, but the comment has been made, and this is by school divisions

who themselves are criticized from time to time for being top-heavy, meaning on the administrative side. A lot of people, myself included, sometimes say when things are going bad, well, have you looked at the administration part and have you cut back there instead of cutting back in the classroom or whatever the debate happens to be. It is not a bad argument to make, but if you have the facts to back it up, then you are in a stronger position.

We are accused as a department sometimes of micromanaging. There are an awful lot of forms that have to be completed, and some people would think that we should give them money and never ask them another question. This is what makes for public debate. This is how and why the honourable member, any day of the week, could find a new question to ask in Question Period, because it is always what is the right place and what is the right balance. There are some who just say give us the money and do not ask us any questions, and there are others who would say give them the money but ask a lot of questions, and another group that would say, yes, indeed, give them the money but lay out some criteria, which is a good think, not a bad thing, especially if they are an elected group. Then they have some responsibility too. They have people to whom they have to respond directly.

This has happened in Winnipeg over different things recently. It is happening with respect to the Athena. My question is, you know, what do the parents think? What do the teachers think? Have a public discussion about it before you go and make a decision. Those who want to make a decision without having a public discussion, sometimes there is a price to be paid for that, and I am assuming that more and more in our information age people are much more informed. That is an overall observation I am making, rightly or wrongly, but I think it is rightly. Public institutions are far more responsive today to the feelings of the ordinary citizen than they used to be, and part of the reason for that is technology has made that happen.

Think, Mr. Chairman, what life was like before television came on the scene. There was a whole different society. That one technology

alone changed the very culture and fabric of the way we live our lives. Television changed politics. Radio started that change. Television came along and changed it even more. I read Pierre Berton's book, *The Promised Land*. I do not know if the honourable member has read that book. Probably. I understand she has done a lot of reading. Pierre Berton spoke of the politicians of the time of the turn of the century in this book, and Clifford Sifton was one of them. There was a fair bit of emphasis on Clifford Sifton. Well, I am interested in Clifford Sifton because he was the last Attorney General from Brandon, and I was the next one after that. Quite a few years between us, but the point is Mr. Sifton had a very key role at a very important time in the history of our country. I know the honourable member knows all about this.

What Pierre Berton, the spin that he put on his book, *The Promised Land*, was that, you know, there were people back in those days who were rascals in politics, and some people would say that is the case today too. However, the rascals of today, everybody knows who they are. At the turn of the century, not everybody knew who the rascals were because there was no television and there was no radio. There was a newspaper, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, but who owned it and who controlled the editorial content? Clifford Sifton. That is the way it was then. It is not like that now, I do not think, subject to correction. However, that was the point that Pierre Berton was making in his book. I do not know how much of a rascal Mr. Sifton was. Coming from Brandon, he could not have been all that bad. But things were different, that is all.

You cannot impose today's standards on what went on then. Those people were very important in the development of our country. Clifford Sifton, God bless his memory, opened up the West. Although he was Minister of the Interior for the federal Liberals, he started out in this House or in the provincial Legislature and moved on to federal politics. As Minister of the Interior, I think was his title, he was responsible for all those waves of immigration that brought the settlers to the West and opened up the West for habitation and civilization. He did a lot of things to get us going as a civilized province, so

I speak with pride. I do not always agree with everything Pierre Berton said in his book, although the point I am making is the technology has changed the way we do everything.

I know of certain activities that do not happen anymore because there are hockey games on TV all the time. This is important too though, is it not, Mr. Chair, that there be hockey on TV, or as long as the right team is winning. I cannot seem to get the chairman involved in this discussion. So there are so many more ways for us to be accountable now than there were in the olden days. It would be simple enough to say, oh, we are very accountable because it is all published in the Public Accounts. My grandad had a Grade 2 education, and when he learned to read, he kind of forgot most of it in pretty short order because he only achieved Grade 2 education.

So it is published in the Public Accounts. Big deal. What kind of accountability is that for the ordinary citizen of the turn of the century? Well, today it is a little different. You have a vigilant media for the most part; you have all these ways to get information to people. I heard yesterday 36 percent of Canadians have access to the Internet, mostly in their homes now. That is expected to grow by about 30 percent every year or so, the level of it, of participation that way.

So nowadays I do not think anybody who is really interested in a topic can claim that there is something being held back unless you can make a really good case that somebody is covering something up, which is different. The fact is people have access to information, and nowadays politicians are more conditioned than before to being very forthcoming with information, government politicians and other politicians as well. I refer to school division politicians and to municipal politicians, so that nowadays, something is happening in our school system, we just do not take it for granted that that person that we elected to be our school trustee will do the right thing, and if we really hate it, it must be the medicine that we needed. We do not think like that anymore, because we have access to so much information. We almost instantaneously can say we do not think this trustee is right because of this, this and this that

we know about because of our right and our ability to acquire information about the subject matter.

* (1740)

So that is why I do not think that we ought to be meddling and micromanaging school division responsibilities. That does not mean to say that we have no interest or ought not to gather information. I started by saying it is a balance that we need to look at. You cannot use a certain set of principles one day to make a particular point, then move over to a whole different set of principles to make another point. If you want to be believed, I mean, if you do not care if you are believed or not, do whatever you like. The point is I think there is a balance that needs to be identified and used.

There are forms coming out of people's ears that they have to fill out, and I think it is incumbent on us, if we are interested in efficient and effective government at every level, to encourage efficiency giving due regard to the whole principle that these are public dollars we are talking about. I mean I do not believe that we should just give them money and never ask them another question, for example. I do not believe that, but there is another school of thought that wants us to fund and direct and control, and as I say, we are trying, striving to find that responsible balance. I think here is an area where, if you are looking for something that shows a difference between the different approaches taken by the political party at the provincial level, it could probably be said that there is one group that wants to direct and control and control and control. George Orwell, I think he referred to that group as big brother. That is on the one side. Then there is the libertarian side who would not fund very much and have even fewer questions. That is the other extreme. Somewhere in the '90s and in the new millennium, there are those who strive to find the right balance that is absent of slavish adherence to philosophy, absent of that but interested in getting the job done. That is where you want to find the balance. That is where it should be.

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I will just put it on the record, I am against the big brother concept of government. There are others who slavishly adhere to that even though you know, what is his name, Tony Blair—Tony Blair is the latest one whose shrine some people pretend to be worshipping. Even Tony Blair dare not undo the good work of the Maggie Thatcher administration, Margaret Thatcher.

An Honourable Member: He probably has blue on the background of his billboards too.

Mr. McCrae: I do not know; it may be that he does, but the point is they are labelling themselves the new socialists or the new whatever they are called.

An Honourable Member: Like the New Democrats, today's New Democrats.

Mr. McCrae: Like today's New Democrats. The point is you cannot fool everybody about that. You could fool everybody about it if you were consistent long enough, if you were consistent, but if you are not consistent, then you do not fool very many for very long.

But I digress. I am trying to make the point that the big brother system should be for somebody else, not for Manitobans. The big brother system suggests that elected school trustees are nobodies who know nothing and who should not be trusted to have any responsibility. I do not agree with that theory.

I believe we have a couple of former school trustees in our midst this afternoon, and I should speak with some respect. I would anyway, even if you were not here, Mr. Chairman, be speaking with respect about school trustees. They put their reputation on the line in order to do a job. They do not make huge piles of money to do that work. In fact, huge does not even come close to describing what school trustees get for their effort. They become trustees because they care. Therefore, they want to be good trustees. They are elected, and they can be removed too. I have seen it done, by the way. I think that system of responsible government at the school board level ought to be encouraged and not just meddled with through excessive regulation.

So there should be criteria because we, too, at the provincial level, have to be responsible.

We have to answer for things that happen, I guess, at the school board level too. We had better be ready with an answer that says: well, these were our criteria when the dollars were made available. If those criteria were not followed, either it is serious enough that you have something in The Public Schools Act that allows you to do something about it, or the criticism can properly rest with the school trustees, at which level the decision was made.

* (1750)

I mean, I am not going to run away from a responsibility that should be mine. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) has said that the curriculum belongs to the people. Therefore, the Athena business, we should be imposing from on high our will on an unsuspecting public, without even having the debate. Well, the debates are happening. It is a good thing that those debates are happening. There are some people with the Big Brother network who would say, it shall not be done under any circumstances, when perfectly intelligent, elected people, with their feet on the ground in the community, are quite able to look at some of these sorts of things and make decisions about them. The fact that decisions are going both ways suggests to me the system works.

So there should be broad criteria. I agree with that. The debate will always revolve around whether it is too broad or not broad enough or whether there is too much focus or too little focus. We want terms and conditions that attach to money. That is what the system is all about. We have set up a system where a good chunk of the education of our children comes from the coffers of the provincial government, and, of course, there have to be rules. That is why we have a Public Schools Act. That is why you see amendments being made to it from time to time to address issues that arise in a constantly changing world. Then we want to be informed in a general sense, sometimes more specific than other times, maybe more so in new programming, although it is kind of difficult with rapidly changing technology to get really specific about what we demand. So we work hard to keep on top of that, to keep our partners working with us to ensure that we are getting the best we can out of the dollars. But is it the very best? Well, I do

not know until technology stops changing. Can anybody tell me when that is going to happen?

I had a friend in Los Angeles who gave me a date in August of 1969 that the world was going to come to an end. Well, it did not happen. That was 30 years ago now. He has been wrong for 30 years, and I remind him every time I see him too.

Anyway, we want to know if the money is spent according to the terms and conditions. That is where there are contractual arrangements. There are different kinds of ways. There are reporting mechanisms, when you have categorical funding. You want to know that your categorical dollars are being spent in a way that meets the objective that was hoped to be achieved when the dollars were made available. We do not see that it is in the public's interest for us to be gathering more and more data of the nature of the make and the model or the type of computer or the make or the model or the type of modem or network software. These are and should remain local matters. Unless someone can make a good argument to the contrary, that is my feeling about it. Otherwise, we would need a department considerably larger than the department we have. I think the people we have are working hard enough just to try to keep up on all the demands that we already make of them. Unless somebody can show me that I am off the mark here, I would like to continue in that way.

I see the system as just that, a system. Local boards can and should be permitted to operate somewhat freely within a defined scope—that is defined in The Public Schools Act—and to make entrepreneurial decisions, because entrepreneurial decisions are part of progress too. You see, public decisions can also be entrepreneurial. Some people do not understand that, because they make distinctions in broad, sweeping ways. It is all good or it is all bad. It is not always that simple.

We think that local school boards should be able to make choices about what vendors they use, because I know they have to be responsible to the public that elected them about whom they are dealing with and what they are getting for their ratepayers' money. If the honourable member and her colleagues are right, which I

think they are, that local school taxes are an issue, I am just as right that provincial taxes are an issue. People simply want to be assured that they are getting value. They want to be in agreement with their government that those things that the government sees as priority reflect their own, things like health and education. I think there has been enough polling done, there has been enough door knocking done, there has been enough coffee shop talks done and public meetings in church basements and town halls and community centres to know that health and education are the priorities.

We do not require school divisions to report to us on a lot of local purchase decisions, many of which you could argue are just as important as local purchases on technology, for example, science equipment, band equipment. I mean, I do not care what kind of trumpet they are using, who built it or whether it was made in Manitoba or in Saskatchewan. I would prefer Manitoba, of course, but these are appropriately division-level decisions. Phys ed equipment, I mean are we going to start telling them what kind of soccer equipment to be using, what kind of basketball hoops they have to use?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

We provide help. I know that in terms of purchasing, we provide help through the Textbook Bureau because we know that we can get a good price, or a better price, in some ways. We provide help through MERLIN to negotiate broker pricing that can help. It is all with a view to being helpful. Copiers and fax machines, all those things, I would argue, are very rightly matters that ought to be made at the division level. So I guess it depends on the issue.

I am not saying the honourable member is wrong and that I am right. I am not even saying that, but I think on certain identifiable issues I might take a stronger position than that. When I have made the point that I think the NDP is wrong, I have said that. Sometimes we have been wrong, not as often as the NDP, but we have been wrong sometimes too, and that is why we are quite prepared to be accountable and to be open with the public of Manitoba.

Ms. Friesen: Well, the minister chose to talk about the nature of the decision. The question

dealt with the nature of the reporting, and I asked the minister what information is reported back from school divisions as a result of receiving the per capita grants for technology. So I am asking for what is reported.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member is asking specifically what is reportable, and it may be that I took more from her question than she intended. If I did that, I am sorry. I thought that she was wanting more detail than I felt was necessary. As it turns out, I am right on this one in that the FRAME reporting arrangements require divisions that take the categorical dollars, let us say, for technology. We ask them to break down in three areas, and I do not think it is broken down much more than that. Supplies, equipment, and service, those are the three. You could have a hundred questions arising out of division A putting in a report for FRAME saying that X hundred thousand dollars was used for supplies. Well, you sure could have a lot of questions about that, and I would say, well, there is a place you can ask those questions.

The division involved with the expenditure of those dollars knows in much more detail what those supplies were. I do not know what they all are, and I do not think I need to know. As a department, we have identified in recent years the need for categorical funding for technology. It is appropriate that we ask about how much you are spending for supplies, how much you are spending for equipment, and how much you are spending on service. But then, if some division gets into some wonky contract with some fly-by-night supplier of service which raises some kind of issue, well, I think that issue should be fleshed out, but it probably should be fleshed out at the level where those decisions got made. Of course, the Manitoba government is going to be interested in knowing if monies are being inappropriately spent, but I do not think it is unreasonable to ask for the general categories of supplies, equipment and service.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

HOUSING

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 Housing.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 30.1. Housing Executive (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 98 of the Estimates book.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I think what I want to do today is sort of pick up where we were last time. I think we were discussing the Emergency Home Repair Program. I want to talk about home renovation and repair programs but in the context of urban revitalization and spend a little bit of time dealing with that issue, and then I think we will call it.

Actually, in the meantime, I want to ask a brief question based on the discussions we were having about the vacancies recently. Has Manitoba Housing been approached or given any consideration to or offered to have vacant Manitoba Housing properties used by Kosovo refugees?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing): As it happens, we have made units available, and at the present we have three families that are into our Manitoba Housing complex. The three families are located in the St. Vital area. I believe it is a mother and two children in one unit, a mother and—I think we have the families here. But there are three families, and we are in the process of possibly looking at locating, I believe it is, a couple of more families that are looking at moving in. Two more, yes. So we possibly might have a total of five families within our housing complex in the next short while.

Ms. Cerilli: So how did that come about?

Mr. Reimer: I believe we were approached by the International Centre. They asked us whether we could make space available, and we were more than happy to accommodate these people.

Ms. Cerilli: Wonderful.

Mr. Reimer: Just to give a little bit of a further update on it. From what I have been told, they

are all related, the families, and they asked to be fairly close to each other. So they are all in the same complex.

Ms. Cerilli: That is even better. Good, very nice. That could raise the issue then of how those units are going to be furnished. That is all provided by the sponsoring agency, I would assume.

Mr. Reimer: From what I understand, yes, by the sponsoring agency. Also, I believe the Salvation Army has stepped in and got them some furnishings and some clothing and things of that nature. From what I understand, there has been a fairly good uptake and response to supplying them with some of the basics.

Ms. Cerilli: Okay, that is good. I want to go then to talking about repair programs and community revitalization, the role that housing and your department will play in that in the province. We have been talking about what used to be the Emergency Home Repair Program and now is the Critical Home Repair Program.

With the change in the title, are there any other changes that have occurred in that program, and why did you change the title if you are not doing any other changes?

Mr. Reimer: The one thing that has always been evident when you deal with the government is you get these new acronyms and new expressions, and they seem to just grow like mushrooms. With every new idea, you get a new acronym and new initials to try to remember.

The member is right. It was a change. There was a change in name. The name now is the Homeowner Emergency Loan Program, and what it is, is it has gone from a grant program to a noninterest-bearing loan program to the homeowners. That is the biggest change between the two programs.

Ms. Cerilli: Then is there another program called the Critical Home Repair Program, or is that a different program?

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Reimer: No, that program was replaced, from what I understand, about five years ago, so it is no longer around.

Ms. Cerilli: Okay. So what went into the decision to change the program from a grant to the maximum amount of \$3,000 to a loan of \$3,000? Do you not think that that is going to affect the regions' uptake in the program?

Mr. Reimer: As I mentioned, the Critical Home Repair Program used to be a combination of loans and grants. With the change, as was mentioned, five or six years ago, I was just checking to see whether we had the statistics as to the take-up before compared to what it is now, and from what I am told, we do not have that type of information with us. So I am not too sure of the background as to the popularity or the amount of monies that were involved prior to this change, but we could get those numbers for the member if she would like them.

* (1600)

Ms. Cerilli: I would appreciate that, but I am also referring to the change in the Emergency Home Repair Program to the emergency home loan program. That is a different one that you said was changed.

What was the date for that change, and on that one, as well, will you get me the information and give me a little bit of background about why you made the change, the rationale for that, and if you do not have the stats, an idea of how it has affected the location of the pickup on the program, if you could get me that.

Mr. Reimer: Yes, we can get that information, too, for the member.

Ms. Cerilli: But are you going to answer about the rationale for changing the program?

Mr. Reimer: As it happens, this happened about three or four years ago, I guess, and the personnel I have with me right now were not involved with those decisions, but they have said that they can look into some of the background on that and try to give us a bit of a briefing note on that. So we can include that, too, with the information that has been requested.

Ms. Cerilli: So there has been a formal review of the pickup then, because even in the last program that the government ran, the Home Renovation Program where you had to spend \$5,000 to get one, that really did not have much of an impact on the urban core in Winnipeg, some of the neighbourhoods that are most in need of home revitalization or repair.

So my concern would be, any attempts to sort of shift the responsibilities for higher incomes or to have a program like this go from being a grant to being a loan would mean that it is going to lose some of that emergency quality, but it is also going to mean that it is going to change the type of people who are going to be able to make use of the program just because of the fact that it has now got to be repaid. So was that not considered when you changed the program?

Mr. Reimer: The Home Renovation Program that was alluded to in the question was—some of the criteria on that was the assessed value had to be under \$100,000, and the homes had to be built prior to 1981. From the recollection of some of the staff here, the biggest pickup was in area of assessed value somewhere around \$70,000, \$75,000 of home value. So there was a fair amount of pickup in that area.

We do not have the exact numbers of the program and the building permits that were associated with that renovation program, but from my memory, I believe it generated about—

Point of Order

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Chairperson, on a point of order, I was using the old program that you did with Lotteries-run revenue as an example of how there is a danger. I do not need you to go into trying to remember about that program. I know the details and the history of that program.

The point I am making is, is there not a risk in changing this grant program to a loan program, to having the same thing happen where the pickup is going to be at homes that are in the higher end, and the homes that really need the program on an emergency basis in some of the older neighbourhoods that are really suffering right now are not going to be able to afford to use the program.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): The honourable member for Radisson does not have a point of order, but it is a point of clarification.

* * *

Mr. Reimer: I was just going to point out, too, that the program is income-tested and income-based, so it is not as if it would be picked up by people who were of substantial means. It is close to the core income levels for the pickup.

Ms. Cerilli: Well, I want to spend a little bit more time talking about some of the other programs that exist. I hope that I am going to get the book that I just sent the intern to get. It was a book that was a report from Manitoba Housing from 1984 that listed all the government programs that existed in Manitoba Housing in 1984, and there was a tremendous number. Now there is hardly any. The fact that we are—you know, just this last weekend, had another, what I would think is very good overview in the Free Press article on urban renewal and urban decline. The minister was quoted in that article making the same point that the programs that are there are not meeting the scope of the problem, the needs that are out there, and that this area has been neglected for so many years now under this government, and there is some responsibility for the federal government, as well, but that now we have this huge hole to fill.

I know recently the minister has made some increases into the RRAP program. I remember last year asking about this, asking why the provincial government has not been matching the funds, has not been putting the money into the RRAP program that it could be. Now you decided two weeks ago or so to put in \$616,000 more dollars which is going to amount to an additional 45 or so properties. I have raised before with this program the fact that there is a waiting list for RRAP.

* (1610)

I am wondering, though, if the minister would agree that there is this huge unmet need in the community and that even the dollars that are in the RRAP program now are not going to meet the needs that are out there, are not going to keep

up to the fact that the housing stock continues to decline and a program that now has not even \$2 million or so, around there, in it that used to have over \$10 million, as I understand it from talking to city officials, just for the city of Winnipeg back in the '80s, that more has to be done. Would the minister agree that there has to be more public money invested?

Mr. Reimer: It is interesting doing the Estimates on Housing and how there is a bit of an overlap into my other portfolio which is Minister of Urban Affairs where we are naturally concerned about the city of Winnipeg. Naturally, the core area is a very, very important component of trying to revitalize the city of Winnipeg and to be aware of where problems are and where there is room for work for the provincial government to be involved in the program.

One of the programs that was quite successful with the City of Winnipeg, and again I will answer this using my two portfolios in a sense, was what we called the Manitoba-Winnipeg Community Revitalization Program. That is a program that was started back in the '80s. It was a commitment by the provincial government and the City of Winnipeg to identify certain areas for regeneration of the community and housing and other areas of community involvement. I believe the funding allocations were upwards of \$6 million to \$8 million for Phase 1, about the same amount for the second phase, which was five-year increments.

It expired last year. It was felt by the City of Winnipeg and the province that an analysis should be done and an audit as to where this funding can get the best results and where we can get some better bang for our buck, if you want to call it. Both the City of Winnipeg and the province agreed. So there was a bit of a hold on announcing a new MWCRP program or whatever it was going to be called.

We had committed, as a provincial government, \$7 million into this program, which was matched over five years. This was matched by the civic government or City of Winnipeg government for another seven. So we are looking at \$14 million and how we can invest that into the best use for our communities.

We were asked to come up with a new program. When I say we it was in consultation with the City of Winnipeg and the province to come up with a different program. One of the components that was looked at very seriously was a home renovation program and also a block renovation program. This was more or less brought to discussions with the mayor. This was the previous mayor, Mayor Thompson and EPC and council at that time. There seemed to be a bit of an agreement and an understanding that this was possibly a good way to revitalize or revamp the old program. However, it was put on hold with the election of last year in October with the understanding that it would be incumbent upon the new mayor and the new council and the new EPC to re-evaluate this and to approve it so that we could get it going in this specific year, which is 1999.

I believe there was even a fairly extensive article in the paper regarding this program. Since that time the city has come back and said, no, we want to re-evaluate that program and come up with a different direction on it. Since that time nothing has happened. We have made overtures to the city asking how do you want to utilize these fundings that we have earmarked towards a new type of community revitalization program or a new community effort and in which areas? The city has come back and said that they are still re-evaluating.

So we have made the overtures. We have made the commitment. We feel that some of that money should or could possibly go towards a home renovation program or a block revitalization program—when I say block, I mean a block of houses, not an apartment block—and get some good bang for our various areas in the city we are using. But it sits there and there has not been a pickup by the city to that.

It was targeted to lower income homes, and we were talking about some of the guidelines for expenditures not being as high as \$5,000 but of a smaller amount, whether we would get a percentage back as a grant of their expenditures. But here again, the city has not come back with any type of acknowledgement in the sense of accepting or how they would like to proceed with this commitment of \$7 million.

Whether it even goes forward under the old name, the MWCRP or a new name, it really is of no consequence to us other than to try to get the program going off the ground.

Ms. Cerilli: I am familiar with the news clipping that the minister is referring to, and as I recall following up when I read that, the city was asked for \$14 million over five years. The minister is nodding that that is correct.

Mr. Reimer: Yes, there was a partnership of seven and seven for \$14 million total.

Ms. Cerilli: I thought the way I read it was that the city was going to have to put in \$14 million, and when I contacted the mayor's office about it and the city departments to find out what was being proposed, they said that they did not have actually anything concrete in writing, that you just sort of went and made this request. Now what you are saying is this had been a long-standing discussion with the previous administration, because that has changed over there, too, the whole structure. It was more the former mayor and council that had been involved in this negotiation. Does the minister not think then it is incumbent upon him to maybe revisit this with a review of what had been discussed, and can you demonstrate that there was sort of a concrete explanation of what you had in mind, particularly knowing the mayor's background and that he has hired staff specifically working on these kind of issues? I do not think they are closed to having initiatives in this area, but there has to be, I think, a concrete proposal of what you are asking them for. The \$7 million over five years in the scope of things when we are looking at some of the estimates that are being made by community groups and the articles in the paper, that is not the kind of scope that meets the need either, even if it is \$7 million by two or three levels of government.

I guess the point now is to look at what is needed to get this issue going again, and if this is the program that the provincial government wants to follow through on. If you are starting with \$7 million, what specifically did you ask the current mayor and council for that money for?

* (1620)

Mr. Reimer: It was a very specific and concrete proposal because staff on both levels within our departments, Urban Affairs, and because there was a housing component, even some of my Housing department was involved with the discussions, and the City of Winnipeg. The negotiations for the proposals took upwards of four months. It was specific proposals. From what I understand, it was presented to the mayor in EPC, and it was, from what I understand, rejected at that level. It never went to council for council's perusal.

So we were told that they rejected it and that they were going to revamp it or redirect it towards something that they felt was of more importance and of a different direction. I guess that happened about—very similar to when that article came out in the paper, and I am just trying to guesstimate. I think that was about the end of February or March. So since that time we have asked, well, what do you want to do, and nothing has come back.

Ms. Cerilli: But the city is also undertaking a number of things. I guess this is one of the concerns that I am hearing in the community, is there is not a very good, co-ordinated approach to this at this point, that there seems to be a number of studies and a task force and things being announced. All of a sudden, there is the recognition, for whatever reason, that this issue has to be addressed.

How is the minister going to deal with that, then, that there is this lack of co-operation or communication or collaborative approach between the city and the province?

Mr. Reimer: One of the things that we stress as very, very important and a high priority is a good working relationship with the city because of the fact that Manitoba and Winnipeg are such an integral part of each other.

I meet with the mayor quite regularly. I meet with the mayor and EPC quite regularly. The topic has been brought up a few times since the new mayor and EPC have come into existence. I think that initially there was a feeling that, well, it takes a little while to sort of get the lay of the land with the new council and a new EPC. But I guess it is like anything, on our

part it is a matter of communicating to them on a regular basis that we are still very interested; we are still willing to participate; show me the course and we will run with you or try to accommodate you in your directions that you want to take with the city.

As the member mentioned, I know that there is a fair number of studies and proposals that are flying around. But I guess it is like anything, until we get something concrete and specific from council, it is very hard for us to do it unilaterally and just say that we are going to do this specifically on this one when we are looking at a partnership of 50-50 funding, that there has to be a clear sense of co-operation between the both of us as to the directions we want to take.

So we are willing. We have made the commitment. We have worked out a proposal. They have rejected it, and I guess it is the old adage, well, you tell me what you want and we will try to work with you and accommodate you, but it has not come back that way.

Ms. Cerilli: I am sure the minister is aware that the mayor has a contract with a fellow named David Shore [phonetic], who is working specifically on policy and programs related to housing. I do not know if he has met with any of your staff. His task has been to come up with something that would be the city's response on some of these housing matters.

Mr. Reimer: I have been told that he has met with my Housing staff, yes.

Ms. Cerilli: Is that one of the ways that this is going to be worked out? Has that meeting resulted in any kind of an agreement?

Mr. Reimer: From what I understand, he is looking for information. He has met with staff. It could lead to some sort of programming. It could lead to some sort of redirection of utilization of that funding.

I certainly do not rule out various initiatives that the city may come up with in regard to how those programming dollars can be utilized. So I guess we wait to see what kind of report Mr. Shore [phonetic] comes up with.

Ms. Cerilli: Wait, wait, wait, wait. Then there is the issue of trying to get the federal government involved, and I am wondering if you think that it is reasonable, on an issue with the scope that we have here which estimates, where did I read this, that there are 6,100 homes in the core that would cost approximately \$183 million to repair. That is quoting from the most recent Free Press weekend article. Is it reasonable to expect the cost-sharing to be on an equal basis, in terms of the federal government or provincial government and the city, to address that kind of a problem, that the city should be putting in as much as the other levels of government?

Mr. Reimer: I read the article too, and they do seem to indicate and they throw in the scenario of the federal government into the equation, but our indications are that the federal government has given no indication at all that they want to be involved with housing of any kind anymore, in the bricks and mortar. They have indicated that they are more interested in possibly programming funding, but the bricks and mortar and any type of development in a city-wide area, they have just said that they do not want to be part of it.

So in the article I think that maybe there is a bit of an overly optimistic view that the federal government would be a willing participant. We certainly do not get that indication of, in our dealing not only in our Housing department but in our Urban Affairs department when we are dealing with the Winnipeg Development Agreement or The Forks-North Portage agreement, that the federal government does not want to be part of the downtown development corporation. They are not looking at a new Winnipeg Development No. 3, or No. 2, I guess you might call it.

So the federal government is not that willing of a partner that we get that indication. I think it would take a bit of a re-evaluation or a recommitment on their part to be part of something like when they talk about \$183 million.

Ms. Cerilli: I have another article here here Axworthy seeks \$2 million for a "fire zone." He is looking that the money would come from his negotiations with the Public Works

minister, Alfonso Gagliano, to tap the \$50-million federal fund for rehabilitating the nation's housing stock. What happened to that \$2 million?

Mr. Reimer: I have been told that is the RRAP program that we are talking about. That is where that \$2 million is. The same dollar gets spent three different ways.

Ms. Cerilli: The article does mention that what we are trying to do is get a special cut on it, the money established for Manitoba, over several years of the program that would allow us to do some stuff immediately. The \$50 million for the RRAP that was announced by the minister before Christmas has prompted a large part of homelessness in many urban centres. So what has happened, you are telling me, is that the federal minister said there is \$50 million more for RRAP. Is that then the same money that you are announcing, the \$616,000 additional for RRAP. That is provincial money, I thought, now federal money.

Mr. Reimer: That is right. That is part of that program, yes. You see, the \$50 million is a national program right across Canada, and our share was somewhere around \$2 million, whatever. So what Mr. Axworthy is alluding to in that program is, I guess he is just pre-empting Gagliano's announcement of the RRAP program. So he is spending the \$2 million there.

* (1630)

Ms. Cerilli: So is the money you announced for RRAP on—what did I do with that now; I want to get the date right; here it is—May 14 of '99, was that money provincial money, \$616,000?

Mr. Reimer: Yes.

Ms. Cerilli: Is that the total amount that the province puts into RRAP?

Mr. Reimer: Yes.

Ms. Cerilli: The total federal contribution to RRAP now is up two million. It is for a total of, then, what? Why are we only putting in \$616,000?

Mr. Reimer: What it is, the RRAP program is a partnership. It is a 75-25 percent partnership, 75 percent federal and 25 percent provincial. The federal contribution is \$1.8 million. The provincial contribution is just over \$600,000, so it gives you about \$2.4 million or so of total dollars for the RRAP program for Manitoba.

Ms. Cerilli: I have talked to CMHC staff who have queried why, though, the provincial government is not matching the federal dollars. I have seen the overview of the RRAP program which says that that is something that the federal government intended. Are you telling me, though, that that was never the intention, that it is a 75-25 program?

Mr. Reimer: I have been told that it is. It has always been a 75-25 program, and the contribution has always been that way.

Ms. Cerilli: But the minister knows that there is a waiting list of a couple of years on that program. Have you ever considered that that would be one vehicle for addressing some of the needs out there, is to simply increase the funds into that existing program?

Mr. Reimer: I think that is one of the areas where we can look a little bit more critically at trying to expand for provincial funding in a sense, because if there is a way of tying in the federal dollars and get their dollars spent in Manitoba, and we have the ability to—of the things with our devolution is our ability to redirect funding that is realized into different programs or different subsidies or whatever. This is something that maybe we should look at, because if it is a way of saving some money somewhere and redirecting it into another program where we can tap into additional RRAP funds or something like that, that is something we should look at more.

These are some of the things that I think could be of a benefit, to free up some of the waiting lists that there are on the RRAP program, because I know that not only is there a waiting list here in Winnipeg but throughout rural Manitoba. Anytime that I am out in the rural market, that program comes up continuously. If you do not get asked one question about RRAP, you do not feel like you have been out doing your job in the country.

Ms. Cerilli: So this is an important point then. What the minister is saying, then, if they can create these efficiencies, as we have been talking about in previous days, in anywhere else in the portfolio under the agreement with the federal government, maybe those monies could be put into the RRAP program.

Would that then force the federal government to also increase their dollars into the RRAP program? Could that be a position that could be negotiated with the federal government to say, look, if you are looking for a way to help us out here in Manitoba, this would be it?

Mr. Reimer: Yes, that is a way that we can sort of lever and try to negotiate more funding, but it is an excellent way to try to get at some more of the federal dollars.

Ms. Cerilli: There is another initiative that you are involved with. It says that you are working with the city on this one. Getting back to that theme, this is a discussion about a \$100,000-study on housing in the core, and it is money that is from the WDA, I believe. That would be then \$50,000 committed from the city portion and \$50,000 from the provincial portion.

When I last was inquiring about this, they were still looking at proposals from different consulting firms on who was going to actually conduct that study, and the parameters or terms of reference for it were not completed. I believe that I was told that it was going to be looking at issues around the decline of property values in some of the older neighbourhoods. So can you fill me in on what has happened with that tendering process and that study and what the expected completion date is and results for that?

Mr. Reimer: The contract was tendered and it was awarded. We can get you the name of the company that is doing the study for us. I believe the time frame on it—and it has just been awarded very recently—was 90 days or in around that amount for the study. It is happening right now—[interjection] Oh, the firm is not in there, but we can get that name. We thought we had it with us here, but we do not have the company that is doing the work for us.

Ms. Cerilli: What I am more interested, though, is the terms of reference or sort of the expected results of the study and that kind of thing.

Mr. Reimer: Yes, it was housing, as was mentioned, specifically geared towards the downtown, in and around the downtown, looking at the market, what was the availability, what was the developmental potential, what were the demographics of the particular area, the expectations of housing components in regard to the mix of units regarding free-standing or condos or townhouse type of developments. I believe it even got into some of the locations possibly for development in the downtown area locating or identifying specific areas. I think those are mainly what the study was comprised of.

Ms. Cerilli: So it sounds to me, then, in terms of the expectations of that study, the purpose of it is to try and identify the types and the locations for housing developments in the downtown. These would be new developments or renovations?

Mr. Reimer: I think it was a combination of both. I believe they were even looking at some of the existing structures and buildings, and they could possibly re-evaluate it or redirect it towards housing too, residential housing.

* (1640)

Ms. Cerilli: So is the idea that this would then guide a plan with the city to do that kind of redevelopment so that people could be encouraged to live downtown and more people would be brought downtown to live?

Mr. Reimer: The study of the Winnipeg housing market was required to facilitate investment by private developers, financial institutions, homeowners in marketable downtown residential projects and homes. Increasing the number of owner-occupied residences in the downtown contributes to the quality of life and living, enhances safety and strengthens the commercial sector, generates tax revenues, public infrastructure, the amenities and the programs. It said: to assess the market demand for housing in the Winnipeg centre, to recommend and prioritize actions based on

findings to support expanding residential living in the city, in Winnipeg centre.

Ms. Cerilli: I was under the impression that part of it too was to try and do some analysis to understand what it is that has contributed to the decline in the property values in those neighbourhoods. Is that part of it?

Mr. Reimer: No, that was not part of the parameters.

Ms. Cerilli: Would this be a public study when it is done? Will it be available to the public?

Mr. Reimer: Here again it is shared between the city and the province, and we would have to be aware of their requirements on that, too. The implementation of it would, I think—to a large degree, the city of Winnipeg would be the benefactor of the study. How they look at their handling of it, whether it is a zoning application or building code variance, or things like that, would come strictly under the city's purview.

Ms. Cerilli: Has there been an analysis done that the minister has been privy to that does try to explain what has caused the current situation in some of the older neighbourhoods in the city in terms of decline of property values and the housing needs?

Mr. Reimer: One person I enjoy having lunch with on a fairly regular basis, and I do it purposely because he has a tremendous wealth of knowledge and background in the city as a constituent of the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), is Mr. Bernie Wolfe. Bernie Wolfe has a long memory and a long involvement with civic government here in Winnipeg. I remember once having a luncheon with him, and I asked him about studies that have been done in the city of Winnipeg for the City of Winnipeg. He supplied me a book—believe it or not there is a book. It was updated lastly in 1997, I think it was, or something like that. It has all the listings of all the subjects that the city of Winnipeg has had studies done on it. The number that I saw at that time was something like 1,600 different types of studies done on the city of Winnipeg, in the core area, in and around Winnipeg, regarding various components, and they all dealt with

some sort of social aspect or studies of different natures within the city of Winnipeg.

The one thing that has been done, I think, is the city of Winnipeg has been studied to death in regard to what causes certain things and how things have changed. I think it is becoming more and more evident, even in conversations with the mayor and council, that it is time to try to get some sort of handle on how we can make the city of Winnipeg change and be a better place for everybody to live and work. I am not saying that we do not need any more studies, because I think, if anything, the city of Winnipeg is like a flowing river. You take a snapshot at a particular time for a specific incident, and you cannot make your evaluations just strictly on that specific time. But I think that a lot of things that are happening in the city of Winnipeg, we know what the problems are. It is a matter of let us make some solutions and get some things changing and look at the resources and look at the availability of what we can utilize in the city of Winnipeg to make these changes.

I know that it is not addressing more or less what the member is asking, because I do not have a specific answer as to what the basic problem is in the downtown area. I think it is a combination of not only the problems possibly with my Housing department and possibly with my Urban Affairs department, but there are problems in the social aspect. There are problems in the justice aspect; there is health. It is a myriad of problems that come together in trying to find out where things can change in the city. It is a big undertaking.

But I think there is willingness to make things change. I really do. I think there is a willingness to make things change because people realize that if you want to make Winnipeg a great city, you have to have a strong central core, if you want to call it, of residential components, business components, social components. All these things have to come about in the inner city. You cannot neglect them because if you neglect them, all it is is just a growth of decay, and it just spreads. So we have to set up programs to try to address it.

Ms. Cerilli: Of course, the minister realizes in asking that question I was not asking him about

his favourite studies or more studies. I was asking him because I want to know what his view is in terms of what the underlying problems are in causing the kind of decline that older neighbourhoods are facing in the province.

I guess at the end the minister started answering that part of the question in terms of saying that it is not just related to housing. There are social factors. There are a variety of interwoven issues, and I would agree with that. But when I talk to people, too, one of the things that is being said now is that there is no demand. There has not been a demand. Because of all the issues, the social, the crime, the poverty and economic issues, there has not been a demand for the residential properties in some of those neighbourhoods, and when there are no demands, then we are going to see what is occurring. There is going to be a decline with people moving out.

So I am wondering if the minister would agree then that because the demand has shifted elsewhere, and for this we are talking about demand in terms of the sort of higher, not even higher income but more medium and toward higher income, that what has happened is the demand for properties has been out to the suburbs and even outside the city, and that demand has been supported in all sorts of ways by government policy.

Would the minister agree that what has happened is there has been sort of a tendency, then, for people to move out of those neighbourhoods, who have the means to do that, and that is one of the things that has affected the demand for housing in those areas and contributed to this decline?

Mr. Reimer: I guess there are a lot of factors that can be brought into effect as to why certain neighbourhoods decline and other ones stay stable, and pride of community comes about in some places and not other places. It is tied in sometimes with the convenience of whether it is neighbourhood shopping or neighbourhood activities. The demographics have changed, I guess, have a lot to do with it.

Winnipeg has an awful lot of older stock homes. Winnipeg is one of the "older homes"

cities in Canada, because a lot of the homes that were built were back in the '30s, '40s and '50s, and they were occupied by a lot of new people coming to Canada. There was that sense of striving to achieve, striving to accomplish. That was reflected in their homeownership, their streets, their conditions. I think that became quite prevalent throughout all neighbourhoods in Winnipeg.

* (1650)

At one time, there was no such thing as what we see in some neighbourhoods. There was always a pride of ownership on the streets and in the yards and on the sidewalks, things like that. A lot of it had to do with, like I say, the immigrant movement into Winnipeg, the sense of working to strive for betterment in their community. New generations have come in, different attitudes, different types of goals and objectives. The different type of family make-up is a different factor. At one time there was always the two-parent homes. There is a tremendous amount of one-parent homes in the inner city now. With that brings the responsibility of raising children with only one parent. Those things all contribute to a degree of instability of pressures on the family, and when there are pressures on the family, it is reflected in the community and the neighbourhood or in the sense of commitment that people have, or the time commitment that they have.

There is a myriad of problems that can be associated, but one of the things, it was pointed out to me, that a study is looking at the amenities, looking at amenities that we would want in a downtown and how you can bring people into the downtown and what they might be looking for. I think that looking at some of those things we can relate to some of the other cities that we have revamped and renovated some of their downtown areas because they have gone after some of the housing and some of the warehousing component and things like that to try to get people, young professionals, downtown to work and look after their buildings. Those are some of the things that can happen to renovate, to regenerate, if you want to call it, some of the downtown areas. I think there are a lot of components that can come about to make it a better place to work.

Ms. Cerilli: One of the areas I wanted to really have some time to discuss is then your government's response to all of this. We have sort of been discussing that a little bit with the RRAP program and that. One of the major things you had in this throne speech was this Take Back the Streets initiative. I do have with me the article. It talked about the \$14 million between the province and the city for your grime and crime program, as the Free Press called it.

Is this the same thing? Is the proposal you went to the city with for their \$7 million, is that also the Take Back the Streets initiative, because here you talk about a program that would deal with the shoulder communities, neighbourhoods, for grants to repair their homes, to be more attractive and safer from crime. You talked about city-wide renovation grants. You talked about downtown businesses offered grants to fix up their storefronts. Is that the kind of program you are talking about for Take Back the Streets? Are these two the same thing?

Mr. Reimer: The article that the member is referring to is the one that I was talking to earlier regarding the offshoot of the MWCRP program. That was sort of the alternative that we were proposing and that is where that \$14 million is at. That is the program.

Ms. Cerilli: So then what about the Take Back the Streets initiative? Is that going to have a housing component? Is that going to focus then on the older neighbourhoods and not so much the shoulder communities?

Mr. Reimer: The Take Back the Streets program is something that is more or less directed out of my Urban Affairs portfolio, and I can certainly talk about it at this part of the Estimates.

It is a program that looks at trying to work with the assets and the values in the communities. When we talk about that, we are talking about the community groups, the community centres, the nonprofit associations, the people that are involved with change in the communities. That is where we are talking about the Take Back the Streets initiative. It is working with the communities, working with trying to get them to find out where their

priorities are, where their needs are, and working with them in a way that if once these problems are identified, then government can possibly help with some sort of possible catalyst funding or support funding and things of that nature to keep good programs going and to build further on programs that are showing results in the communities. So those are some of the directions with the Take Back the Streets program is to work with—excuse me, the communities, the places where there have been results, places where they have shown where there are positive initiatives and to work with those types of groups and peoples and trying to make it better for the streets or for Winnipeg.

Ms. Cerilli: You talk a lot about working with community groups. Would you acknowledge that what the community groups are looking for though is the kind of programs we have been talking about is a program for renovations specifically, and is that part of the partnership piece you are going to bring to this?

Mr. Reimer: I think in reference to the article the member has there, I think that is the type of initiative we would like to be part of in working with the city is working with a housing component, working with a community revitalization, if you want to call it or a block revitalization or a community revitalization, someplace where you can tap into the resources and build upon those resources. It is not necessarily going out there and trying to reinvent the wheel for every new component within the community. It is to going to the community and identify where there is change being made and where you can help that change and where you can possibly foster additional change by resources or the redirection of funding or programming dollars, so that you can build upon those. You do not necessarily have to layer upon them with new programming or new initiatives.

I think this is where the community itself takes hold of initiatives and has the ability to make more changes and more positive initiatives, because they are people that are on the street if you want to call it. Those are the people that are involved with the day-to-day operations or exposed to the community more than anybody else, so why not rely on their

wealth of knowledge and experience and contacts and the ability to do things, and try to help them? I think that is how you can initiate more changes in a community, because it then becomes a spider web effect of working more positively.

I think there is a great opportunity that government can be part of, but it does not have to be the overall leader in the sense of being up front. You find the leaders, you find the groups, and you let them initiate the changes.

* (1700)

Ms. Cerilli: But what the minister, when he gives me the same answer all the time, does not seem to acknowledge though is the community groups are doing that. They are coming to the federal government, provincial governments, city and they are saying, come on, we are trying to do this. Where is the money? We cannot do it without resources. I have articles here where the minister will maybe hand over a couple of units to a group, I guess if he likes the people in that group. I do not know how he decides who gets what.

What the community groups are doing is coming with proposals, and I have one in front of me from the inner city Housing Coalition and the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg. I know the minister has this. It is for 1,250 homes over five years. It has specific allocations for funding from the provincial government. They have done their background. They have commitments from other private sector financial institutions. They have other things in place in terms of training resources.

In this particular case, have you responded favourably to this program, and more importantly, is this how you see it working? Is it that a community group comes up with a proposal, then it comes to the provincial government and says can you fund this? Is that how you see it working? Do you not see it working where you come up with a few programs that are funded, then all sorts of community groups across the province can get themselves going to apply and qualify for the funds in those programs that would provide for all the different areas that are going to revitalize

a community, but specifically we are dealing with housing that would then qualify for community grants to do revitalization and renovations and retrofitting for housing?

Mr. Reimer: The study that the member is referring to, that one there, I have met with that group. We had an excellent meeting with them. We did not outright reject anything that they had brought for us, but what they agreed to in conversation with us was that they did have to come up with a business plan. We are working with them. We have had meetings. We are still working with that group. That is an excellent example of various factors coming together for a common cause and meeting with me. I know that it has merit.

We certainly have not rejected that type of approach to it, but at the same time, like I said, they were the ones who suggested when they came to meet with us, it was on a preliminary basis, just to see exactly what the member mentioned, are we barking up the wrong tree or what should we do to complement this. In the discussions, it was decided that you should have a business plan. I believe that they also wanted to take it further to some of the financial institutes and they were going to get some background on that. They are working with some of those groups. We have not heard back from them as to how far they have gone, but I know that we have been working with them in that particular group.

Ms. Cerilli: So where will the money for this kind of initiative come from from the provincial government if you are going to meet the obligations in here; \$1.7 million invested by the municipal government and the provincial government. They figure that would leverage \$11 million. So they are asking you for \$1.7 million. Where would that money come from?

Mr. Reimer: We have not identified specifically where funding can be allocated from because at this time we do not know exactly what their total requirements are and what their commitments are with other programs. What we have said is that if there are strong cases to be made, then it is a matter of looking within the departments or the various sectors within government to see

where monies can be freed up to support that type of initiative.

Ms. Cerilli: This is what I think that I and a number of the community groups are getting at when they say that is what they need governments to do, and that is the kind of leadership. They want a government to make a commitment. You started doing that I guess by approaching the city and saying: we want you to cough up \$7 million, and we are going to cough up \$7 million for some of these types of initiatives. But you have to have that in the budget. That is why we have been raising this. We are concerned that you do not have that in this.

Mr. Reimer: That \$7 million is in the budget. That is in what we call the UCPA budget. There is an allocation of \$7 million in there.

Ms. Cerilli: So then groups like the inner city Housing Coalition would be guaranteed that they could get money for their program, and it may come from the \$7 million allocated, the money that is set aside for your MWCRP?

Mr. Reimer: I think the member knows I cannot guarantee anything until you get approval, but there is a willingness to certainly work towards them. If anything, like I say, they were not ushered out of my office with a noncommittal. We said let us see what we can try to work together on this one.

Ms. Cerilli: Okay. I am just going to keep going until the other department shows up, so maybe the intern should go and let them know—the page, sorry. It would be the Minister of Culture, Mrs. Vodrey, here she comes. I am going to then just ask a few specific questions about this \$14 million program under MWCRP, and then we can just pass everything very quickly.

Mr. Reimer: Okay, go ahead.

Ms. Cerilli: Under that program then, have you gone through the specifics like this? I am going to put the questions on the record, and you can respond quickly. How large would the renovation grants be that you have referenced under that program? Have you dealt with

criteria including income limits? Would they be a matching type grant or a loan or some combination of those?

One of the things that a lot of the community groups are looking for is community-designated programs that you have, for example, renovation-type programs that would be for homeowners, and then you would have a certain pool of money, for example, in the RRAP program that would be designated for community groups. Is that something that would be considered as part of this program? And again, would those programs be sort of targeted to certain neighbourhoods?

Mr. Reimer: I think that every one of the questions that the member raises are questions that we would be working with the City of Winnipeg is to come to those numbers because they have not indicated that they would want to even participate in that program. But I think that those are the types of things, and those numbers are all legitimate questions, that we would want to work with because those are the same types of initiatives that we would want. We would want to know the maximum amount of dollars, whether it is a loan program or a grant program. We would want to look at specific communities that could be identified working with the city. Those again are part of the program that we wanted to work with the city, but hopefully—I guess I am a bit of an optimist—I think that we can still work towards that.

Ms. Cerilli: So did you have all those details worked out with the former mayor and City Council?

Mr. Reimer: From what I understand, those were the type of things that were worked out on an administrative level but were never approved by the city.

Ms. Cerilli: I think we are going to have to pass.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Item 30.1. Housing Executive (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$391,100—pass; (b)(2) Other Expenditures \$88,500—pass; (3) Less: Recoverable from Urban Affairs (\$239,800)—pass.

30.2. Housing Program Support (a) Finance and Operations (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,236,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$365,200—pass; (3) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations (\$364,400)—pass.

30.2.(b) Planning and Portfolio Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,002,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$106,000—pass; (3) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations (\$496,800)—pass.

30.2.(c) Human Resource Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$266,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$46,400—pass.

Then moving on to 30.2.(d) Information Systems (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$942,400.

* (1710)

Ms. Cerilli: I just want to interject here, and I am sorry that the staff have already gone. I asked at the beginning today, again, the maintenance budgets and schedules that you were supposed to have for me today, what happened to that?

Mr. Reimer: I will get them for the member. I guess, they may have had them with them and we forgot to ask them.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Going back to 30.2.(d)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$942,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,332,300—pass.

Resolution 30.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,437,200 for Housing, Housing Program Support, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

Then coming back to 30.3. The Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (a) Transfer Payments \$32,952,800—pass; (b) Grants and Subsidies \$5,920,300—pass.

Resolution 30.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$38,873,100 for Housing, The Manitoba

Housing and Renewal Corporation, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

Then to 30.4. Amortization of Capital Assets \$433,600—pass.

Resolution 30.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$433,600 for Housing, Amortization of Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Housing is item 30.1. Housing Executive (a) Minister's Salary \$13,500. Shall the resolution pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): It is accordingly passed.

Mr. Reimer: Oh, thank you, guys.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Resolution 30.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$253,300 for Housing, Housing Executive, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Housing.

The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply are the Estimates for the Status of Women.

STATUS OF WOMEN

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

Does the honourable Minister for the Status of Women have an opening statement?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I do have a statement. I may,

in fact, use my whole time allotted. This is probably the last statement I will be making as minister due to my retirement, so I would like to take a few moments to speak about the Women's Directorate and also about the Advisory Council.

I am very pleased to present the working Estimates for the Manitoba Status of Women ministry for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2000. The Women's Directorate, as a department of government, envisions a society committed to the true achievement of equality for women and men. To effect this vision, the directorate is focusing this year's efforts on six major areas critical to the achievement of equality.

The six goals of the directorate are to enhance the capacity for Manitoba women to attain economic self-sufficiency, facilitate strategic education choices and enhance employment opportunities in high-growth, well-paid fields for women, facilitate opportunities that promote healthy lifestyle choices for youth, foster awareness and further enhance the government of Manitoba's efforts to provide a safe environment for women and children, raise awareness of women's health issues, and advocate for recognition of women's needs in public health policy, educate government decision makers about the potential differential impacts of government action.

The Women's Directorate works to achieve its goals in a number of ways. Within government, it works to influence government decision making through research support, policy development and evaluation of government programs, policies and legislation. The directorate interacts with the community, the business sector, as well as the various departments of government, to raise awareness of the reality of women's lives, and to ensure that the differential impact of proposed initiatives, employment practices and proposed government reforms are considered.

The directorate also generates government initiatives which reflect specific concerns and priorities of Manitoba women. Manitoba participates in federal-provincial-territorial working groups on violence against women, economic security, Canada Pension reform and

women's health. This collaboration with colleagues across the country has enabled the directorate to address issues of common concern including violence against women.

This past year, the Status of Women reaffirmed their dedication to working towards the goal of eliminating violence against women through the adoption of the Iqaluit Declaration on Violence Against Women. The declaration acknowledges the need to speak out against violence and to work together as governments, communities and individuals toward the achievement of a violence-free society.

In health concerns, Status of Women ministries across Canada are concerned with the broad perspective of health concerns of women and will be considering these issues at their annual meeting July of 1999. F/P/T ministries have also developed a variety of tools useful to assess women's economic self-sufficiency such as the economic gender equality indicators which provide guidelines to determine the economic status of women.

In terms of economic security, we believe that a key to economic security for all Manitobans is access to employment. To this end, we have undertaken a number of initiatives. Over the past years, it has become more and more apparent that small business is an engine of economic growth and job creation here in Manitoba and across Canada. Increasing numbers of women are embracing the challenges of becoming entrepreneurs, particularly in small business.

The Women's Directorate recognizes that when women consider starting a business, they need information regarding various aspects of entrepreneurship. In response to this need and as a part of the celebration of Small Business Week, the Women's Directorate hosted a conference, Manitoba Women in Business: Voices of Experience, in November 1998. Directorate partners in this event included Departments of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Agriculture, Rural Development and Northern and Native Affairs, the Bowering Group Inc., the Business and Professional Women's Club of Manitoba and the Women Business Owners of Manitoba.

* (1720)

The panel discussions featured successful Manitoba women business owners who shared their secrets of success with participants. This event marked the first interactive video conference link between Winnipeg and the Flin Flon women's community. Approximately 40 women from Flin Flon and surrounding area were able to participate in the conference through this medium.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Women also need information regarding available marketplace supports. The directorate produced the Quick Reference for Women Entrepreneurs, a user-friendly directory listing provincial government programs and services targeted to the novice woman entrepreneur. Mr. Chair, I would like to table copies of this Quick Reference for Women Entrepreneurs at this time.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank you.

Mrs. Vodrey: In March 1998, staff from the Business Development services of Manitoba Industry, Trade and Tourism joined forces with Canada Business Service Centre in a storefront setting to provide a more integrated service, now called the Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre. The centre has a publicly accessible resource library with a special section devoted to women in business, as well as a website.

In 1990-91, Industry, Trade and Tourism introduced the Business Start Program which is targeted towards women and rural entrepreneurs. This budget extends funding for this program for another two years.

This Loan Guarantee Program for up to \$10,000 includes a three-day business planning workshop. As of February 1999, the Business Start has provided a total of 237 loans to women of the total of 670 loans approved since its inception. Manitoba Industry, Trade and Tourism has created the position of women's entrepreneurial development officer to assist women wanting to start or expand their own business. Prospective women entrepreneurs can get help with business plan development, planning approaches to lending institutions, market analysis and developing networks.

The Rural Economic Development Initiative, or REDI, focuses on long-term benefits for the rural community. The Rural Entrepreneurial Assistance, or REA, and the Community Works Loan Program offer financial assistance. For the past four years, REA has provided loan guarantees to participating lenders for rural businesses. The amounts range from \$10,000 to \$100,000 and are guaranteed through credit unions and the CIBC. As of March 31, 1999, 54 of the 150 loan guarantees have been provided to women clients. The Diversification Loan Guarantee Program, which provides access to the capital necessary to diversify into profitable commodities and add value to primary production, has been extended to March 31, 2001. Since 1996, 35 loans totalling approximately \$35 million have been approved. Value-added assistance has been requested by such women's groups as the Women's Institute over the past several years and will help farm families increase their financial security.

As a companion initiative to the Loan Guarantee Program, an additional \$2.6 million has been added to the Agri-Food Research and Development Initiative which helps the agri-food industry develop ways to process commodities into higher valued products. Statistics Canada estimates that two-thirds of the jobs in Manitoba require at least basic computer skills, twice as many as 10 years ago, yet many women in Manitoba lack even basic computer skills. Because of the ever-increasing importance of computer skills in today's labour market and the need expressed by Manitoba women, the Manitoba Women's Directorate in partnership with Education and Training has created a computer and Internet training initiative called Power Up. I would like to table some copies of the pamphlet called Power Up.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Mrs. Vodrey: For women entrepreneurs, it is very important that they have the skills needed to access the information available through the information highway. As well, more and more businesses are marketing through the Internet. This \$400,000 initiative will promote the importance of technology for women in today's marketplace and provide training that will build computer and Internet skills for adult women

participants. Power Up reaffirms our government's commitment to bring the full potential of the information economy to all Manitobans, as stated in the Filmon Vision. The need for this program has been borne out by the more than 1,000 registrations the directorate has received since the announcement at International Women's Day.

To promote economic self-sufficiency and assist social assistance recipients make the transition to employment, we have refocused training and social assistance dollars to Making Welfare Work. Manitoba Education and Training and Family Services work together to offer job readiness training, specific skill training and job placement supports to clients on social assistance. This maximizes opportunities for women to participate in and benefit from our growing economy. Since the introduction of welfare reform, there has been a reduction of almost 2,100 in the caseload of single parents. Women have benefited substantially through such innovative programs as Taking Charge!, whose clients are 97 percent women. This has been an increase of approximately 45 percent in the number of people reporting income since the introduction of Making Welfare Work, and general assistance caseloads are at their lowest level since 1980.

In the area of education, fundamental to finding employment as an entrepreneur or in a salaried position is a good education, an education which prepares one for today's world of work. As we approach the new millennium, it is vital that women make strategic education choices that will prepare them for career-oriented employment in well-paid fields of skill oriented, knowledge-based economy. To encourage women in these directions, the Women's Directorate developed and administers the very successful Training for Tomorrow scholarships program for women. Mr. Chair, I have copies of the application program here. There are copies in both French and English.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you once again, Madam Minister.

Mrs. Vodrey: A total of 241 one-thousand-dollar scholarships have been awarded with 50 more due to be awarded in September to women

entering two-year diploma courses in math, science and technology-related programs at the province's community colleges. Building on this program, the directorate has developed in partnership with Manitoba Education and Training and Red River College, a role model video and curriculum guide for Training for Tomorrow.

Mr. Chair, I have copies of the program that we have been talking about and one copy of the video to table for my colleague.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Mrs. Vodrey: The video features young Manitoba women studying or employed in technology related fields. The curriculum guide outlines lesson plans for teachers to use in their classrooms with a view to encouraging young women to expand their career horizons. We are particularly proud that parts of the video's story were developed by students and graduates of the creative communications course, a course eligible for our scholarships.

This summer, the directorate will again hire a STEP student to visit middle schools to talk to students about the importance of math, science and technology in their career possibilities.

In support of our government's commitment to double the number of apprentices by 2000-2001, the Women's Directorate is working with Manitoba Education and Training to develop Trade Up to Your Future, a program designed to promote greater participation of women in the trades. Targeted to begin in September, details will be announced in the near future.

We are continuing to support distance education services which link schools to libraries and universities to enhance their educational opportunities. We are expanding the First Year Distance Education Program, which is soon to be renamed, to enable students to do their first and second year of university in their home communities. It will also be expanded into more communities and will in the future include full degree capabilities.

The classroom's link to the network will serve as a community resource for video

conferencing, labour force training and community development. This will provide excellent opportunities for women in northern and remote communities to access information and training.

* (1730)

We are also developing a number of Web-based courses for delivery through the Internet. The first of these courses, Senior 3 or Grade 11 applied math, will be online to pilot sites in September, 1999, another important opportunity for women to upgrade their academic qualifications when they may not have access to or the time to attend regular classroom instruction.

The Computers for Schools Program will place more than 3,000 computers in classrooms, libraries and literacy centres across Manitoba. This will enable rural and northern areas to access up-to-the-minute educational and training programs. The Manitoba Learning Tax Credit provides a 7 percent tax credit, to a maximum of \$700 per student, to assist students and/or their families to finance higher education costs.

In 1997-98, we established a \$1-million fund to match \$1 to every \$2 raised by universities and colleges for a scholarship and bursary fund. This year, the program will be increased to \$5 million, extended for five years and will match, dollar for dollar, donations made by private industries and/or individuals. Part-time students will now be able to claim childcare expenses and more of their education costs, as well as their interest on student loans, to obtain new income tax benefits. This is a particularly significant benefit for women with children who have often had to take a reduced course load. In addition, we have moved to address the issue of student loan repayment schedules through the interest relief and debt reduction program. This will help ease the debt load which, for women, is often difficult, particularly if they have the sole responsibility of children.

We are very pleased to be working in cooperation with the federal government on the Partners for Careers initiative to help place aboriginal high school, college and university graduates in positions in the private and public

sectors. These graduates are providing important role models for today's aboriginal youth and open the doors to long-term employment opportunities. Fifty-two percent of the approximately 1,000 participants have now been successfully placed in meaningful jobs, and 57 percent of these candidates are women.

In addition, the aboriginal public administration program will recruit and introduce aboriginal participants to the processes of government, leading to employment opportunities. We are developing an Aboriginal Education Strategy to improve graduation rates from both high school and post-secondary institutions.

Healthy lifestyle choices for youth: Take the Challenge is an umbrella program that addresses health, wellness and lifestyle issues affecting today's young women. It focuses on healthy choices and positive lifestyles for young women and encourages them to stay physically active, develop healthy eating habits, stay in school and make strategic educational choices for themselves that will in turn lead to their economic independence and a brighter future. The Training for Tomorrow's scholarship awards, the Training for Tomorrow role model video and curriculum guide and Trade Up to Your Future are all part of this program.

Also, under the umbrella of Take the Challenge is On the Move, carried out in partnership with Recreation & Wellness Promotion Branch of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. It is designed to encourage nonactive teenage girls to embrace active living by participating in fun-filled support of recreational activity.

In the spring of 1999, two On the Move pilots were started at the Wolseley Family Place, a community outreach agency for young single mothers. The Manitoba Fitness Council has partnered with the directorate to bring On the Move to the Adolescent Parent Centre of Winnipeg. We are thrilled that the school for young moms sees the value of a physical component in their curriculum. They will give participants a regular high school credit for On the Move activities.

Recently, the directorate formed a partnership with CAAWS, the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport, to fund five demonstration projects around the province. In addition, the partnership will fund another initiative along with Recreation & Wellness Promotion Branch titled Take the Challenge, Speak Up. Through Speak Up, we will raise awareness by recruiting ambassadors to carry the message of the importance of recreation and physical activity for girls and to address the barriers to participation that girls face.

A workshop training session is scheduled for June where approximately 30 women, community and professional leaders, will be invited to attend. Afterward, these women will become ambassadors of this initiative and will agree to speak to this important issue within their own communities and professional network. This \$15,000 undertaking will kickstart an enhanced outreach effort to young Manitoba women.

The directorate is excited about another initiative of Take the Challenge that will bring it summer step students to Manitoba middle schools. Discussions will be held with girls between the ages of 10 and 15 about their views on physical activity and what motivates them in addition to the important benefits of being active. This initiative has received an overwhelming response from schools interested in booking our students, and we expect to reach approximately 600 girls.

The directorate has also served on several working group committees with the Children and Youth Secretariat in the development of their programming for children at risk. Our government recognizes the need to take action against teen pregnancy. For this reason, the Child and Youth Secretariat has been given the mandate to combat teen pregnancy and to work with youth at risk. A number of approaches will be taken to deal with this complex problem of teenage pregnancy, including Healthy Choices, pregnant teens returning to or remaining in school, adoption as a healthy lifestyle choice and preventing additional pregnancies by linking to community supports.

The Youville Clinic nurse resource centre is the first of several sites to deliver services to pregnant adolescents. Public health nurses will work directly with pregnant young teens and provide referrals to other supports in a one-stop approach to providing services to young girls. Two aboriginal youth councils will be established to develop culturally appropriate strategies to reduce adolescent pregnancies.

The Ma-mow-we-tak Friendship Centre in Thompson will administer northern youth councils and work to identify ways to reduce the incidence of teen pregnancy. The Baby Think It Over program, in co-operation with Manitoba home economists association will receive funding to purchase 35 more dolls for a total of 60 now in circulation. In addition, the Department of Education and Training has recently announced funding for the Manitoba Association of School Trustees to work with youth to develop concepts for a multimedia educational campaign that will include videos, public service announcements and Internet web pages. The emphasis will be on teens talking to teens about adolescent pregnancy.

The Children and Youth Secretariat is co-ordinating the implementation of the Children First strategy which addresses the need to provide supports early in a child's life. It will provide better co-ordination of services for children and youth to prevent at-risk situations such as teen pregnancy.

EarlyStart programs will work to ensure children are prepared to learn when they start school. BabyFirst programs will help infants receive the care and stimulation they need to grow and thrive.

In child care, our government has demonstrated its commitment to providing affordable, accessible child care for Manitoba families through its mandate. When we took office, the annual budget for child care was \$27.3 million. This year's budget increase to child care is over \$5.3 million for a total estimated expenditure of almost \$53.7 million. This funding will provide 500 additional subsidized spaces, grant funding for an additional 385 licensed spaces outside of

Winnipeg, and an additional 400 spaces for extended-hour child care.

Operating grants for infant and preschool spaces will be increased by 15 percent and 10 percent, respectively. Grant funding will be provided to approximately 1,600 expansion and nursery school spaces. Grant funding for family daycare and nursery school spaces will be increased by 2 percent. An additional \$1 million will be provided to the Children With Disabilities Program. As recommended by the Child Care Regulatory Review Committee, the 1999-2000 budget provides resources to move towards a unit-funding model for funded child care centres. This model ensures that funding takes into account the staffing levels required by regulation, as well as the need to improve salary levels for early childhood educators. To provide new child care facilities, the Public Schools Finance Board will consider funding capital costs for child care facilities when a school is constructed, replaced or undergoing major renovations.

In the area of violence, Manitoba is acknowledged by jurisdictions across the country as having the most comprehensive approach for addressing violence against women: crisis intervention, services to the victim, follow-up and after care, as well as prevention and deterrent strategies and programs for abusers. Our rapid response to the report of the Lavoie inquiry demonstrates our ongoing commitment to working toward the goal of eliminating violence against women.

* (1740)

Over the last two years, the commitment to implementing the Lavoie Inquiry Action Plan has amounted to \$2.8 million. Of the 91 recommendations in the Schulman report, 73 are directed toward the provincial government. Virtually all of these recommendations have been or are being implemented. Some of the key recommendations include: double the staff of the Women's Advocacy Program; double the staff of the Crown Attorney's Family Violence Unit to 11 prosecutors in Winnipeg and one in Brandon; the near completion of a comprehensive computer system to provide Corrections with ready access to police records,

Crown files, court documents and other information necessary to ensure the proper treatment of domestic violence offenders. The automated province-wide Corrections Offender Management Systems, or COMS, will be fully networked to each correctional facility and community Corrections office to aid the programming, monitoring and data gathering regarding offenders.

A public awareness campaign on domestic violence ran in early November to increase awareness of the type of behaviour that constitutes domestic abuse and how people can help families caught in the cycle of violence. November will now be designated Domestic Violence Prevention Month in Manitoba.

In June 1998 Manitoba passed The Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation and Consequential Amendments Act, the strongest civil remedies in Canada for victims of domestic violence and stalking. The legislation reflects the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission's report on stalking and was developed with input from the Lavoie Implementation Committee. The legislation proposes a range of civil remedies in four classes according to their purpose: protective, preventative, compensatory and punitive. To enhance safety in our communities, our government has increased funding to Citizens on Patrol throughout Manitoba. The Take Back the Streets Initiative will create neighbourhood renewal committees to lead the way in finding solutions to local problems. The Women's Directorate will also continue to present its highly successful Keeping Safe at Work Program.

Mr. Chair, I would like to table, for the committee, several brochures of Keeping Safe at Work.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Mrs. Vodrey: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Launched in September 1996, this initiative focuses on the safety of those who work or travel to and from work alone and provides tips on awareness of potentially threatening situations.

It assists employers and employees in planning responses to such situations, provides a booklet containing valuable safety tips, such as a business safety check list for employers and employees, a poster to call attention to the issue, and information sessions. Sessions are offered onsite at workplaces and at CIBC's Employment Development Centre by the directorate and CIBC staff.

We have undertaken a number of initiatives to meet the needs of Manitoba women in our health care system. Manitoba Health will see a 10.1 percent increase in spending for the 1999-2000 fiscal year, for a total budget of \$194 million. Women will see reduced waiting times and increased availability for tests such as mammograms, bone density tests and MRIs, with \$29 million to be spent to cut waiting lists for these diagnostic procedures. The funding will provide specialized equipment throughout the province to make our system one of the best in Canada.

Our other initiatives will include the establishment of primary health care centres with nurses, dieticians, mental health workers, physiotherapists and physicians delivering care in one location. This is a particularly valuable service for women who will be able to access all the services that they require at one site.

Home care services funding will be augmented by \$20.5 million and will include home care, companion care, personal care home services, community and mental health services. Palliative care services and support for families will receive \$3 million to enhance support for families and provide the option for palliative care at home.

Funding to each northern and rural regional health authority will enable them to hire a palliative care resource person, and over the next two years we will put into place a 24-hour response team at St. Boniface Hospital. We will provide \$7 million to encourage former nurses to re-enter their profession and to upgrade their qualifications; \$55.5 million for medical services, anesthesiology, orthopedic surgery, cardiac care, obstetrics, intensive care and physician resources; \$1 million to hire Manitoba's first 20 midwives to provide midwife

care for Manitoba women. It is anticipated that, by the end of 1999, the College of Midwives will be proclaimed as the profession's regulatory body and that 20 midwives will be qualified to practise in Manitoba. All of these initiatives are vitally important to women as users of the system, caretakers for their family and workers in the system.

The Women's Directorate has a number of new initiatives underway, initiatives that will support Manitoba women in developing their potential contributions to their own families' well-being. To meet its mandate to support women's equal participation in society and the workplace, the directorate has developed a tool for gender analysis to be used by service delivery departments and other accountability centres. This will enable government to assess the impact on women of proposed programs and policies to determine if the impact is different for women than it is for men. A pilot training session will be held on June 23 for key departmental staff.

The directorate is working on Opening Doors, a guide to government services and programs available to women and their families. To help northern women establish home-based businesses, the directorate is working with the Native Affairs Secretariat and the Communities Economic Development Fund to facilitate micro-lending and establish a credit circle project. The directorate continues to provide an outreach service to the women of Manitoba through its representatives based in the communities. Through its 1-800 line, the directorate provides referral services to Manitoba women who are looking for information related to government services and programs.

Twice yearly, the directorate publishes its About Women newsletter, which highlights successful Manitoba women, provides information on government programs and news on directorate activities. Mr. Chair, I would like to table the latest copy of About Women.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Mrs. Vodrey: I am pleased that the directorate through its alliances with community groups,

business enterprises and other government departments, has been able to provide a variety of services to Manitoba women.

Mr. Chair, the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council is an arm's-length advisory body to government on issues of concern to women and their families. The council's role is to enhance the status of women by promoting women's equal participation in society. The council addresses these equality issues by working to effect meaningful change in economic, legal and social structures. In appointing members to council, the government endeavours to ensure membership that truly reflects Manitoba's unique population base, while maintaining appropriate urban and rural representation. Sandra Hasenack is the chairperson of the Advisory Council. There are 14 council members who represent women of all ages and backgrounds.

To enhance the status of women, council is focusing its effort on four areas: serving as a provincial resource by sharing information on events, resources and programs of interest to women; better educating the community on research and issues that affect the formation of public policy; providing recommendations for policy that can be implemented by government to approve the status of women; and acting as a facilitator in building effective and collaborative partnerships among women, community organizations and government departments.

As an information resource, council provided the following services to the community in the last fiscal year: one-stop library resource with Internet access for the public; Did you Know? information and a list of community events through a weekly fax and e-mail to cover over 140 individuals and organizations. I would just like to table the latest copy of that.

Provision of a resource guide called Parenting on your Own to over 12,000 single parents and to those who work with them. I would like to table copies of Parenting on your Own.

Administrative support to individuals and nonprofit women's organizations at no cost to use computers and do faxing, photocopying and

mailing out of their documents and upcoming events to the community; expertise in consultation, as well as participation on planning committees for community-driven events; the provision of sponsorships to individuals of low income to attend informational sessions and community events of interest to women. For example, council sponsored 12 low-income seniors to the Seniors Living Well Workshop.

To better educate the public on issues and research development that affect the formation of public policy, council last year provided lunch-and-learn sessions on topics of interest to women. This is a list of the topics: elder abuse and safety, john school, prostitution diversion program, increasing involvement of girls in gang activities, BabyFirst program, Healthy Start program, restorative justice model, women's heart health, fetal alcohol syndrome/effect, mail and phone scams.

Community-based information workshops were: day-long Seniors Living Well Workshop and a wellness day at Portage Correctional Institution for women. Council provided information and made recommendations to government on a variety of issues identified by the community as areas of concern. This was accomplished by giving voice to women's concerns and focusing on community liaison and outreach to Manitoba women. As a result, council's priority issues are: teen pregnancy, child care, domestic violence, women's health and wellness.

* (1750)

Council's work has also focused on the following: consultation with rural women, pornography on the Internet, women's education and training needs, elder abuse, single parenting, crime prevention, public policy, women who experience multiple disadvantages, women in the justice system and the justice system, human rights, beyond Beijing, an aboriginal urban strategy. Council also facilitated the building of effective and collaborative partnerships among women, community groups and government by liaising with over 375 individuals and organizations; outreach to all seven regions of our province over the last three years, attending over 60 community events, workshops and

partnerships; participating on several multi-disciplinary steering committees and public awareness campaign; maintaining a mailing list of over 2,000 individuals and organizations and sharing best practices and information on issues of common concern with provincial territorial coalition of women's advisory councils.

Council has undertaken a number of groundbreaking initiatives, some of which have become annual events. A first-time Seniors Living Well Information Workshop, in partnership with Age and Opportunity, army, navy, air force veterans, Unit 1, and the Seniors Directorate; the third annual sunrise breakfast to mark the anniversary date of the Montreal massacre; a second annual wellness day at Portage Correctional Institution for women in partnership with the Child and Youth Secretariat; Street Connections in Winnipeg Parks and Recreation; the planning and implementation of the Victims First emergency program enhance the short-term safety of high-risk domestic abuse and stalking victims.

In collaboration with government departments, community members, and service providers in nonprofit organizations, council has worked on the following: policy development and community awareness regarding sexually exploited children, a public awareness campaign on domestic violence, identification of gaps in service to the victims of domestic violence, tracking the impact of health reform on women's health, a public awareness campaign on teen pregnancy, a child care regulatory review process, the development of the aboriginal women's directorate of the Manitoba Assembly of Chiefs, the planning of an international women's conference and policy development on harassment and abuse in sport.

To recognize the contributions that Manitobans, particularly women, have made to their community, council has undertaken to successfully nominate some exemplary citizens for a number of prestigious awards: two Manitoba Justice Crime Prevention Awards, the YM/YWCA Women of Distinction Award, the Premier's Volunteer Service Award, the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Person's Case and the Citizens Hall of Fame.

In the future, council will continue to work with the community on issues of concern to women and their families by providing informational sessions and events of interest to women, one-stop library resource, an Internet access to the public, support services to individuals and nonprofit women's organizations, information and referral services to women, accessing council's office for assistance, consultation expertise and participation on planning committees for community events of interest to women, a weekly fax, an e-mail list of informational and upcoming events to women's organizations and the interested community.

In conclusion, council is looking forward to another productive year working on behalf of the women of Manitoba by advising government on issues of concern to women and participating in the women's community. Council will continue to play a pivotal role in the advancement of women's equality. Mr. Chair, members of the committee, I am very proud of the work of both the Women's Directorate and the Women's Advisory Council. They have worked effectively to bring information to Manitoba women and to inform government on issues of concern to women. I know that both organizations will continue to work toward the goal of ensuring for Manitoba women equal opportunities and equal participation on all aspects of our society.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable Minister for those opening remarks. Would the honourable member for Osborne wish to start her opening statement today?

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Mr. Chair, I do not have an opening statement, but perhaps I could take this opportunity to ask the minister if we could follow our usual procedure in these Estimates and do some general questioning as opposed to the line-by-line method.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, I would like to ask the committee if it is the will of the committee to do a far-ranging bit of questioning as we did last year.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, that is fine with me. I think that is sometimes quite helpful.

Mr. Chairperson: Agreed? [agreed] We now would ask the staff to join us at the table and the honourable minister will have the opportunity to introduce her staff present.

We are on page 142 of the Estimates book, 22.1 Status of Women (a) Manitoba Women's Advisory Council (1) Salaries and Employees Benefits \$175,800.

The honourable minister, to introduce her staff.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, I would like to take an opportunity to introduce the staff. I would like to introduce Sandra Hasenack who is the chairperson of the Women's Advisory Council and Sue Barnsley who is the executive director. I would like to introduce Theresa Harvey who is now ADM of the Women's Directorate, and I would like to introduce Ruth Mitchell who is the director of policy.

Ms. McGifford: Perhaps I could begin by asking the minister some questions that grew out of her opening statement. The minister talked about the Power Up program, and I wondered if I might ask some questions about it. I have read about the program before, and I am interested in how women find out about this program.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, as the member knows, we made a public announcement, issued a press release on International Women's Day. That has been picked up by media around the province who have been putting articles in their local newspaper. So we have planned and had intended from the beginning to actually do more advertising. At the moment, the program has been extremely well received by what the media has seen as public interest and printed.

Ms. McGifford: I am wondering where the program is delivered and who the instructors are.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, in Winnipeg, the program is actually being run by Employment Projects for Women, and it is taking place in schools and also at their centre and the Taking Charge! lab. Employment Projects for Women Inc. are, in fact, hiring the instructors.

In the rural area, it is taking place at community centres, storefront education centres and the directorate is in charge of the instructors.

Ms. McGifford: I am wondering how many women are in enrolled in the program, whether any women have graduated from the program yet, and if there is any cap on the number of women who will be accepted into this program, if there is any time line when the program might end. Well, perhaps, we should leave it right there.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Chair, it is a two-year commitment. There are four pilots in the city of Winnipeg. Courses are set to begin in rural Manitoba. There are 1,100 women currently registered.

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

HEALTH

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): The committee will come to order. We have before us the Estimates of the Department of Health. Would the staff please enter the Chamber at this time.

We are on Resolution 21.2.(f) Human Resource Planning and Labour Relations on page 84.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Chairperson, to continue on where I had left off on Thursday with respect to the issue involving the redeployment or hiring of LPNs at the hospitals, I had referenced that LPNs in my community had contacted me, ones in particular that had their services terminated at St. Boniface Hospital in particular. I had asked with respect to the redeployment whether or not the individuals would be given hiring preference should they make application to that particular hospital. The minister skated around the question. At that time we were near the end of our time and he did not give us a direct answer.

I would like to ask the question again about whether or not through the Winnipeg Hospital Authority or through the minister's office if there has been some guidance or some policy provided whether or not the LPNs that have been laid off earlier this decade as a result of the government's restructuring of health care, would be given first preference in hiring back into those particular

facilities for which they had once worked. I am wondering if the minister would provide us with some guidance and some information or background on that hiring practice, since they have announced that they are going to be rehiring LPNs back into the health system.

* (1550)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Mr. Chairman, I did not think I skated around this issue last Thursday. I thought I answered, if I recall correctly, but I will answer it again. We did run out of time.

First of all, in terms of the issues of the individual facilities. Obviously, the individual facilities hire the nurses that they require. Having said that, we believe that in our hospital system, our personal care home system, our home care system, to various degrees, there are needs for LPNs in all of those systems, and there are roles to play for LPNs in all of those systems. But, in terms of an LPN, as the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) describes, or a person who is an LPN who left the system in the early '90s who wants to come back into employment, what that person can do is they can certainly contact our nurse recruitment and retention committee, and things like retraining, recertification and so on can and will qualify for support from that fund, from that committee, so that contact could be made. Then, when the person comes back into the system, there definitely is a need for LPNs to come back into the health care system.

As I said to the member on Thursday, I will have to check the current status at St. Boniface, but if this individual who is an LPN who left health care in the early '90s is very interested in coming back into health care, they can be supported for retraining or recertification. There is definitely a need for them in the system. There is definitely a job for them in the system, and I will follow up in terms of what the situation is at St. Boniface. So, if the member for Transcona does have some individuals that he has made contact with, I would encourage him to either give us their names or to put them in contact with Sue Hicks, the associate deputy minister of Health, and look at what kinds of

things can be done to encourage them to come back into the health care system.

Mr. Reid: When I had raised this case last week, I had referenced a woman in my community who is an LPN working now part time outside of the city of Winnipeg, trying to make ends meet. She is a single parent. It has been very difficult for her since the government terminated the LPNs in this province. She was unable, because of the situation of being a single parent, for her to interrupt her income to go out and seek the retraining at that time when you cut the LPNs, at the time to seek that retraining that would allow her to upgrade to an R.N.

In the situation you are describing here now, it looks as if you are asking for the LPNs again to interrupt their income. In the situation of a single parent, it makes it somewhat difficult, the way my constituent describes it to me. I am wondering if there are some provisions in there that would allow for the individual to be redeployed or hired back into the St. Boniface Hospital in this case—I can provide you with the name of that individual—and whether or not there would be some allowance to have some training ongoing while they are employed, should they be hired back into the hospital, to allow some training to take place while they are working at the hospital to make sure that there is no loss of income as a result of the retraining.

I know you say you have \$7 million in your recruitment and retention, but I am not sure that it goes far enough to help. From my understanding of the program, I am not sure it goes far enough to help my particular constituent who is an LPN and is also a single parent. So, if you can describe for me how the policy works, how we can help this individual, I will get the individual to contact the department, or I will provide the name, and if we can give some assurance that the people who were formerly employed as LPNs within those particular facilities, such as St. Boniface, would have some opportunity to have some preference to be hiring back into there. They have a history of that facility. They know it inside and out and its functionings, and I would expect that there would be an employment history that would be favourable to rehiring of those people. I am

wondering if the minister could give some commitment in that regard.

* (1600)

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I think, maybe to put things in perspective in terms of decisions that were being made in the early '90s as a result of decisions being made relative to the educational requirements of nurses, decisions being made by individual employers about the types of nursing support they require and so on. The result of that today is there is approximately 120 individuals with LPN training skills that are out of the health care system and have to be tracked down in terms of seeing whether or not they want to come back into the system. So that is the magnitude of the numbers of individuals that we are aware that left the system in the early '90s that if they are employed right now, it would be outside of the government health care system.

So that is potentially a pool to go after to some extent to bring back into the system, depending where those individuals have ended up today. In terms of the individual that the member for Transcona describes, again, there is a need for LPNs right here in the city of Winnipeg. So if the member would provide Sue Hicks with this person's name, contact could be made with the person to work towards employment opportunities here in Winnipeg. If that individual needed some upgrading and training adjustments to fill a particular position, that would be looked at through this nurse recruitment and retention fund we have described, the \$7-million fund. Ms. Hicks would be able to discuss with the individual what facilities are currently looking for LPNs and/or what future opportunities there might be.

For that individual, if they are looking to come back into Winnipeg, there are jobs in Winnipeg. If there are skills adjustments that are required, there is an opportunity to potentially do something in that area. Whether or not it ends up being at St. Boniface would remain to be seen in terms of looking at what facilities currently require LPNs today and which ones might be requiring LPNs in the short term.

Mr. Reid: The part of the question that the minister did not address was dealing with

income continuity. We wanted to make sure that there was no interruption, because the individual is a single parent. One of the problems going back to the early '90s when the LPNs were phased out was that she could not afford to have interruption of her income to do retraining to become an R.N. or a B.N. This I would expect to be the similar situation. At least that is what she has expressed to me. I am wondering: is there some way that we can facilitate having this person work and maintain an income while at the same time perhaps, if required, upgrading the skills while employed?

Mr. Stefanson: That is an issue that the committee is looking at for the very reasons we are discussing here, whether it is somebody already in the system or even somebody coming back into the system who might have gotten a different type of job outside of health care and wants to come back in. The issue of income continuity is certainly an important one for individuals. That is one of the many issues that committee is in the process of reviewing.

As I think I mentioned to the member on Thursday, the committee has six people on it. They are all nurses. Two of them are appointed by the Manitoba Nurses' Union, two of them are appointed by the employers, and two of them are appointed by government directly, of which Sue Hicks is one of the government appointees. Those six individuals will obviously provide further advice on all of the criteria that should be in place to keep nurses in our health care system and to bring more nurses back into our health care system. Again, that is why I think it would be very worthwhile for this individual to be brought in contact with that committee and a thorough analysis done of what could be done to keep her in the health care system and, if she wants to be doing that here in the city of Winnipeg, to help make that happen.

Mr. Reid: Well, I very much want my constituent to remain in the nursing profession. I do not want to see her drop out. I mean, we already have a shortage of nurses in this province. Can the minister advise when we might expect to see some decision? When would be the timetable that you would have in mind that you would expect some decision with respect to these criteria? Is it even on the agenda

for this working group or this advisory body that you currently have in place? When might we expect a decision with respect to the questions that I have posed to the minister here?

Mr. Stefanson: Well, I share that concern and I have certainly been pushing the department and the committee to be acting immediately on all of those issues in terms of the criteria and the process, and so on. That is why, even though they are still concluding all of the criteria, there are still things that can start to be done on an individual basis. So it is still important to bring people in contact with the committee, which has been happening to date.

They are working on concluding the overall criteria. I would hope they will be in a position to be able to outline those in more detail fairly shortly. We outlined some of the preliminary ones when we announced the committee. One of the very slight delays was that the Manitoba Nurses' Union wanted to wait until the collective bargaining was over before they confirmed their appointments and their participation, which they ultimately did after the collective agreement was ratified by 75 percent of the nurses. So the two appointees from the Nurses' Union are Irene Giesbrecht and Maureen Hancharyk.

So I guess two things, I continue to press on the very point that the more detailed criteria we can put out there the easier it makes for everybody to understand whether or not it is something that they can be pursuing. Having said that, if anybody is the slightest bit interested in any of this, any nurse currently in the system or looking to come back into the system, the best thing they can do is to be brought in contact with the committee because the overall mandate of the committee is to address the whole issue of retention and recruitment. Again, I would just encourage the member if he can either provide us a name or, vice versa, have the individual make contact, then we should do that as soon as possible.

* (1610)

Mr. Reid: Well, I do not know if the minister has provided this information or not, but I am going to ask the question anyway and he can advise. The criteria that your committee, or your

advisory body, are using for consideration, can you provide a list of that information or those criteria for me, please?

Mr. Edward Helwer, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, well, I will do a couple of things. I will certainly provide the information that was released when the announcement was first made, and as soon as there is some more detailed criteria available, I will provide those to the member as well.

I think it is important to remember, as we discussed before, that this fund has a few purposes. A very important part of the fund is to retain nurses currently in the system, nurses in our province who maybe left the system and, of course, an opportunity to bring nurses back to Manitoba. So what I will do is I will provide that information we have made available just to give some of the general areas when the fund was first established and announced, and I will be able to provide some more detailed criteria to the member shortly.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Chair, I did have a few questions I was wanting to ask in regard to the nursing profession. One of the areas in which I have debated and asked questions in the past was in regard to the whole issue of nurse practitioners. Can the minister give any sort of indication to what degree today the province of Manitoba uses nurse practitioners?

Mr. Stefanson: I am really looking for a little clarification from the member whether or not he is talking about the advanced practice nursing program being run out of the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Manitoba or whether he is asking the more general question about the expanded role of nurses in our health care system.

If it is the expanded role today, I think, as he knows, we currently have, I believe, two nurse resource centres functioning, the Youville Clinic here in Winnipeg and the clinic in Thompson. We also have the expanded role of nurses at the nursing stations in terms of our on-reserve nursing stations. Even in our acute care, cardiac

as an example, we have an expanded role of nurses. So I could return with some details of examples where nurses have what we call an expanded role in our health care system today. If you want details on the advanced practice nursing program, which, I am told, is basically a relatively new program, just started last year, I could return with information on that program: the number of students in the program, the objective of the program, and so on.

So there are really the two issues: the expanded role of nurses in our health care system today, and then this issue of the advanced practice nursing program at the University of Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: The advanced nursing and what is happening in that area definitely do interest me. I think that the public perceives, and I think reality dictates, that we need to look at having the nursing profession in certain areas expanded; that they can in fact play a more significant role than they are already playing, which is most significant. I argue it is the backbone of our health care system.

In northern Manitoba, I had a discussion with an individual constituent who was talking about the difference between nurses in northern Manitoba and—I guess there was a nursing station in which they do many things which a doctor could actually do in Winnipeg. Now, I did not get any of the specific details. In the past, I have posed in Question Period, in health care Estimates, the need for us to look at the nursing physician, for lack of a better word, and I understand stateside that there is a certifying body, for example. It is more so to see movement. Is the government or is our health care in the province of Manitoba moving towards that classification of a nurse practitioner, where they would get some sort of a certification where they might be able to prescribe medicines, for example? To what degree is the government or the regional health authorities or whoever is taking the responsibility with respect to this particular issue moving forward?

What do they see happening over the next 10 years in that area? Ten years from now, can we expect, for example, to see nurse practitioners in our community health clinics so

that if someone scratches a knee, they can actually go there and a nurse practitioner looks at it and deals with it as opposed to the child who fell off the bike having to go to a medical doctor given in certain areas there is huge shortage and so forth? Is that something that the government sees on the horizon, and what sort of a time frame would you put that in?

Mr. Stefanson: The short answer to the member's question is yes, that what he outlined is exactly what we see happening. In fact, we will be introducing amendments very shortly to The Registered Nurses Act and some of those amendments deal with the whole issue of advanced practice nurses that we talked about, the change in the educational program. So part of the changes that he will see in the act then will be the expanded role of these advanced practice nurses in our health care system along the lines that you have basically described relative to the services they provide, relative to the prescribing of some medication, being key players, participants in areas like our community health clinics, nurse resource centres and so on.

Basically the expanded role that the member has outlined is exactly what we see happening, and a great deal of that will be taking place as a result of the educational changes that are already in place and the amendments that are being put in place in this session through the amendments to The Registered Nurses Act.

* (1620)

Mr. Lamoureux: It pleases me to hear, albeit somewhat late, but the government is moving in a direction of recognizing some of the value of enhancing some of our skills that nurses have that will allow them to play even a more stronger role in providing health care services. In '98, I actually had a survey. One of the questions that I had posed on it was: should the role of health care nurses be expanded to include treating minor injuries?

I represent somewhere in the neighbourhood of about 7,500 households. Out of that I had in this particular questionnaire about 650 households participate in a fairly extensive survey. I think it is fairly representative of what constituents think. It was nice to see that 75

percent felt that, yes, this is a direction that we need to move towards. It is encouraging that the department is doing that.

The question I would put is: does the government have a committee? Is it an individual? Who is ultimately taking charge of ensuring that what we are talking about does in fact get implemented?

Mr. Stefanson: First of all, in terms of the implementation of the legislation, it will be within the Department of Health, divisions within Health, the policy and the primary care divisions after extensive consultation with certainly nurses. In terms of the implementation, which is the more important, the change in the role and the going forward, it will really be a combination of the employers themselves and MARN, the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses. MARN will also play a role in terms of the education and the information out to their members. Everything I have seen of this change and these initiatives, they are well received and well supported. I think everybody is anxious to start to implement them.

The department will be introducing the legislation. We will obviously have a role to play. We mean the department in terms of the ultimate implementation, but it will primarily be driven by MARN and by the employers.

Mr. Lamoureux: The legislation that the minister is referring to, is that something that is currently at work? Can we anticipate that we will see that legislation sometime in the next couple of weeks for first reading, second reading? Is it the government's intention to have the legislation if there is no election call, that we have the legislation before the election?

Mr. Stefanson: It is definitely our intention to introduce bills repealing and replacing really three nursing acts: The Registered Nurses Act, which is the one we have really been talking about here today in terms of the advanced practice of nurses; we are also introducing some amendments to The Licensed Practical Nurses Act and The Registered Psychiatric Nurses Act.

The department has had fairly extensive discussion with nurses affected by these three

acts. My understanding is that we have resolved all of the issues. We are doing work right now on finalizing all of the draft legislation. It is definitely our intention to introduce it this session. It is obviously my objective and responsibility to get it on the Order Paper as quickly as we can for obvious reasons in terms of giving members as much opportunity to be aware of what the changes are and, ultimately, have it working through our process. So I cannot give the member an absolute date today, but the department is working aggressively to have that ready to get on the Order Paper very shortly.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

* (1630)

Mr. Lamoureux: Can the minister indicate: is there some sort of a listing of the types of responsibilities that would then be followed with the legislation, either within the legislation or through regulation? Here, much as we have LPN, R.N., B.N., we now have nurse practitioner. In the nurse practitioner, here are the types of responsibilities, generally speaking, that they would be expected to do. If the minister does have today some sort of an idea of the demand for nurse practitioners, whether the minister can speculate on that particular point, or if they do not actually have a projected number, what could they anticipate that would be used within the system?

Mr. Stefanson: What I will do for the member is that I will provide him a summary of the competencies that these nurses will have as a result of going through the program and then relate that to examples of the kinds of enhanced services that they will be able to provide. He asked about their ability to prescribe certain types of medication, do stitching or sutures in certain situations, minor fractures and those kinds of things. So I will return to the member with examples of what those might be, recognizing at the end of the day there are also going to be really decisions made by employers as to how they utilize those nurses in the system and what kinds of responsibilities they give them. But I think that, if I give a listing of the competencies and some examples of services, it

will give the member a good sense of the expanded role of these nurses in the system.

Mr. Lamoureux: Finally, in regard to doctors, if I can just ask somewhat of a general question in regard to doctors. The minister, if he does not have the number, can actually get back to me at another stage. It is not important that I get the answer today. We have a number of doctors, I understand, that are on salaried positions but in a very limited way in the province of Manitoba. Is the government looking at increasing the number of salaried doctors? If so, to what degree would the government like to see doctors? I am looking in particular for the family doctors. Obviously, specialists would be probably a different story, at least in part, but do we have any indication in terms of what direction the government would like to see the whole issue of salaried doctors in terms of percentages on salary?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, it was interesting an article that appeared, I think, in one of today's papers—the member may have seen it—is talking about health care costs and talking about the quotes, one individual talked to him about fee for service and whether or not we should be looking at alternative ways to be compensating doctors.

An Honourable Member: Pure coincidence.

Mr. Stefanson: Is that pure coincidence? But we continue to look at all options in terms of compensating our doctors whether it be utilizing the fee for service, whether it be salaried, whether it be contract. I think the member knows I had a discussion with the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), I think during Estimates, about a model we tried with the Assiniboine Clinic here in Winnipeg, basically a block-funding model and so on. So we continue to look at various ways to compensate doctors, and we are certainly open to suggestions in that area.

We have had some preliminary discussions with the Manitoba Medical Association about that very issue saying that perhaps the time has come for all of us to start sitting down collectively and saying how we should be compensating our doctors today and to focus on

all aspects of health, from prevention to wellness to treatment and so on. So I welcome getting into that broader debate with the medical community, with others, in terms of how we compensate doctors.

So there is no specific plan to say we are going to shift from X fee for service to X number of salaried doctors. It is more continuing to look at what is the most appropriate means to compensate doctors in given situations in our province.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, I have some questions about the specific activities that are identified in the Supplementary Estimates book on page 47, where it says that the third activity is to develop financial information management systems as an important negotiation project and the development of a program specialty in family practitioners.

Can the minister outline for me what that is referring to?

Mr. Stefanson: Maybe I will ask a question first before I answer the question. We have staff that can help us with nursing questions. If you want to move on to doctors, we are prepared to do that, but maybe if there are some nursing questions first, if we could deal with them, I think that is appropriate.

* (1640)

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you for the clarification, to the minister. I will try to deal with the nursing-related questions, following which, I guess what we will have to do is deal with doctor-related questions when we next meet under this item, or perhaps we could defer doctor questions till we get to Section 4.

Perhaps then, maybe I will just clarify. What I had planned is—I am laughing at myself in terms of moving this along. Just thinking out loud, I am anticipating that we will continue on this item. I will do some nurse-related questions today and tomorrow, move through the Estimates tomorrow, and try to get to Section 4 for Wednesday-Thursday, which would mean regional health authorities, which would mean

Pharmacare, and presumably which would mean medical as well on Wednesday-Thursday.

Now, does that make sense from the perspective of the minister's department?

Mr. Stefanson: Yes, that does. That would work fine.

Mr. Chomiak: I really would have thought that the department would be undertaking a very aggressive nurse recruitment program at this point, particularly because there has been a contract settlement, particularly because there is a fund. I have read the Hansard with respect to nurse recruitment. I am aware of what the minister said with respect to advertising. I am wondering how aggressively the province is going to be pursuing a nurse recruitment program, which, I think, is necessary in the short term as well as in the medium and long term. But I think it is very necessary, if one looks at the numbers.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I agree with the member entirely on not only a nurse recruitment and retention campaign but an aggressive nurse recruitment and retention campaign focused on all of these areas. I do not think I will go back over all of them again. I think I have read some into the record about what the educational side is doing. We know that the LPN program is going to fill the 190 positions from 90 last year. The Faculty of Nursing is being very aggressive in concert with the employers. In fact, I was just told that the last graduating class that we have numbers on, the April Faculty of Nursing graduating class of 40 graduates, apparently 39 are staying in Manitoba. I think that is outstanding news. I believe there is another 80 graduating in July that we will know by August what their plans are. I know that the employers are making contact with all of them.

So whether it is utilizing our educational system using our \$7-million fund, working with organizations like the nursing organization, working with the employers, I agree a hundred percent that it has to be an aggressive campaign for a few reasons. We need the nurses here in Manitoba and it is also highly competitive out there, because as the member knows every province, certainly from Quebec west, needs

more nurses. So the nurse recruitment committee had to wait until the collective bargaining process was basically set aside and that has basically been done now. I think that committee will become much more aggressive in terms of starting to outline the criteria, outline what is available through them and so on. So I think the member will continue to see more and more focus through all of these means on retaining and recruitment nurses.

Mr. Chomiak: I am sure the minister will agree that probably the fundamental issue, which is a long-term issue that has to be resolved, is virtually most nurses are not telling their children to go into the nursing profession, and that is a complete reversal of what was the case 20 or 25 years ago, without getting into all of the reasons for that.

The minister has identified previously and we have identified the problem of full-time work. I would like to know, and I know the minister has alluded to it, what specific plans the government has for ensuring that recruitment is done on a full-time basis and is upgraded on that basis. Just let me work around that a little bit by saying there is a \$32-million plan to hire 650 nurses. Clearly that money or most of that money is going towards new positions. Clearly those should be, if it is possible, designated full time. There are issues relating to nurse retention and recruitment. I do not know if the \$7-million fund can be used to augment that, but clearly if the government were to be in a position where they could offer nurses full-time positions, that would be integral to any kind of recruitment campaign as well as a retention campaign. I am wondering what strategies are available. What strategies have been proposed and brought forward to deal with that specific issue?

Mr. Stefanson: Well, the good news is that there are more and more full-time positions and permanent positions. In fact, I am told this recent graduate, the April graduating class were basically all offered full-time positions. Some chose not to take them for personal reasons, but they were all offered full-time positions.

The key is really two issues. The member and I talked about it before. One is the issue of permanent position, which is an issue we have

had raised on many occasions, whether it is permanent, full time, or part time, and then the issue of full-time positions.

So I will certainly undertake to provide data on what has happened to date, showing that there are more permanent, there are more full-time positions in the system. What is happening now is the WHA, RHAs are working collectively and as employers, in the case of the WHA working with the employers to continue to create more permanent full-time positions. There are issues that need to be addressed. Some of the issues affect the collective bargaining that is already in place, the whole issue of the ability for individuals to be bumped within positions.

But what I will do is I will return and provide the member both with a summary of what has happened to date in terms of the growth in permanent and full-time positions and some of the elements of some of the issues that are being addressed to provide for more permanent and full-time positions in the health care system.

* (1650)

Mr. Chomiak: I am not sure if we asked this previously. I am not sure if we are going to be getting a list from the minister of the identified vacancies. Will we be getting a list of the identified vacancies? If not, is it possible to get a list of at least the, for lack of a better term, the most acutely required needs?

Mr. Stefanson: What we had agreed was to return with a breakdown of the 650 nurses required. The member will recall from our discussion, we said it really was created in two areas: in one case, vacancies that need to be filled and, in the other case, new initiatives that have recently been put in place. We were going to provide that on a breakdown by RHAs, I believe was what we said we could prepare. So we would show the vacancies by RHAs, including the WHA, obviously, and then similar information on the new initiative. So, if that is satisfactory, that will be provided very shortly.

Mr. Chomiak: Is the department still considering legislation of any kind that would establish some kind of patient-to-staff ratios in our facilities or in our system? Just by way of

background, I was under the impression that as a result of meetings that were taking place with various of the professional organizations that the former minister had proposed some kind of legislation or they were looking at some kind of legislation with respect to staff-to-patient ratios at facilities.

Mr. Stefanson: I would be curious really what additional information the member could provide me or whether he is referring to the issue—I am assuming we are talking about hospitals, first of all, and probably the rural facilities where there is a staffing guideline currently in place for our hospital facilities outside of Winnipeg that again the RHAs use as just that. They use that as a guideline and assess against that and provide us information on that and so on. So that currently takes place. There are staffing guidelines that could be provided to the member for facilities outside of Winnipeg. The RHAs do benchmark, do reviews against those, but really at the end of the day what the hospitals are doing are really looking at the levels of care that they need to provide, what services are they providing and so on.

I think, certainly discussions we have had with the RHAs is this whole issue about future funding and the possibility of shifting to more of a service-and-needs-based kind of an approach. That is similar to what we talked about with our personal care homes, to look at the services and the needs and basically a patient care criteria as opposed to staffing guidelines which really should just be exactly that, guidelines. It really should be the outcomes and the quality of care and the type of care that we should be focusing on as opposed to rigid guidelines that might not be the best mix to provide that quality of care. But we do have staffing guidelines outside of Winnipeg. I can certainly provide those. If that is what the member is asking about in terms of legislation, I would be curious if he could provide me some more information.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, have we now waived private members' hour?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, we have. Yes, we waived private members' hour prior to coming into committee, so we can go right on through.

* (1700)

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. Well, I think the minister has almost answered my question that there had been floated for a time from an idea that had been brought to my attention and then perhaps I misinterpreted of a potential for legislation to be brought forward dealing with that issue, but I take it from the minister's response that in fact that is not the case.

I want to deal with the issue that was raised a little bit earlier. On page 48 of the Supplementary Estimates books it indicates there is going to be development of legislation to permit nonphysician health care providers to provide medical services in selected health care areas. I assume that is nurse practitioners which I understand more information is forthcoming. But does that also include the issue of the physician assistants that had been brought forward by the College of Physicians and Surgeons?

Mr. Stefanson: Yes, the member is correct, only the position is going to be referred to as clinical assistants but the objective being similar to what the member has outlined. So the bill will make amendments and allow for the registration of clinical assistants. So it will focus on really both, the clinical assistants and the advanced practice nurse position.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I take it we will be seeing this legislation this session.

Mr. Stefanson: As far as I am concerned, absolutely. I do not see any reason that it should not be and will not be introduced. As I said earlier, it is being finalized in terms of its drafting. We have had some discussions with the nursing governing bodies directly impacted, and it is my intention to try and introduce it for first reading as soon as I can, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate what the status is of the nursing resource model?

Mr. Stefanson: I am assuming it is the nurse resource centres that the member is referring to. I think, as he knows, there are currently two up and running, one at the Youville Clinic here in

Winnipeg and one in Thompson. There are two more planned, one for the Parkland Region and one for the Norman Region. There currently is an evaluation ongoing in terms of the Youville project. I can certainly return with more details on the two projects that are currently functioning, Mr. Chairman. If the member would like some additional details on current staffing and functions, I can certainly provide that.

Mr. Chomiak: I do not think that is what I was necessarily referring to, but let me go to another question that might clarify it. The province set up a provincial nursing resource task force. Has that task force reported and can we have the results of that task force?

Mr. Stefanson: I am told we can expect a report from that task force fairly shortly. It is an ongoing committee that deals with vacancies, numbers of nurses and so on. They have actually been providing information to us as we have developed the nurse recruitment fund, the nursing strategy. They will certainly be a resource to the nurse recruitment and retention committee as well, but in terms of their actual report on vacancies and staffing within the nursing positions in Manitoba, I am told I will receive that report fairly shortly.

Mr. Chomiak: Is the minister saying that he is going to receive a report from the provincial nursing resource task force shortly which he will then table in the Legislature?

Mr. Stefanson: I would expect that I certainly would be prepared to table a copy in this House. I think the intention is that it will be a public document. It will be a resource document that we can all use to retain and recruit and attract nurses to our health care system in Manitoba. I do not know that it is a report that would normally meet the criteria of being tabled here, but whether I table one or make a copy available to the member for Kildonan, I am expecting that it will be a public document.

Mr. Chomiak: I know that these questions were alluded to by other members when the committee last met on Thursday regarding the model of nursing mix. I am wondering what the process is for the development of that model,

clearly whether it is different in different regions, and how we in this committee can get some understanding of what the nursing mix model is intended to look like in Manitoba.

* (1710)

Mr. Stefanson: I guess we did discuss this. If the member is looking for a rigid or a fixed model or a cookie-cutter model that you can say, this is exactly how a community hospital should look in terms of R.N.s, LPNs, psychiatric nurses, this is exactly how a personal care home should look, this is exactly how the Home Care program should look, that does not exist, because again I think the more important issue for all of those types of services is the nature of the services that have to be provided to meet the care requirements of the patients and individuals.

I can certainly provide examples of what fairly typical personal care homes would look like, what the Home Care program looks like, what a community hospital looks like, and so on, in terms of that staffing mix. I would undertake to provide that. I know the member has asked me on several occasions about the role of LPNs in particular as it relates to our acute care facilities. I have indicated to him in Question Period that we support a role for LPNs in our acute care facilities. We do that. We are working with the employers relative to that issue, making sure that that continues to take place.

Mr. Chomiak: I would appreciate if the minister could table an outline of what it looks like in terms of the ratios. The other part of my question is: does the government have plans for how it should look in the future?

Mr. Edward Helwer, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Stefanson: Basically our plan for, and I am probably being repetitive here, our acute care facilities and for our personal care home facilities and our Home Care program includes a balance of both R.N.s and LPNs but, again, within those it will vary within the hospital setting. That mix will vary from a tertiary hospital to a community hospital. It will even vary to a certain extent within community hospitals, depending on the programs, the

services they are providing, the needs they have. So we see a system that has both playing a role, the LPNs and the R.N.s. In terms of that exact mix that obviously takes place with the administration, with the management of the individual facilities to have the appropriate mix to meet the needs in terms of the care they are providing in that facility. It is not a matter of saying for this hospital, this is the ideal mix. It is more a matter of saying: what is the mix that they require to meet the services they are providing?

Mr. Chomiak: Of course, the other direction, there was a decision made with respect to mix several years ago that went one particular way. Is the minister saying that there is now a different direction with respect to mix? What is the government position with respect to mix?

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Chairman, as I have said in response to questions in Question Period, we see a mix in our acute care facilities of both R.N.s and LPNs. We obviously see a mix of both in our personal care homes and in our Home Care program. I had the opportunity to meet recently with the CEOs and the board chairs of the WHA and the hospitals here in Winnipeg and made that very clear to all of the individual facilities, that we see a mix and a role for both of those types of nurses in our acute care facilities, and we are working with them on their plans as they move forward filling their vacancies and meeting their needs in their facilities.

That is obviously part and parcel of the reasons that we have supported the changes to the educational program for LPNs, I believe from a 10-month program to a 14-month program. It is also one of the reasons that we support the expansion of the LPN program from an entrance of 90 students to 190 students this year. As well, I should not forget, obviously, that the registered psychiatric nurses have a significant role to play through our mental health initiatives, as well, Mr. Chairman.

So we see a combination of all of those nurses playing key roles in our health care system, and I have certainly communicated that very directly to the people who are responsible for administering our hospital facilities.

* (1720)

Mr. Chomiak: I actually got what I was asking for in the last sentence the minister said, when he indicated that he communicated to those individuals the government policy, because when the decision was different, the government line was that it was the hospitals and the institutions making the decisions, although the LPN classes were cut back, although the changes were allowed. So that was what I was looking for, a policy direction of sorts from the government.

I could pursue this further, but I want to go on to other questions. Does the government have a policy position with respect to the head nurse position in institutions? Is there a government policy decision with respect to the role and function of head nurses in institutions?

Mr. Stefanson: I apologize for the delay. I just wanted to conclude with the last bit of discussion about the LPNs and the member's reference to a policy on LPNs. As I said at the end of my last comments, I met with the WHA, met with the CEOs, the board chairs of all of the hospitals and told them very clearly that we see a role in our hospitals for both R.N.s and LPNs. Obviously, the individual decision as to the mix is still that of the employers, the hospitals. They know very clearly our view that we do see a role for both, and we want to see their mix and their plans as they continue to evolve and go forward to fill vacancies and develop the new program that they have and so on. It is not that we are saying unequivocally to a facility this has to be your mix, but based on the skills, the training, the education that the LPNs have in the needs in our hospital system, we believe that there is a role for them to play. We have communicated that very directly, verbally, to the Winnipeg hospitals.

* (1730)

Moving on to the question about policy on head nurses at institutions, I am certainly prepared to return with some more detailed information. I gather what has happened over time is that there really has been a change from the head nurse system to the nurse manager system where the nurse has responsibilities for

units in the health care facility. In many ways, what has happened is that nurse manager has had a broader scope, and it would not even necessarily always be a nurse but I gather more often than not, it is a nurse. If it is in occupational rehab as an example and some other area, it would not necessarily be a nurse. There has been a shift in nurse managers over a broadened management scope within the health care facilities, and obviously the system believes that that really has created probably better efficiencies and better overall use of human resources.

Mr. Chomiak: Having said that, can the minister give us any conclusive evidence or analysis of the shift in the system that would justify the continuance of the nurse manager position versus a return for example to a head nurse situation? The minister seemed to be fairly conclusive that this system is working better. Can he outline for us why he has reached that conclusion?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Stefanson: What I am told is this decision did a couple of things. It basically delayed the organization to a certain extent, led to an organizational structure that is more specialized, more focused, and by delaying it, it spreads out the functions and in some ways is more inclusive because you have the nurse managers, you still have a clinical nurse manager and so on. Now this system, I am told, has now been in place for at least a few years. What limited feedback I have had is positive. No organizations that I am aware of are requesting a change back to the previous structure or to a different structure. So the general feedback is that this structure works and it is fine. If somebody were to come to me and suggest there were problems in terms of efficiencies, problems in terms of morale with nurses and other health care providers, obviously I would look at the issue, but I am not aware that that is the case. I have no information suggesting that at all, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: I want to return just briefly to the minister's previous response with respect to providing the various health authorities with the government's position vis-a-vis the nurse mix,

LPNs and R.N.s. The minister said there was a role for the LPNs and the R.N.s in the acute care facilities. Has the minister also differentiated and made known the government position on the role of LPNs in tertiary care facilities, and what is that position?

* (1740)

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am surprised it took the member as long as it did to ask me that question. The tertiary hospitals were both represented and in attendance at the meeting that I referred to, and when I made my comments I did not differentiate between tertiary and other acute care facilities. My remarks were meant to be inclusive for all of them. I think they were accepted on that basis, and we are certainly encouraging the two tertiary hospitals to also be sure to utilize LPNs in their system.

At the end of the day, under our structure right now, it is their decision as to the complement of staff, but we do see—when I say we, we as a government see a role for the LPNs in our tertiary hospitals as well. We are encouraging both those facilities to look at utilizing LPNs, and we will continue to work with them as they fill their requirements.

Mr. Chomiak: I think I will try to get through a few more questions on nursing before the end of the day and then leave the nursing section, and then we can move—what I am hoping to do is do the great leap forward. I always do this in anticipation and it almost never seems to work out, but tomorrow I would like to jump through all the sections right up to Section 4, so we can come in on Wednesday and just move into Section 4.

So on nursing, related to nursing, is the government bringing in any legislation or proposed legislation with respect to nurses' aides?

Mr. Stefanson: I think the question was whether I was looking at bringing in legislation to deal with nurses' aides. Nurses' aides or health care aides are going to be affected by the legislative amendments to The Licensed Practical Nurses Act. We are looking at dealing with the issue of standards, education, and a roster for health care aides within the framework

of that act. As I said earlier, I am bringing forward amendments to The Registered Nurses Act, the registered psychiatric, and the LPN. It is under the LPN act that we are looking at health care aides or nurses' aides in terms of those issues, a roster, standards in education.

Mr. Chomiak: Who will be the governing body for the nurses' aides?

Mr. Stefanson: We will be bringing forward the amendments, but I probably should make it clear now that the LPN organization will not be a governing body. They will establish and set the standards, the education, and develop a roster. Really, for all intents and purposes, there will not be a governing body as such like I am sure the member is referring to in terms of other professional type organizations and so on. Ultimately, it will be the employer who will be responsible and accountable for looking at the employees as they hire them in terms of meeting the standards in education. That is certainly the intent at this particular point in time, that the LPN organization itself will not be and, I am also told, I do not believe wants to play that role. They are prepared to play the role in terms of the issues we have discussed but not a governing role.

Mr. Chomiak: Is the minister saying that as part of those proposed legislative changes there will be certain educational standards that will be required to be attained by nurses' aides prior to or in order to have employment?

Mr. Stefanson: That was a good question because, just to clarify, and we are speaking in advance of the legislation being tabled, but that is fine, that the legislation will set the standards for the educational program, so an employer or any individual looking at it will know what skills that individual is meant to be obtaining through their educational program. As well, it will keep a roster, so I guess I roll standards and education together, it will be the establishment of the standards for an educational program and the maintaining of a roster.

* (1750)

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that clarification, but that will then mean that a

nurse's aide will have to obtain the particular education in order to be employed or not.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, again, Mr. Chairman, I am told that to meet the standards of education, one will be able to do it in various ways, either through some educational courses that are and will be available. There will also be the opportunity, I am told, to obtain it or achieve it, in total or in part, through on-the-job training, so if it is not as though it will lead to an automatic educational program that says this is what you must do, there will be various ways to achieve the standards. I think that was answering the question.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I know it is difficult because we have not seen the legislation, but this is a relatively significant change unless I am misinterpreting what the minister said. It seems to me that we are going to a quasi-registered, you know, a quasi-registered health aide system or a hybrid or something like that. Is that correct, or what are we heading for? It strikes me, unless I am overemphasizing, it looks to me as a fairly significant change to the system.

Mr. Stefanson: I do not want to necessarily make more of this than is really the case based on the member's last comments. He is right. We do not have all of the details of all of the legislative amendments here, but I think it is still worthwhile to be discussing this but really the purpose is to set educational standards. Again, I may inappropriately have used the word "register" as opposed to using the word "roster," and really what the LPNs will maintain is a roster of individuals who have achieved those educational standards. Really what that will do, we believe and I think, this I am told and what feedback again I have had, has the support of the health care nurses' aides, health care aides, and attendants, and the LPN. It really will make it better for the whole system. It will obviously make it better for the employer in terms of knowing the standards that have been met, for those individuals to be able to say that they are

on a roster having achieved these certain standards, and obviously for the patient.

Having said all of that, there is nothing saying that everybody in the system has to be at that stage. There will still be opportunities for people in the health care system, and those will be decisions that employers make, but I am told this is being done with the support of nurses' aides, LPNs, and it really is the establishment of the educational standards and the maintaining of a roster, not a registry in the sense that we would normally think of a registry like other professional organizations.

Mr. Chomiak: When we last met in Estimates, the previous minister brought in officials from the USSC, WHA, and the Long Term Care association. Is the minister in agreement that he can bring in individuals from those organizations?

If that is the case, I am thinking of any kind of mix of that Wednesday and Thursday because it is difficult for those officials to attend. That is why I am looking toward Wednesday and Thursday in terms of giving advance notice to those officials. If, in fact, the minister is in agreement that he will bring those people in, then we can deal with questions on their bailiwicks in the area of Wednesday, Thursday.

Mr. Stefanson: Just because of time, Mr. Chairman, I will look into that issue. It is not normal practice. I will have a discussion with my staff. Can we talk about it tomorrow? I think we are in Estimates right after Question Period. I will report back to the member in Estimates tomorrow.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour now being six o'clock, committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 31, 1999

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