



Fifth Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature

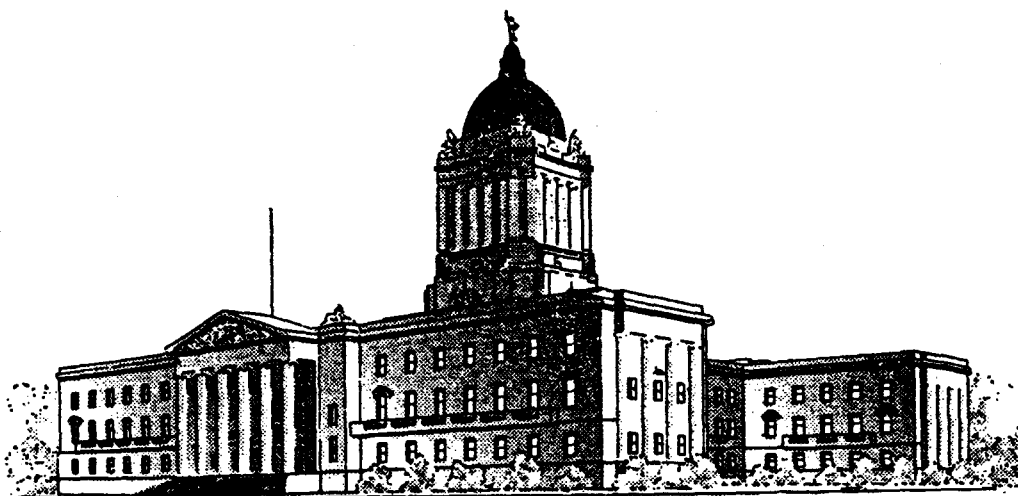
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(Hansard)

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The Honourable Denis C. Rocan
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

| NAME | CONSTITUENCY | PARTY |
|----------------------------|--------------------|---------|
| ASHTON, Steve | Thompson | NDP |
| BARRETT, Becky | Wellington | NDP |
| CARSTAIRS, Sharon | River Heights | Liberal |
| CERILLI, Marianne | Radisson | NDP |
| CHOMIAK, Dave | Kildonan | NDP |
| CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon. | Ste. Rose | PC |
| DACQUAY, Louise | Seine River | PC |
| DERKACH, Leonard, Hon. | Roblin-Russell | PC |
| DEWAR, Gregory | Selkirk | NDP |
| DOER, Gary | Concordia | NDP |
| DOWNEY, James, Hon. | Arthur-Virden | PC |
| DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon. | Steinbach | PC |
| DUCHARME, Gerry, Hon. | Riel | PC |
| EDWARDS, Paul | St. James | Liberal |
| ENNS, Harry, Hon. | Lakeside | PC |
| ERNST, Jim, Hon. | Charleswood | PC |
| EVANS, Clif | Interlake | NDP |
| EVANS, Leonard S. | Brandon East | NDP |
| FILMON, Gary, Hon. | Tuxedo | PC |
| FINDLAY, Glen, Hon. | Springfield | PC |
| FRIESEN, Jean | Wolseley | NDP |
| GAUDRY, Neil | St. Boniface | Liberal |
| GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon. | Minnedosa | PC |
| GRAY, Avis | Crescentwood | Liberal |
| HELWER, Edward R. | Gimli | PC |
| HICKES, George | Point Douglas | NDP |
| KOWALSKI, Gary | The Maples | Liberal |
| LAMOUREUX, Kevin | Inkster | Liberal |
| LATHLIN, Oscar | The Pas | NDP |
| LAURENDEAU, Marcel | St. Norbert | PC |
| MACKINTOSH, Gord | St. Johns | NDP |
| MALOWAY, Jim | Elmwood | NDP |
| MANNES, Clayton, Hon. | Morris | PC |
| MARTINDALE, Doug | Burrows | NDP |
| McALPINE, Gerry | Sturgeon Creek | PC |
| McCORMICK, Norma | Osborne | Liberal |
| McCRAE, James, Hon. | Brandon West | PC |
| McINTOSH, Linda, Hon. | Assiniboia | PC |
| MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon. | River East | PC |
| ORCHARD, Donald, Hon. | Pembina | PC |
| PALLISTER, Brian | Portage la Prairie | PC |
| PENNER, Jack | Emerson | PC |
| PLOHMAN, John | Dauphin | NDP |
| PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon. | Lac du Bonnet | PC |
| REID, Daryl | Transcona | NDP |
| REIMER, Jack | Niakwa | PC |
| RENDER, Shirley | St. Vital | PC |
| ROBINSON, Eric | Rupertsland | NDP |
| ROCAN, Denis, Hon. | Gladstone | PC |
| ROSE, Bob | Turtle Mountain | PC |
| SANTOS, Conrad | Broadway | NDP |
| SHELLENBERG, Harry | Rossmere | NDP |
| STEFANSON, Eric, Hon. | Kirkfield Park | PC |
| STORIE, Jerry | Flin Flon | NDP |
| SVEINSON, Ben | La Verendrye | PC |
| VODREY, Rosemary, Hon. | Fort Garry | PC |
| WOWCHUK, Rosann | Swan River | NDP |

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 25, 1994

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

ACCESS Program Funding

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Darlene Daniels, Arlene Mentuck, George Munroe and others requesting the Legislative Assembly to request the Minister of Education and Training to consider restoring funding to the ACCESS program.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Martin Ross, Kim Summers, Ken Boyd and others requesting the Legislative Assembly to request the Minister of Education and Training to consider restoring funding to ACCESS program.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Jim Edkins, Crystal Gibbs, Jodi Horsburgh and others requesting the Legislative Assembly to request the Minister of Education and Training to consider restoring funding to ACCESS program.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Della Beattie, Beth Rogers, Archie Carmichael and others requesting the Legislative Assembly to request the Minister of Education and Training to consider restoring funding to the ACCESS program.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Mickey Spence, M. Vieira, A. Zibroski and others requesting the Legislative Assembly to request the Minister of Education and Training to consider restoring funding to the ACCESS program.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Chairperson of Committees): The Committee of Supply has adopted a certain resolution, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinsson), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Your Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources presents the following as its First Report.

Your Committee met on Tuesday, May 24, 1994, at 10 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building to consider the Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the year ended October 31, 1993.

At that meeting, your Committee agreed by unanimous consent to also consider the Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the year ended October 31, 1992. Your Committee had previously met on Thursday, June 17, 1993, at 10 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building to consider the aforementioned 1992 Annual Report.

Mr. Don McCarthy, Chairperson, and Mr. Walter Bardua, President and General Manager, provided such information as was requested with

respect to the Annual Report and business of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation.

Your Committee has considered the Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the year ended October 31, 1992, and has adopted the same as presented.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

Mr. Laurendeau: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this afternoon from the Elton Collegiate fifty Grade 9 students under the direction of Mrs. Sharon Jantz. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mr. Gilleshammer).

Also, from the West Park School and the Portage Collegiate, we have eighteen Grade 12 students under the direction of Mr. Ray Johnson. These schools are located in the constituency of the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister).

From the Parc La Salle School, we have sixty-two Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Aimé Cyr. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau).

On behalf of all honourable members, I would like to welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Environmental Legislation Enforcement

* (1335)

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

Annually the Premier produces very glitzy reports dealing with sustainable development strategies for the province of Manitoba. These

reports of course have a number of statements of intent in the documents. The latest one talked about, in terms of environment policy: It is necessary to have strong standards and regulations and enforcement in terms of the environment.

What the government does not release of course is the report cards dealing with the enforcement of the standards. A report commissioned by the government produced by Arthur Andersen and Company on dealing with the laboratories in the province of Manitoba for the EITC, which of course is chaired by the Premier states: Manitoba has typically not been aggressive in the enforcement of various environment legislation as a result—

Point of Order

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would not want the member opposite to continue to put false information on the record. I do not chair the EITC. It is chaired by Russ Hood, a professional engineer from the private sector.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the official opposition, to carry on with his question.

Mr. Doer: He chairs one of the round tables and the other one reports to him, as Premier, but I do apologize for the inaccurate assumption that the Premier chaired it.

Manitoba has typically not been aggressive in the enforcement of various environmental legislation. As a result, environmental testing volumes are lower than other provinces. Some provinces such as Saskatchewan require that various labs and industries utilize provincial testing laboratories and pay for that service. This has caused these operations to have relatively high volumes in profitability.

I would like to know why this government has not had rigorous environmental enforcement dealing with our labs, consistent with the Premier's own words in the document he produces for the public annually.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the report in front of me, but if I can believe the Leader of the Opposition's comments, it does not refer to active enforcement. It says that Manitoba does not require a great deal of testing.

The act under which we operate, The Environment Act, was passed by the New Democratic government. If they do not require a great deal of testing, then that is a problem that we will have to contend with in terms of the deficiencies of the act.

Provincial Laboratories User Fees

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Premier has had this document for over a year now, and it says, and I quote: Manitoba has not been aggressive in the enforcement of various environmental legislation.

It does not say the legislation is weak. It says that his stewardship of that legislation through environmental enforcement is weak, very clearly in the document.

Mr. Speaker, in the last budget the government had put together an operating agency to deal with Cadham Lab and the Ward Lab in the province of Manitoba. They are now, in this report, calling for a change from the nonprofit areas of public health for testing such as water, for those services now to be made on a profit basis and moved onto the costs of the municipalities and private citizens.

I would like to ask the government: Will they be implementing the user-pay system for municipalities and private citizens, and what will be the impact on public health?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member opposite that when the New Democrats were in office they were evaluated, on the basis of a national environmental organization who evaluated all of the provinces of Canada, as being 10th out of 10 provinces in terms of their environmental record.

So we have no lessons to learn from New Democrats in Manitoba on protection of the environment. They were the worst in Canada.

That same organization has improved their rating of Manitoba under this administration to middle of the range of the provinces of Canada, a substantial improvement, I might say.

With respect to his question about the recommendations that are being put forward regarding the operations of the various laboratories in Manitoba, we will take those recommendations into consideration, and we will be reviewing them in due course.

* (1340)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the government had a document for over a year. The government has placed in their last budget, in their Estimates, a special operating agency to deal with the issue of the Cadham Lab and the Ward Lab. It calls clearly in this report for user fees to municipalities and private citizens.

We believe, in terms of water quality and water testing, which is now considered a public health issue, a nonprofit public health issue, going over to a user-pay system, that this has implications for public health.

I would like to ask the Premier: What are the basic policies of the government when they are moving from the existing system to a special operating agency? Are they going to put the user-pay system into effect, and what is the impact on public health and public health policies in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, as is regularly the case, the member has it wrong again.

We are not moving to a special operating agency in the provincial government. It is not in the Estimates. In the Estimates are the fees that are paid by the departments to the labs for the testing that they require. The Environment department pays fees to the labs. The Health department pays fees to the labs for their requirements, and so on.

We are not moving to a special operating agency. He can go back to the drawing board and start all over again.

Universities Student Service Fees

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, when this government is finally gone it will be remembered for its amazing powers of self-deception.

When the member for Morris (Mr. Manness) was Minister of Finance, he was able to say with a straight face that taxes had not increased in Manitoba, when every Manitoban knew the impact of the property tax, the expansion of the sales tax and the increase in government fees.

Now that he is Minister of Education, the minister is up to the same powers of self-deception. He claims that he has put a 5-percent cap on university fees, and yet universities are being allowed, by a letter received at the universities this morning, to raise their fees by creating student service fees. It is the same kind of self-deception again, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to ask the Premier, today, to confirm that his supposed cap on student fees, in fact at the University of Manitoba, is going to mean an increase not of 5 percent, but of something closer to 7.5 percent.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy that drips from the mouth of the member for Wolseley when she speaks is unbelievable, when the government of the New Democrats that preceded our government in six years raised the income from income taxes in this province by 140 percent, raised the income from corporations by over 50 percent during that same period of time, imposed an increase in sales tax from 5 percent to 7 percent, brought in a 2 percent tax on net income, brought in a payroll tax and increased it 50 percent a few years later to bring in over \$300 million, all of those massive, massive increases that had never been seen before or since, and she wants to talk about tax increases.

She ought to be embarrassed when she talks about tax increases, given the record of the New Democrats when they were in office. That would have to be the greatest condemnation of New Democratic policy anybody has ever seen.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, could the minister now answer the question? Is the fee increase at the University of Manitoba going to be the 5 percent that he promised, or is it going to be the 7.5 percent that, in fact, is going to happen as a result of the changes which he is permitting?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, we as a government are attempting to do everything possible to keep the costs of operation down for the universities so that, in fact, we can keep, as well, the costs of tuition down to the students.

In the course of that, we obviously need the co-operation and the assistance of those who run the institutions on a decentralized authority basis, and that includes, obviously, those who operate the schools of Manitoba through public school boards, those who operate the universities of Manitoba through their management system.

We can only go so far, because she would be the first one to stand up and accuse us of interfering—the honourable member for Wolseley, to whom I have referred—as she would be the first to accuse us of interfering with the universities and intervening in their right to manage their own affairs.

We have done everything we can to show the way, that we would like them to keep their costs of operation down, and we would like them to keep their tuition fee increases down. We can only go so far as long as we want to retain that authority within the hands of the universities themselves to govern themselves.

* (1345)

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I still did not hear any answer. Is it the 5 percent they promised? Is it the 7.5 percent that it is going to be?

I want to ask the Premier, again, and I have emphasized this over and over in this House. Will he use some common sense and take that money from Midland Walwyn, the blue chip investors, from Pepsi Cola, from Chicken Delight, from Murray Chev Olds Cadillac sales, take those education dollars and put them into the universities and the colleges where they can benefit everyone?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, Workforce 2000 has been able to train over 80,000 people in this province. They have done so in ways, I might say—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am having great difficulty in hearing the comments of the honourable First Minister, and unfortunately, I think it is my earpiece, so the honourable First Minister.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite do not want to listen to answers. They only want to indulge themselves in their own questions, but the fact is, Workforce 2000 has trained over 80,000 people in this province, and they have done so in ways that have been followed by other provinces.

The Province of Ontario, through its Jobs Ontario Fund, has given money for training in the workplace by Toyota, by Chrysler, by major corporations throughout—[interjection] Mr. Speaker, I cannot hear myself respond. They obviously do not want to hear the answer.

Independent Schools Funding Formula—Special Needs

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

The Minister of Education (Mr. Manness) recently confirmed in the Estimates of the Department of Education that, in fact, for the first time, independent schools will be given the special needs Level I grants that are not based on any proof of actual students needing those special needs designations but, rather, are the same as all public schools, based on a straight 5 percent assumption, that 5 percent of the students would need it.

Mr. Speaker, this is curious, because a lot of independent schools, specifically through their process of selecting students, do not accept special needs children.

Why is the government going to give the same special needs grants based on that same formula to independent schools that by their very enlistment and enrollment process weed those students out?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the Leader of the Liberal Party is now enunciating a policy directly contrary to that which was espoused by his party in this Legislature, that they are opposed to fairer funding—

Point of Order

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party of Manitoba not only has not approved of Level I funding on a percentage basis to independent schools, but we have not done—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, we certainly now have on record their opposition to this funding going to independent schools, and we will communicate that to the independent schools of Manitoba. I will take the remainder of that question as notice on behalf of the Minister of Education.

Independent Schools Funding Formula—Special Needs

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, never, never has this party or indeed I think any reasonable, thinking person supported giving money for special needs without any proof of the special needs. That is the bottom line.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my question for the Premier: Given that they are giving this carte blanche to these funds when there is no proven need, are they now going to require and mandate that all independent schools receiving this money accept any and all children whether or not they have those special needs?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, firstly, there is no significant change with respect to special needs funding. As in the public school system, unless there are specific individuals in Levels II and III, there are no funds that flow.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to Level I, there has been a long-standing disagreement between

negotiators for the independent school system and the government as to the every-dollar principle that was entered into by way of agreement several years ago. By agreement, that now has changed, recognizing that there are a growing number of Level I incidence students within the independent school system.

* (1350)

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, for the Minister of Education, Level I funding is going without any proof of actual need for that special needs Level I funding.

My question for the Minister of Education: Why is that money going to every independent school when there is no proof of actual need and, secondly, there are independent schools that specifically bar children with special needs? Why is that money going carte blanche with absolutely no proof of need and the fact that these independent schools do not even accept them?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, that is not the case. There is a growing number of students with Level I needs who are being accepted within the independent school system, and just like there is a divisor put into place across the public school system, 180 divided into the total number of students within the school division times a factor of \$43,500 per student, that is the Level I support that is in place in the public school system.

The same level of support is now put into place with the independent school system.

Independent Schools Funding Formula

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, is it not interesting that the Liberals are now flip-flopping on their 80 percent promise that the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) made in 1990 during the election. Do they not understand that this is just this government's way of delivering on their 80 percent promise that they led in this province?

I want to ask the Minister of Education, in light of the fact that he admitted last night that many schools in Manitoba in the public school systems

are now operating at less than 1991 levels of funding from the Province of Manitoba, how he can justify 20 percent increases in funding to the private schools, including funding for special needs, which is not documented, when these schools are now operating at 1990 levels, and the minister admitted it last night.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, this is all part of the public record, and indeed the members opposite have posed that same question to me shortly after the release of the Estimates.

Mr. Speaker, as I have pointed out on several occasions, the increase of support to the Federation of Independent Schools is maintained at a factor level of 63 percent of operating support on a per capita basis as compared to the public school system. The total global increase in that level of funding, dollar over dollar, is roughly an amount of \$22 million to \$24 million, whereas the total provincial commitment to the public school system is in the realm of \$760 million.

The members, I know, are trying to make an awful lot with respect to trying to compare \$24 million with \$760 million. The fact is, there has been an agreement. It supports the principle that this government has entered into, a principle that has been also mirrored by the Liberal Party, constitutionally created as a result of an agreement entered into by this government and the Federation of Independent Schools.

Mr. Speaker, there is an eight-year formula in place that will drive funding towards 80 percent of the operating costs of a per capita student within the public school system.

* (1355)

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, clearly, I would think the Liberal position is still 80 percent, even though they would like it to leave the impression that it is not.

I want to ask the minister whether he will now admit that if he were to roll back the elite, exclusionary private schools like St. John's-Ravenscourt and Balmoral Hall to 1990 levels, the same level that the public schools are having to function at at this time, that he would save \$8

million to give to such divisions as Transcona, Selkirk, Agassiz and Evergreen, who are suffering under this government's policies.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I will not admit that, because indeed if the Catholic school system were to win their way in court the government would have to provide 100 percent funding, and today we would have to provide an extra \$12 million that ultimately may have to come out of the public school system. There is a saving today with respect to the agreement that has been struck.

Let the member be so honest as to suggest when the NDP were in government they too were providing increasing levels of support to the independent school system.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, we were providing a third of the dollars—less than one-third of the dollars that are being spent now.

I want to ask the Minister of Education whether he will now consider, supposedly with the blessing of the Liberals as well in this House, to roll back to 50 percent of the funding for public schools on a per student basis and take that money and provide it with fair funding for those school divisions who have been cut unfairly by this minister, divisions like Selkirk and—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put his question.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, the member for Dauphin just rumbles on and on.

What I find difficult to accept, particularly in the line of questioning coming from the member for Dauphin, is that he sat as part of a Treasury bench when indeed levels of support to the very same schools that we are talking about increased significantly over a period of time. The member can try and wash his hands of that fact, but the reality is, that is fact.

The government was well aware that there was a greater negative impact with respect to a number of results, not the least of which of course is the reassessment impact on some certain school divisions throughout the province of Manitoba.

That is why we went some distance to try and relieve the pressure with respect to the school

divisions mentioned by the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), because we did see where they had gone the extra mile, particularly the year previous, in dealing with the reduced workweek, Mr. Speaker, and they had obviously a minimal amount of surplus. We have tried to accommodate the shortfall in those two cases.

Social Safety Net Program Reform Communication Strategy

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has begun a process of reviewing social programs which their own opinion polls show that Canadians overwhelmingly support. This exercise is supposedly about modernizing and restructuring Canada's social programs, but now we have a 14-page communication strategy, the intent of which is to sell these cutbacks to Canadians, including spending \$575,000 for newspaper ads, \$200,000 for TV ads and \$75,000 for a loose, hip interactive Much Music program.

Can the Minister of Family Services tell the House what the impact on Manitoba will be of a \$1.5-billion cutback in social programs spending next year, cuts that this federal government plans to spend to engage the Canadian Bankers' Association to sell to Canadians?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question, because it does raise some questions in my mind about the number of dollars that are going to be spent on a communication strategy, but we have not to date seen an action plan from the federal government.

I would like to just give you a little bit of background on the process that has been followed to date. Back in mid-February, the federal Minister of Human Resources, Lloyd Axworthy, called together all of the provinces to discuss the announcement that he had made about major national social safety net reform. At that meeting, I think I can recall him clearly stating that there had been a fair amount of consultation, but there was indeed no federal vision when they took over as the federal government.

What he was going to do through a process was pull together around him an advisory body that would set out a national vision for social safety net reform and put in place an action plan. He did reiterate at that time that it had to be a federal vision and a federal action plan, and once that action plan was developed, he would call the provinces together again to share that action plan with him and get feedback.

That was to happen at the end of March and to date it has not happened.

* (1400)

Impact on Manitoba

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I would like to ask the minister if she can tell the House what the impact will be on the province of Manitoba when the federal government cuts \$2.4 billion next year, which we have already been given advance warning of, from social programs under the guise of social program review, since this could put thousands of people on provincial social assistance in Manitoba.

What is the financial implication for this province?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I do not think that we have any more information than the New Democratic Party has in the communique that they seem to have obtained by some means. We do not know what the federal government is planning, because to date, although we were promised that there would be an action plan by the end of March, we have not seen any action plan on what social safety net reform would be.

Some of the concerns that were raised with the federal government back in February were the issues around, is this going to be true reform, Mr. Speaker, because we all realize and recognize that things have to change. We have to look at changes in the way we deliver our social programs right throughout the country, but we do not know exactly what impact that will have.

Indeed, is it just going to be an offload or is it going to be true reform?

Mr. Martindale: The minister raises very serious and legitimate questions, and I would like to ask her if she has communicated to the federal minister responsible, Mr. Axworthy, and asked when her government can expect the copy of the white paper so that her government can take a position on these cutbacks, which could have a very negative impact on the province of Manitoba.

This minister wants to budget, this minister wants to add matching money to new federal initiatives. At the same time, she needs to know what is coming down the pipe from Ottawa, because it will have an effect on Manitoba.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, when we met in the middle of February with provinces and the federal government, there was to be a follow-up meeting at the end of March. In the interim, a co-ordinating committee, a federal-provincial committee of deputies, was to be doing some work.

That meeting was cancelled at the end of March. There was a further meeting set up of deputies, scheduled for next week, at the end of May, and the federal government has cancelled that meeting, too.

I guess we are not quite sure at this point where the plan is at, when we are going to see anything, and when we will have anything to respond to.

Health Care Facilities Reduced Workweek

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, the implementation of Bill 22 and the major cuts to facilities have been very poorly administered by this government. In the most recent letter from the department to the facilities, the department states, quote: We will give special consideration to those facilities in which patient care is jeopardized.

Just what does the government mean by using the words "patient care," will be in jeopardy, and did the government not consider this before they put these cuts in place?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the honourable member says something about cuts being put in place, while he reads from a letter that talks about how we might seek some

kind of participation from the facilities. You cannot have both at the same time. In fact, if he reads that letter, I am sure he will see a reference to our bottom line being patient care on two, perhaps three occasions throughout the body of that letter.

The honourable member cannot have it both ways. I think what he really wants to see us do is to impose massive cuts like New Democratic government here in the past in Manitoba has done and like New Democratic governments in other provinces are doing now.

That is not our approach in Manitoba. Patient care comes first. We will not follow the advice of the honourable member for Kildonan and cut deeply into the fabric of our health system.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the minister is wrong. He asked the facilities to submit their plan by May 16, and they will give special consideration to see then if these patients are put in jeopardy. Those are the minister's own words.

My supplementary: Can the minister advise this House whether or not the possibility that Deer Lodge hospital will have to cut rehab services and cut outpatient services constitutes putting potential patient care in jeopardy or not?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Speaker, Deer Lodge is one of many facilities in Manitoba that have responded to our letter, and they have, if I am correct, I believe Deer Lodge has said they can use Bill 22 to some extent but not to the full extent to achieve the savings and that perhaps there are other ways they can do that without jeopardizing patient care. Those are the kinds of constructive sorts of responses we were hoping to receive.

In fact, we have received many responses, not all of them yet, but many, many responses which indicate a willingness either to use this vehicle or this vehicle combined with other mechanisms or some other mechanisms altogether, which is what we asked from the facilities. We asked for their proposals, because we respect their autonomy, we respect the work of their boards, and we want them to be able to operate in the way that they feel is best for their communities' own needs.

We have had an encouraging response from many, many facilities in Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the minister confirms the cuts will be put in place, and then special consideration may be given by the department to these cuts, because that is what the letter says.

My final supplementary to the minister is: Will these same criteria of special consideration, if patient care is placed in jeopardy, be placed in effect for the \$100 million in cuts that the government has asked the urban hospitals in Winnipeg to institute over the next three years?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member and his colleagues are getting pretty desperate when they deliberately misunderstand answers given in this House.

I in no way confirm that cuts will take place. I have asked facilities for their proposals. Facilities are making their proposals available to us. We are reviewing those proposals, and at the end of that review, we will let the facilities know whether their proposals will be accepted or not accepted.

Government Departments Reduced Workweek

Ms. Avis Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, we have seen the potential for some flexibility in the application of Bill 22 with personal care homes and hospitals.

I would ask a question to the Premier. Is he willing to allow that same flexibility with the application of Bill 22 as it affects government services so that in fact essential government services will remain open and provide service to the public?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I have indicated that we will certainly be encouraging the managers who are responsible for delivery of services in the various government departments to apply the requirements of Bill 22 in the interests of ensuring that services that are in particular demand and requirement are able to be provided.

Having said that, I do not think we are suggesting that there are no requirements. Certainly the effect of Bill 22 needs to be achieved in terms of the savings that are required, but there is some flexibility in the hands of managers to

allow for provision of services where there is an obvious requirement for those services.

Essential Service

Ms. Avis Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, with a supplementary question to the Premier: Is he willing to allow exemptions of essential services in the government services such as home care, child and family services, court backlogs and maintenance enforcement, where there are already extended waiting lists for service and there is a great need? Is he willing to allow an exemption of these essential services?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I am informed that home care operated last year within the requirements of Bill 22 without a problem vis-à-vis services. I am not sure the specifics that she is referring to. It is a blanket general question. If she could give me some specific examples, perhaps we could deal with it.

Home Care Program Essential Service

Ms. Avis Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, with a final supplementary to the Premier: Perhaps if the Premier could read the Estimates in the Department of Health, we would give him a specific example where hospitals in rural Manitoba are not able to discharge patients, because in fact home care services are not available on Fridays and, in some cases, on Mondays.

Will the minister now, in light of that information, reconsider some of the essential services such as home care and provide an exemption to Bill 22 in that area to provide better public service and save dollars in the long run?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, with respect to home care, the same rules apply on the Bill 22 days as apply on statutory holidays. However, where our program has not been able to be as responsive as perceived necessary in certain circumstances, i.e., at Seven Oaks Hospital, the Seven Oaks Hospital has taken the initiative to attempt to provide an earlier discharge program through the services of the We Care Home Health Services company, which the

patients have found extremely positive and the NDP has found extremely negative for their own particular reasons.

I do not think Bill 22 is the cause of the problems at Seven Oaks, and those are issues that we are attempting to address.

We need the support of the New Democrats as we attempt to address these important issues of patient care, Mr. Speaker, and we are disappointed when for philosophical reasons they put the patients second.

* (1410)

Education System Physical Education

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, day after day we hear of incidents of youth violence, criminal activity, gangs, unemployment, youth depression, suicide.

Young people in Manitoba need some hope and they need some alternatives. This is provided by school programs in sports, arts and cultural programs. They are a cost-effective investment in young people in Manitoba.

I have a question for the Minister of Education.

Is the minister and his government considering the policy of eliminating physical education specialists and other specialists in the schools as core courses in Manitoba? What research or other rationale does the minister have for the basis of this kind of policy change?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, this issue and many others have been discussed in the Estimates review in the program area of the Department of Education.

When the government makes known its blueprint for educational reform, that issue and many others will be discussed at that time.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Speaker, I have a survey of over 1,200 Manitoba students from 18 schools regarding the benefits of athletics for high school students in keeping young people in school and developing life skills.

I would ask if the minister has seen this survey done by the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association and if he will use this as the basis of his decisions in changing extracurricular and core-curricular specialist programs in Manitoba.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I have not seen it, but I can accept and endorse all of the recommendations that would flow therefrom. I fully understand the incredible benefit of physical exercise within the whole sphere of learning. I am a supporter of it.

I was actively involved as a student myself in physical activities. My children have been. I am a full understander and, I believe, a supporter of physical education within our training institutions.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Speaker, if the minister feels so strongly about this, can the minister explain then why he is telling the physical education specialists that he thinks that there needs to be more generalists in education and they are looking at eliminating specialists in education?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I do not know the basis on which the member asked the question. If she wants to peddle hearsay, she is welcome to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I too have an opportunity. I was in attendance at the meeting. I know exactly what I said. If the member wants to contradict the statements that were made or embellish some of the comments that have been made public, I say she does a tremendous disservice to the meeting that took place.

Breast Implant Lawsuit Delay Request

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a letter from the Women's Health Clinic to an American judge filing a formal objection to the proposed settlement of the breast implant lawsuit as it affects foreign claimants and requesting an extension of the deadline for those foreign claimants, many of whom are Canadians and Manitobans.

On May 31, an information meeting will be held in Winnipeg to provide background information, a history of the various lawsuits, and an overview of the options available to Manitoba women.

I would like to ask the Premier if he will do two things, Mr. Speaker, if he will also write a letter to the American judge asking for a delay, an extension of the time for filing an application, asking for more information, and also, will he urge the federal Liberal government to join with him in lobbying the American judge and the American judicial system into delaying the June 17 deadline so that Canadian and Manitoba women have more of an opportunity and a better understanding of the implications for them in the health care system in the province of Manitoba of the judicial ruling in the United States on the breast implant issue?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I must admit, Mr. Speaker, that I do not have the information with which to make that commitment. So I will have to take time to review it and respond back to the member.

Breast Implant Lawsuit Delay Request

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, will the Premier, upon review and remembering that the deadline is fast approaching, please undertake a commitment to the women of Manitoba and Canada to lobby the federal government and the United States judge on the issue of breast implant judicial compensation, so that Canadian women are not held to the 3 percent of the \$4-billion lawsuit money available to them?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I would take under advisement the suggestion of the honourable member about our getting involved in writing a letter directly to the judge.

We have in progress now preparation of a letter to the federal Minister of Health and Welfare to ask the federal Liberal government to show some leadership in this area on behalf of all Canadian women.

Our initial response is that 3 percent of this settlement for all women outside the U.S.A. is totally inadequate from what we can tell on a preliminary review.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the loge to my left, where we have with us this afternoon our very good friend Mr. Larry Desjardins, the former MLA for St. Boniface.

On behalf of all honourable members, I would like to welcome you here this afternoon.

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Portage la Prairie have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Missing Children's Day

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, today is Missing Children's Day. You will notice a number of the honourable members have green ribbons on their lapels signifying their awareness of the problem around this issue.

Today is a day to think about those children and young people who are missing. In this Year of the Family I think it is very important to draw attention to this important issue.

Some young people decide to run away and find themselves on the streets trying to make ends meet, and in almost every case they find that their desire for freedom from their home life has turned into a form of bondage to the street life.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to send out the message today to young people that there are people who care and are willing to listen to their concerns. We have a number of help lines in our province. They are listed on the inside cover of the telephone directory, and there is also a national kids helpline called Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868.

I know there are also children who are missing because of abduction either by parents or by strangers, and I ask all Manitobans to ensure that when they walk by the poster of a child who is missing to take a moment and really look at that picture of that child. If it helps return one child to its family, that moment will be well spent. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Burrows have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

* (1420)

Child Find Week

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): We too are wearing ribbons today to mark Child Find Week. This organization provides public awareness regarding missing children and information about prevention. They help find missing children. They offer information and support to families.

I believe that protecting our children is the responsibility for everyone in our society, and particularly of parents, and we can all do our part by knowing where our children are at all times and knowing who they are with. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for The Maples have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I too on behalf of our caucus would like to applaud the work of Child Find. As a police officer for a number of years I have been a part of many investigations looking for lost children. I see the devastation that it causes parents, family and even the entire community when a child is lost and how the community has come together, enemies and friends have come together to help out. I applaud the work of Child Find and I wear this ribbon to honour the work that they do. Thank you.

Committee Changes

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) for the member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer); the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Rose) for the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine); the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) for the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau); and the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) for the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister).

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the honourable government House leader under Orders of the Day, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the gallery to my left, where we have with us this afternoon His Worship the Mayor Rick Borotsik of the City of Brandon. On behalf of all honourable members, I would like to welcome you here this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that Mr. 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, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Lauredeau) in the Chair for the Department of Education and Training; and the honourable member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) in the Chair for the Department of Family Services.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Marcel Lauredeau): 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 Education and Training.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 5.(a)(1) on page 43 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, as I promised last night I would provide an historical perspective of support to private and independent schools, I table that information now.

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Yes, my colleague the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) indicated that the minister had promised to provide, to table some documents on Workforce 2000 prior to the sitting today, at least that is what she just informed me was the case.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the training division as yet, at 2:30, did not have that information prepared. We will table it as soon as it is here.

Mr. Plohman: I thank the minister for tabling the information on increases to private schools. Can the minister tell us what the figures referenced here, 63.50 percent for '93-94 for high incidence, 63.50—what does that refer to? Then '94-95, the Level I, 154—is this thousands of dollars, or what are we referring to?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask you to bring the mike forward? Hansard is having some problems picking up, and that does not usually happen.

Mr. Plohman: Well, yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, what I wanted to know was if the minister could explain the figures under high incidence, Level I and General Support Grant that seemed to begin in '93-94, '94-95. What do those numbers represent?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there was a different definition with respect to the support of special needs in '93-94 as compared to '94-95. All we have tried to do is, for once and for all, take away the reference to high incidence and make it synonymous with what exists in the public school system under Level I, Level II, Level III. Whereas in '93-94 there was a level of support within the high incidence, the old reference, that has been shifted and increased totally into Level I funding to make it comparable to the level of support in the public school system.

Mr. Plohman: So the 154 in '94-95 under Level I stands for?

Mr. Manness: Well, it subsumes the \$63 that was provided in high incidence the year before, and what it represents is the per capita student equivalent of support, \$154.

Mr. Plohman: So what the minister is really saying, then, is that in '94-95, schools like St. John's-Ravenscourt and Balmoral Hall were given an increase in funding of \$154 per student plus \$68, or plus \$68 less \$63.50?

Mr. Manness: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the \$63 rolled into the \$154, but what he is saying is right, \$154 plus \$68 minus \$63.

Mr. Plohman: And this is based, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, on a formula that assumes the ratio of Level I special needs students is about the same in St. John's-Ravenscourt and Balmoral Hall as it would be in the general student body throughout the province.

Mr. Manness: I cannot speak to St. John's-Ravenscourt—like the member seems he has this fixation with Balmoral Hall and St. John's.

I will address it in terms of the 53 schools that are all part of the independent school system, [interjection] 53, representing 10,000 students. I do not know what percent of the students that he wants to talk about attend St. John's-Ravenscourt and/or Balmoral Hall.

* (1440)

I will address the 10,500 students who are part of the independent school system and indicate to him there is obviously a growing number of students who are requiring Level I support. Whether it represents the same population, per capita population, as exists within the public school system, probably the answer is no. Let members remember in the first instance, the support that was provided for special needs students, not only took into account those who had learning disabilities and those who had other disadvantages, but also those who are disadvantaged from the perspective of being achievers far beyond average and who were not sufficiently challenged.

So I do not know how we quantify exactly comparable areas, but certainly Level I in this case includes slow learners which exist in many aspects of the independent school system, plus, in some cases, gifted learners, too.

Mr. Plohman: Well, the minister does not want to talk about particular schools. I used those because

they are certainly nondenominational schools, nonreligious-based schools. The minister has increased the funding to them by 5.1 percent on a per student basis, even higher when you consider increased enrollments. I thought the minister might be concerned about that, and he does not want to talk about that. Let the record show that is the case.

Mr. Manness: Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, let the record show, for those who probably do not have access to the historical data that I presented, but let the record show for all those who read these Estimates seriously, that the NDP who like to sense that they would not provide any support for independent schools including the two schools that the member wants to focus on time after time, that during the NDP years of governance, these were the increases on a per student basis to those attending the independent school—[interjection] 1983, 9.7 percent to the students of St. John's and Balmoral Hall; 17.6 percent increase to the same students in 1984; 10.3 percent increase in 1985; 19.6 percent in 1986 to those same students at St. John's-Ravenscourt and Balmoral Hall.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, 38.2 percent in 1988. [interjection] No, no, that was the last year. That was the last year of the Pawley government to those very same students that the member focuses on. Then, the seven budgets that we have brought down, our increases were 19.7, 14.6 and then for the next five budgets, drop into the single-digit area of 6.6, 9.2, 6.1, 2.7 and 5.1 percent, the same base, taking into account the global funding divided by the number of students.

We come nowhere close to the double-digit increases of 38 percent and 17 and 20 percent provided by the NDP Pawley government in the '80s. So the members, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, speak with great inconsistency. As a matter of fact, some would say they are kind of hypocritical with respect to this whole issue.

Mr. Plohman: The minister alleges that he would like to put factual information on the record, but he neglects to mention, first of all, that the base was much smaller. We were talking about in the neighbourhood of \$500 per student versus 2,358, now almost five times as much money per student.

He also neglects to mention that inflation was running around 10 percent in the early '80s, something else that he does not want to put in perspective with regard to the double-digit—as he calls it—increases during that period of time. I think the other couple of points, the fact in 1988 the government was defeated on its budget and went to an election. This government came in and submitted a new budget and at that time, it was in a position to decide on all of these kinds of things and chose to increase the funding by 38.2 percent.

Point of Order

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, on a point of order, I will not stand for the member for Dauphin putting lies on the record. I brought down—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I apologize for imputing that the member has brought lies down, but on the same point of order, this government has brought down seven budgets. Even the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) can count to seven. On this sheet, if he counts back seven—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven—he will see that the first year was 19.7, the first budget that we brought down.

I say to the member, the 38.2 represents an increase provided by the NDP after a letter was signed by Roland Penner, the bench mate of the member for Dauphin. That is part of the record. That has to be part of the record.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister did not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Plohman: I think the minister did not explain his table well when he presented this. He should have indicated that this was not given effect in 1988 by budgetary decisions but in fact was the result of '87 decisions, because in fact the government was elected in '88. At that time this government was elected in 1988 and brought down their first budget in '89. Is that correct?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we were elected in '88. We brought in the '88 budget which covered '88 and '89—year end '89. As I said previously and the first time, the last NDP budget, not the defeated one but the last one that was passed in the House, provided an increase to the independent school system of 38.2 percent.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, what the minister is saying is that these are given effect by the previous year's budget. The '87 budget gave effect to the '88 figures that he has on this sheet.

Mr. Manness: Correct.

Mr. Plohman: I am happy the minister has clarified that. It is important information that we know and understand the levels of funding that we are talking about here in terms of the total dollars. [interjection]

Well, I indicated in the House that what I wanted the minister to do was to roll back the funding to 50 percent of the public school system. That is what I was suggesting. I did not say they should not give them any money. It is a matter of priorities. When the minister is saying he is short of money and he cannot provide it to the Mystery Lake School Division and to the Lord Selkirk School Division and Transcona and Evergreen and so on, all of those divisions which have seen substantial cuts, then I think it is significant.

I think we should also get from the minister, when he provides this table, the percent of funding in relationship to the public schools, because that is significant. When we were in office in the late 1980s, we were talking around 30 percent of the funding that public school students were being given in the private schools. Now we are up at 63.5 percent.

So the minister is the one as the Minister of Finance, and his previous colleagues, that increased the percentage of funding to private schools from some 30 percent to 63.5 percent and increased the dollars from the neighbourhood. The minister can provide that information as well on the global forum from some \$8 million to \$10 million to some \$24 million now. Those are the important figures that we have to consider when we are working with a shortage of funds.

The other point is, and I think it is worth putting on the record as well, during these years that the private schools were getting large increases during the NDP years on a percentage basis—not on a dollar basis, on a percentage basis—the public schools were getting comparatively large increases as well. This is quite different than what we are seeing now, because the public school was at a larger base at that time. Naturally, a percentage on the larger base made many more dollars, and in this case, the minister has increased the amount by some \$16 million over this period of time. So I think the minister has to put all of these things in perspective and still acknowledge that he is going to 80 percent with the support of the Liberals, and it is the NDP that wants to limit the funding to private and especially elite, exclusionary schools to ensure that there is money for the public school system.

It is a matter of priorities. The minister has to remember that he is the one that is saying the NDP wants all kinds of money thrown at everything. We are the ones saying no, cut Workforce 2000; put that money into ACCESS, put that money into universities, put that money into the public school system, cut St. John's, cut Balmoral Hall and put that money into the public school system. It is a matter of priorities.

* (1450)

I think these members opposite have to recognize priorities. Surely by now they should recognize priorities. That is all we are saying, and that is the point we have been making. I want to just re-emphasize that at this point, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, and move on to other points. If the minister wants to respond, that is fine.

Mr. Manness: I really have developed an appreciation for the way the member for Dauphin can butcher arithmetic. We have a situation where the member talks about the high base. I mean, comparisons do not mean much unless they are done on the basis of per pupil comparisons. The member can say, well, we were providing increases to the public school system. Well, a 6 percent increase on a per capita supported base of, let us say, \$4,000 per student represents \$240; 10

percent increase on a \$600 base or \$800 per capita student base or \$1,000 per capita student base within the independent school system represents \$100.

So, with a much lesser increase in the public school system, obviously the benefit is much greater. That is pure arithmetic. The member destroys his own argument then. He uses the right tools, but he butchers his own argument. But we should point out, in '93-94, that the total support on average for a student within the public school system, both provincially supported and indeed locally supported by way of special levy, was \$5,830. That was the total cost of educating, on average, across all the school divisions: \$5,830.

The province by way of Estimates contributed roughly \$3,600 of that, but then there was another \$200-million worth by way of our provincial levy. So I say we would have covered roughly 70 percent, but the total cost was \$530 taxpayer supported to a student—taxpayer meaning taxpayer plus ratepayer—in the public school system. The support provided through the provincial government only by way of tax dollars to the student within the independent school system in 1993-94 was \$2,244. That is the number second from the bottom shown on the list: 38.5 percent as a share of what is being provided for in the public school system.

Now the member I know wants this to be a major plank of the NDP re-election strategy. It is fertile ground. I understand that. It is fertile ground, because I know it is convenient when you do not have solutions of your own. It has been practised by politicians since the beginning of time. When you do not have answers of your own, what you try and do is you make somebody, some group, some individual, the enemy. It is so convenient, of course, to make the Federation of Independent Schools the enemy generally, but more specifically to make St. John's-Ravenscourt and Balmoral Hall the real enemy.

Were it a perfect world and if government had ways of manipulating and without a policy basis and foundation to make decisions, maybe we would do things differently, too, but 53 schools

approached the government, not when we were in office but when the member for Dauphin was in Thompson. Pardon me. I do not know why, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am really, really tied into Thompson today. But when the member for Dauphin sat with Roland Penner and, indeed, when they made decisions within the Executive Council of this province, they made an agreement and the result of that agreement, the manifestation in that agreement with the independent schools, not with the Catholic schools, not with the so-called nonelite schools, but with the Federation of Independent Schools including the elite schools they mentioned.

This member sat at a Treasury bench when that decision was made, and the result of that decision—

An Honourable Member: What was it?

Mr. Manness: —a 38.2 percent increase in their last year of government. Did the members opposite separate under the umbrella of the independent schools, the Catholic schools from the nonreligious schools? Did they do that? Oh, no. They dealt in the same way we had to deal with the Federation of Independent Schools. What the Catholics said was this, basically. We will give away our call for 100 percent funding, which we constitutionally will win. We will ask for 80 percent, but we will do it in the sense that the global community of all independent schools being outside of the public school system.

That was a commitment they made to come in and seek support for all. The member opposite and his government supported that approach. But, today, when our levels of support have increased under an agreement working towards a goal, yes, it is certainly much less than the experience of the NDP ahead of us, the members, of course, wanted to make it to be their election plank in this whole area of education.

So, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that has to be put onto the record for those who want to read Hansard and want the truth associated with these numbers.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, again, the minister is loose with the facts. He is not interested in talking about the additional \$15

million that this government has put in place, more than double, almost triple of what the NDP government was putting in place for private schools at that particular time.

Talk about not having answers—when a government does not have answers. We have gone six years of fumbling around. The minister still does not have a blueprint or direction for education reform in this province, and he is talking about these opposition parties, and particularly the New Democrats, not having the answers. Well, he should look in the mirror and look at his colleagues and look at the fact that there has been no direction. He has been operating a rudderless ship for the last six years.

I think this is something when the minister wants to bring in those kinds of arguments. [interjection] He says now I am off topic. Well, that is exactly what he was when he said we do not have the answer, so therefore we look for a scapegoat. In this case, it happens to be Balmoral Hall and St. John's-Ravenscourt. Well, I am afraid it is this minister. This is the minister who is the target, not St. John's-Ravenscourt and Balmoral Hall.

It is this minister's policies that we are referring to and the huge increases and the agreement that goes to 80 percent on the basis that somebody says we are going to win the court case. You have to remember, we have a Francophone School Division right now and some of that will have a bearing on what is the obligation. [interjection] Well, some of it is bearing on it.

An Honourable Member: What did he say about the same argument in 1983?

Mr. Plohman: That is right. In 1983, on the French language question, he said go to the Supreme Court. Sterling Lyon did. They made a big issue. It was shameful how they tried to stir the pot on that issue in the mid-1980s in a crude political attempt to gain office. So let those members not talk about making these kinds of decisions. In fact, now they take it to the Supreme Court. Why did they not do it with this issue then? They threw in the towel.

An Honourable Member: We did.

Mr. Plohman: You did not do it with private schools. You took the Francophone issue to the Supreme Court, but you did not take the issue of the religious schools, the funding and the historical statement or the obligation that was being made, assertion that was being made by the Catholic schools that in fact, they could win this and get 100 percent. So the minister likes to put it in the light, well, we compromise. We do not know if they compromised, because it never got there. That is enough about that.

I want to get on to a couple of other questions before passing this along to some of my colleagues and the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), as well, for the Liberals. Certainly, there are a lot of issues that have to be raised.

I wanted to ask the minister though, last night he said he made special exception for Transcona and Agassiz as a result of the reductions and the impact that these reductions had on those divisions. What form did that take?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, firstly, I do now have some material that I promised the member for Wolseley last night. I have Workforce 2000 '94-95 training schedules by employers. This is a list of training contracts since April 1 '94.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in response to the—

Point of Order

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have not seen the list that the minister has given me, but I would remind him that he also promised to table information on Caron's Collectibles and Murray Chev Olds Cadillac Sales at the beginning of this session.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member did not have a point of order.

* * *

* (1500)

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I will attempt, through the day, to try and provide—that material is not ready as yet, but as it becomes ready, I will table.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the form in which the support was offered was an advance on next year's funding.

Mr. Plohman: How can the minister do that? What is he saying, that he is going to make it up next year?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I believe it is academic in the case of one school division. I do not think they want to accept the offer. What we have said is that obviously Bill 16 will not be in place next year. School divisions will not be capped. Given that Bill 16 will not be in place, they will not be capped, and they will have an opportunity to go to their ratepayers to try and provide the shortfall, but until then, we would be prepared to provide an advance if they so choose to receive it.

Mr. Plohman: I do not know whether that is any solution at all, and you cannot really blame them for turning it down. What the minister is saying is that he is not prepared to provide additional funding to deal with the unique situation, and he is not prepared to commit to providing funding if he were in the position to be able to do that next year. If he is in that position, he is not committing to give them the additional funding at that time to make it up.

So, what is he saying, then, that they would have to find it from within or raise it locally? Is that the implied option for the school divisions in this case?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, every division, every entity of public service and even in private firms, when there is a shortfall of money, you have to make certain decisions. What we have said is the impact is pretty severe. These divisions probably would want to make expenditure-side decisions over a course of two years rather than be forced to make one, and unto that end, we were prepared to advance some of the proceeds that they would expect under the formula next year, and that they then would have to go to the ratepayer accordingly, by way of tax increase, just to provide the shortfall that would occur next year as a result of having had advances made to them this year.

Mr. Plohman: It is interesting the minister has finally put on the record that the impacts in some divisions were, in his words, "pretty severe." We have been saying all along that they have been intolerable in many divisions because of the combined effect of two cuts in a row, some perhaps even more than that, but certainly many division, two years in a row, being reduced back to perhaps pre-1990 levels.

I wonder if the minister could provide any information on those school divisions that had reductions in provincial funding in two successive years. Maybe, to make it simpler, in two successive years, 8 percent or over combined, so that we could see how many divisions have been hit hard, in other words, something like the minister said, "pretty severe" over the last two years.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not know whether I can do that promptly, but I would indicate that the member deliberately tries to leave the impression that these two divisions also had decreases the last few years. I do not know if anybody has told him or not, but Transcona particularly, No. 12, benefited by the introduction of the schools finance program in '92-93 with a 6.8 percent increase in provincial support. Of course, the member does not talk about that, so obviously Transcona-Springfield School Division No. 12 is not one of those who have accumulated reductions using the member's terms of 8 percent.

Mr. Plohman: Just for clarification, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am talking about '93-94 and '94-95, not '92-93. If we go back to '92-93, then the decreases in '93-94 and '94-95 would more than offset the increase in '92-93, and we are then obviously back in 1991 levels. That is the point I am making here. And some much further back because some did not get a big increase in '92-93.

Mr. Manness: For the most part, the ones that did not receive an increase in '92-93 were again the winners, supposedly, under the reassessment. That is the general rule.

I can provide it globally. The member wants to know what has happened over the years. Again, we have brought seven budgets down. In '88-89, our

percent increase was 7.6 followed by 7.1, 7.4, 3.3, 5.5. These are all increases; 1.6 increase and this year a reduction of 4.6 the way it prints. I am sorry, it is not the way it prints, but it is the way leading up to the print.

So the general cumulative average increase was 4.4 percent over seven budgets. Yet Winnipeg's 12-month average of consumer price index increases over those same seven years on a per year basis was 3.8 percent. That is the cumulative. Those are the global averages.

I know the member would like those breakouts by school divisions over the years, and he would like then to be able to point at those divisions that may have experienced over the last two years, a reduction in absolute funding of some—using his terms—8 percent. Again, I point out to the member, I would only provide that if I also showed where the student enrollment was decreasing because in almost all the cases that is the direct cost.

Mr. Plohman: I do not mind if the minister includes student enrollment and compares apples with apples in terms of a per student cost and then the global base on the same number of students for that division. It is not relevant to talk globally about the cuts or increases in funding over those years because our major point—and the minister just gave global figures as if that is what I was asking about—what I want to see is the figures division by division and particularly, to make it easier for the minister, those divisions that have been severely hard hit over the last two years.

Let us have a look at what divisions we are talking about here. We know that a number of them are urban divisions, but there are also some rural and some urban divisions as well that were impacted in that way.

I would like to see what school divisions specifically, because that is the only way we can debate this. Our contention is that the funding has been unfair, and it has hit certain school divisions in an unfair way. It has not been equitable. So to talk globally just is not talking the same language at all.

The minister may feel it is to his benefit to talk globally, but we want to talk about those specific divisions, because, in fact, it is our contention that some special provision should have been made, that it is intolerable that some of those school divisions should have had the kind of impact two years in a row. Evergreen and Lord Selkirk are a couple of examples.

I think it is important the minister provide us that information so we are not talking in hypothetical terms. It is important for me to have it, and it is important for the minister to have it.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, part of the difficulty that we have in providing that information is, as the member knows full well, the level of support provided to school divisions is made up of two sources: that which comes out of the provincial Treasury—that is what we are voting on here—and then another \$200 million at this point in time, which comes from the Public Schools Finance Board, which is equivalent to the provincial levy, in other words the ESL. Nowhere is it provided for, a global contribution of those two factors.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I stand corrected. What we are going to try and do is we are going to try and take the global of those two sources that has been provided to every school division and we are going to give the historical record over the last several years of increase to school divisions or whatever flowed.

* (1510)

Mr. Plohman: I thank the minister for that.

I think in his reference to the two sources he led into what I wanted to discuss briefly with the minister in addition. That is the true contribution of the province to public schools in the province, in terms of the amount of dollars and percentage that comes from the province—not just general revenue but those funds that come from property taxes through the Public Schools Finance Board.

The MTS uses a figure of some 60 percent, 63 percent. I do not know what exactly it is now that the province is contributing to public education in the province. They say this is dropping. At one time they said it was around 80 percent. They do

these graphs up on a regular basis. I have talked with MTS and I said: I do not think that accurately reflects the provincial contributions.

Perhaps it is just a changing of accounting, but I want to get the minister's view on that: Whether he believes that is an accurate reflection of what the province is contributing to public schools and whether he thinks that perhaps there would be an advantage to have those funds that come from property taxes with just another form of taxation levied by the province should not be part of general revenues and then disseminated on an equitable basis as opposed to out of a separate source, a separate pool and why, as the Minister of Finance, he has never considered doing that.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it is a good point.

I would point out again what we have been voting on, for the record—because I do not think the member will do it, so I think I should do it—that in the first budget we brought down, the '88-89 budget, we contributed by way of vote what we are voting on, hopefully sometime today or some other time, we contributed as a province \$474 million out of the Treasury. That represented at that time roughly 54 percent of all the public school expenditures.

Now members—and indeed particularly the society, but others—have said that this is a funding issue, that we have not provided enough funding. Seven budgets later that amount has grown from \$473 million to \$576 million and reaching its high last year of \$603 million.

Mr. Plohman: So three for '93-94?

Mr. Manness: Correct. This year decreasing by a fair amount.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, today that still represents that increased funding. As the Premier has said many times, 17.2 percent of all funding was allocated to Education when we took government. To date it is 18.2. Still, and this is the main point, 54 percent of all public school funding comes out of the Treasury—not this year, I mean before this year, 54 percent. That means the other 46 percent comes from ratepayers, taxes on property.

Here is basically where the shift has been. Not that the ratepayers are paying a larger percent, because what has happened, they still are paying 46 percent. They paid 46 percent in '82-83, and they are paying 46 percent in terms of '92-93. But there has been a shift between the local levy and the provincial levy. Whereas 10 years ago, out of the 46 percent, 27 percent was levied by the province, 19 percent by the local division, today that is virtually changed so that 27 percent is levied locally and 19 percent is levied by the provincial government.

So the impact on ratepayers, their share, their burden of the total education budget has not changed. Indeed, the contribution put forward by the provincial government out of the special levy, pardon me, out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, has not changed. It just depends how you want to divide the ratepayer as between whether he or she directs their dollars to the local municipality, which directs it to the school board, or whether it is collected by the local municipality, which sends it to the government of Manitoba, to the Public Schools Finance Board, which redirects it back to the school boards.

Mr. Plohman: I think the MTS uses the 54 percent plus the provincial levy, the 19 percent that the minister refers to—was 27 percent, now 19 percent—adds those together to get the provincial contribution. I am not certain of that, but I would think that is what they would do.

There is another element of this as well, and that is, the minimum effort that the province requires of school divisions to levy, the minimum levy. What percentage of that 27 percent that is levied locally is actually a requirement from the province as a minimum local mill rate?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, yes, the member is right. Under the old values of assessment, the number used to be slightly over 8, and under the new value of assessment, the uniform levy is 7.29 mills. That then becomes the threshold, and everybody has to levy up to that point.

We reduce their support on the expectation that everybody raises or can raise or will raise 7.29, the equivalent of 7.29 mills against their assessment.

Mr. Plohman: In actuality then the province is responsible for more than the 19 percent. By decree, by policy or by regulation, school divisions have to levy another 7.29 mills. It varies in percentage terms, but, in fact, the figure that would come from provincially initiated property taxation would be much higher than that reflected by the minister's statements earlier.

Mr. Manness: One can make that statement, yes.

Mr. Plohman: It would be interesting to get these figures in percentage terms rather than in mills. My point is that I guess there is a lot of money there that is raised as a result of provincial taxation that the province does not necessarily get blamed for or credited for.

It is deemed to be local levy and therefore ratepayers tend to look to the local municipality and the local school division and say, well, you guys are taxing us this amount of money when in fact it is because of government policy provincially that they are doing a lot of that. To some extent we just established that 7.29 mills, for example, in addition to the other property tax that is levied as a result of the provincial levy.

* (1520)

I guess I would ask the minister, as a previous Minister of Finance, simply because it was historically done this way, that there be monies separated from the general revenue and school finance board, whether he finds that desirable, or why he has not looked at perhaps combining all sources of provincial revenue in general revenues and then using that to disseminate in a fair and equitable way to school divisions across the province, which would mean greater fairness perhaps in how these dollars are divvied up.

Has the minister studied that at all or considered that option or a change of that nature?

Mr. Manness: The way we are receiving the money, in essence two pots, in support of education, that is not the issue around fairness. Fairness ultimately, as the member knows, that

designated funding as a result of taxation, occurs basically in one area of government. It is the only area the Provincial Auditor has not challenged the setting up of a separate reserve, which does not come, by the way, before this Legislature and that is the Public Schools Finance Board.

I look at my colleague, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) and the former Minister of Natural Resources, who always wanted government to set up in support of Natural Resources expenditures designated funding where the fees that came in, for instance, did not find themselves totally consumed within this big monster called the Treasury, then to find its way never again back into Natural Resources.

I understood the arguments, but for years Provincial Auditors have been forcing governments to consolidate all of their revenues. The one area they have never been successful since the beginning of time, of course, is in the area of education, because there was a belief that if you put forward a levy against property in support of education and it ended up in the big fund, then how did we know for sure it would not end up in some other department?

In this day, of course, it would be in health. Today you would see if it ended up within the Consolidated Revenue Fund, the \$200 million I am talking about, the provincial levies by way of education support levy—

Mr. Plohman: Plus.

Mr. Manness: Slightly plus, not much. Roughly \$200 million, today it would not all come back to education. That is a hard statement to believe, but that is the fact. The member says, well, maybe it should be collapsed into the Consolidated Revenue Fund. I am telling you, it is a designated fund. If it is a designated fund and education wants it to stay designated, it better stay there. That is exactly what Alberta is doing to control it. Now it hits the big pot, and now it is whoever wins the hardest or the greatest at the decision table.

I will tell you, health is not going to lose. If it comes down to health and education, I will tell you where I will bet the farm. It is going to go to health.

So, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that is the reality. The member may say, well, change the accounting, but that is not the issue. The issue is fairness. I mean, we still put it into a formula, and we still try to take into account the ability of school divisions to raise funds by way of local levying and if they are short by way of equalization or supplementary funding. [interjection] That is right.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we can look around at the other models; in the Toronto area, for instance, zero comes from the province. They are all local levy—not a dollar. So there are plenty of models to look at, and I will be interested to hear which of the models the member talks about, but let us not get into a conflict or a belief that because we have two pools of money, that somehow inhibits the greater degree of fairness. That is not the case.

Mr. Plohman: The point is, of course, that we do not get to discuss or consider the \$200 million. We are only talking about the general revenues, the funding that comes from the general revenues. We are not talking about the whole picture. The other thing is, we are not even talking about the other portion at all, of course, even in the Public Schools Finance Board. That is the mills that are levied as a result of government policy, and that is the minimum effort that must be raised locally by school divisions. In fact, the province is actually responsible for much more taxation than is being acknowledged, I guess, in most sources, and that is why I asked the question of the minister in terms of what his views were on consolidating that to present the whole picture.

I guess the concern that the minister raises is a valid one in terms of determining what the priorities are, but it is he that is saying that you would have to choose between Health and Education. I would think that we would be choosing among the 20 or 30 departments of government, and we would be making choices on the basis of priorities, not one priority.

The Minister of Natural Resources knows that he has had to ante up year after year. Of course, things have been that way for many years if you look at the budgets for Natural Resources, and perhaps even in some instances I can speak with

some experience with regard to Highways insofar as where the priorities would sit. But I do not think it has to be the case, and I would strongly argue—I am certainly not making the case that there should be a choice between education and health care in terms of the final dollars allocated. What we have to do is ensure that there is adequate public investment in public education on the basis that it is a priority; and, if the minister wants to turn it into an argument between health care and education, he can do that with someone else. He is not going to find that very rewarding insofar as his discussion here.

I think what I will do is move to some specific school divisions after we have an opportunity for the Liberal critic or whatever the Deputy Chairperson is deciding in terms of who he is recognizing.

I know some of my colleagues have concerns about school divisions in their constituencies. There is some serious concern, as I have outlined, about the way the money has been allocated by way of the formula, the way the cuts have impacted. That is why I have asked the minister to provide us with a copy of those school divisions that received cuts two years in a row, because I believe it has been inequitable in terms of the distribution of funds, as a result of the reassessment and formula that the minister is responsible for. So I know they will have some concerns about how it has impacted in their constituencies, and I hope we have an opportunity to give them time to raise those questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I had a number of questions in this particular area, and I guess a good place to start off is maybe to follow from the Question Period that led into the beginning of the discussions with respect to independent schools.

I know, and I appreciate the minister, in fact, tabling the document based on the percentage increases over the last number of years because it does paint a fairly clear picture, which is not necessarily as consistent.

I did want to spend some time to make comment on this because I think it is important that there are

a significant number of people that are out there watching, and are no doubt going to be reading Hansard to try to find out in terms of where all three political parties are coming from on whole issue of independent funding.

I know at the last couple of meetings that I have been at with the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) that he has been fairly clear in terms of a commitment to 50 percent and the issue should be resolved by going back to court, but I did, in fact, meet with the independent school federation. They are a bit unclear in terms of if that is what—that is not necessarily what they have been telling that particular interest group, if you like. So I think that for those sorts of organizations it is somewhat beneficial for the clarification, because it is indeed needed.

* (1530)

(Mr. Bob Rose, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

I know that in the questions I asked today during Question Period, there was quite a bit of heckling from actually both sides, indicating that there seems to be a bit of a flip-flop on the Liberal Party's position. Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I wanted to take this opportunity to make sure that it is fairly clear in terms of what is in fact going on in independent schools.

I, too, have met with different groups, but I like to believe that I have been fairly consistent, and would like to suggest to the other two political parties, in particular, the New Democratic Party, that they, too, should be consistent.

An Honourable Member: This is today's position. Right, Kevin?

Mr. Lamoureux: This is a very sensitive issue, because I do believe that the New Democrats would like to make this a political issue in the next election, one that is based on classes of individuals. I find that most unfortunate, but in terms of a flip—it was interesting hearing the dialogue that went back and forth between the member for Dauphin and the Minister of Education (Mr. Manness). I will end with a question to the Minister of Education. I do appreciate his being patient with me on this.

Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, if you follow the percentage increases that have been given, the NDP, while in office, sent a very clear message to the independent schools that in fact they were in favour of substantial increases, and we do not know what level they were actually hoping to achieve.

I talked to the independent schools and individuals that had sat down with the New Democrats, and they did not indicate to me that it was 50 percent. They had indicated to me that the NDP have always been committed to independent schools, and if you take a look while they were in office, it is fairly clear that in fact they were committed to independent schools.

Another point that I think has to be emphasized is the New Democrats are also being somewhat inconsistent by making the statement, look, you have the Catholic schools versus the elite schools. The member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohm) and other critics from the New Democratic Party often refer to the Balmoral Hall and St. John's-Ravenscourt, but they never mention St. Mary's or St. Paul's or Western Christian College, and there is a list of other independent schools that are out there. That, I believe, is the primary reason why I say that to them it is a question of class, and they are trying to portray themselves as individuals that are, in fact, supportive of the public school system outside of some of the interest groups that are there.

When I sat down and met, I have been consistent in terms of saying that this whole issue is something that we are looking at. The first priority of the Liberal Party will be to reinforce that the public education system is the No. 1 priority, and we are going to do what is necessary to ensure that is, in fact, portrayed to the public. We have also ensured interested individuals with respect to in the future there will be some very detailed explanations in terms of what the party's position will be. Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I think that is a responsible way of dealing with this particular issue.

I was very interested in the minister's comments in terms of the percentage increases, and I would ask the minister if he could provide the same

percentage increases for the same period of time in the public school sector.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, we will undertake to provide that information.

Mr. Lamoureux: I did not want to spend too much time in terms of the independent schools other than just to get that onto the record.

I do want to move on to the whole education funding formula, and I listened fairly closely with what was being said about the whole funding formula. I know at one point in time, at least it was indicated to me, that the current minister, I believe, when he was in opposition, had made a commitment that that particular opposition party at the time was in favour of seeing increased general revenues towards the financing of education. I would ask the Minister of Education if that was the case.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, we are going back now nine or 10 years, and at that time when revenues to government were growing at the rate of in one year 20 percent, in '84-85, and the condition—

An Honourable Member: How come you did not mention that when you talked about the private schools?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, we are talking about '84-85. The big increase to independent schools was in '88 when already there was beginning to be a slowdown in revenue growth.

An Honourable Member: In '88 there was a slowdown in revenue?

Mr. Manness: In '88, yes. We had it in '89 coming from the 2 percent tax on—[interjection] Right. At that time, with the condition being that revenues to government grow, at a minimum 5 percent to 8 percent, the government of the day sensed that 80 percent support could be provided. Now that was no different than when our former Minister of Education Mr. Cosens, in the last year of the Lyon government, changed around the formula and fused, I think, \$50 million or \$80 million to once again take the level of provincial

support to a pure 80 percent. That number then began to slide through the Pawley years.

We have found ourselves in a situation where, given that revenues to government are no longer double-digit but for the most part are in the area of 2 percent or 3 percent, we have had no alternative but to hold the level of funding at the level that we inherited, and there has been some slippage from there, as far as taking money out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

Yet, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I say for the record that we have still put into public schools over the last seven budgets an additional—well, using last year's base—\$130 million. That is an extraordinarily large amount of money. Just like we have put \$500 million, a half a billion dollars, more into Health over the course of seven budgets, we have put \$175 million into Education. So nobody has to tell me about priority setting and the impact on the other departments, because of course their share of the total revenue pie has decreased some 10 percent.

But back to the question, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson. I think the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is trying to say, well, what is the target? Well, the target of course is to provide more, but it can only be provided if indeed there are additional revenues to government. We have sensed the only way today that we can bring in additional revenues to government in a significant way is to increase the tax load, the individual personal tax load, on Manitobans. This is where we disagree so much with the Liberals and the NDP. We have sensed that it is unfair to brutalize your taxpayers by going and asking them to pay more. That is why, of course, members in opposition have voted against us in seven budgets, because they voted against our freezing individual tax rates, personal income tax rates.

So, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I know it has been a long circuitous argument, but the result is we still have committed over \$100 million more to public school education—happy to do so—and will continue to try to provide a fair share in the years to come.

* (1540)

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I take it then, in the minister's answer, that he did in fact make a commitment to the 80 percent, even though he brings up a caveat of 5 percent increases in general revenues, I believe. But the concept is still there, and that is that the general revenues, I believe, is a much more progressive way of collecting taxes than to have levying against property taxes, whether it is the provincial government levying the property tax or the local school councils levying the property tax. What we have seen—[interjection] The member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) says, they are all forms of taxation. I would like to think that he too would acknowledge that one is much more progressive than the other ones.

But, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the point that I am trying to get at is that over the years we have seen a shift from general revenues, the reliance of funding education from general revenues—the reliance of funding education from general revenues being shifted over to property tax. The Minister of Education (Mr. Manness) has consistently said, and he has been the author of six of the budgets that have been brought down, that this is about fair taxation, that they are fair. They might be implementing cuts, but at least they are fair.

I do not see the shifting of reliance onto property tax from general revenue as something that is fair or appropriate. I would ask the Minister of Education whether he feels that the taxing of property is a more equitable way of taxing or collecting revenues for funding education.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, obviously not. That is why, since we have been in government, we virtually, on the provincial levy, have frozen that over seven budgets. There has been a slight increase over the period. We have not significantly taken total dollars off property, have increased, and as a matter of fact, we have probably decreased the take from local levy as a province.

So conceptually he is right. In policy, we agree with that. As a matter of fact, we removed education tax from bare farmland about four years

ago. What the member has to bear in mind is that still the percent of the total education budget that is supported by the provincial purse as a percent, straight percent, has not changed. It is still in the realm of mid-range 50 percent.

So the question being when the member says, well, you should not be taking more from property, he should be then more specific in his charge when he talks about fairness. Is fairness then in terms of absolute numbers or is fairness in terms of percentage? Because, of course, if we are going to maintain our percent of roughly—and it is an arguable point—around 70 percent, and yes, we would like to ultimately go to 80 percent, but indeed if the pie is growing and indeed the contribution is growing by a hundred-some million dollars in our case, then obviously, if the local school division, the local ratepayer is going to pick up 20 percent or 30 percent, then I say that number of a growing expenditure, that number is obviously going to increase in absolute terms. It is going to increase.

So the member is going to have to tell us where he stands. Does he mean by 20 or 30 percent even though that means more and more from year to year as expenditures increase, or do you like to see the absolute amount on the property tax frozen, the absolute dollars that a roll or a reference number was on the property roll?

So, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the member can talk about—[interjection] Some member from the side says, a small percent. Well, I do not know what he is talking about. Let us talk either percentages or absolutes, because when you are getting down into this sensitive area there certainly is a vast difference.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, let us deal with the percentages. It is fairly clear in terms of what it is I am saying, that we need to see direction from this government to move more toward a reliance on general revenues in financing education and over the last decade it has been the opposite.

If you take a look, using the minister's own numbers that he gave a half hour, three-quarters of an hour ago, with respect to the reliance on

property tax, in his answer that he gave just now he tries to leave the impression there really has not been any increase from the province on the provincial levy in terms of percentage.

But let us look in terms of the school division levy. The figures he gave, and he can correct me if I am wrong, was in '82-83, the reliance for the school division was at 19 percent. In '94-95, and he did not really say the year, I am assuming it was '94-95—

An Honourable Member: '92-93.

Mr. Lamoureux: In '92-93, it was actually 27 percent, a complete reversal from what it was previously. I would interpret that as a form of offloading. The same sort of opposition that the government says whenever the federal government does something.

The local authority, if you will, is the one that then has the responsibility because of the government's actions to be able to provide a quality of education that they have been requested to give to increase their local levies. Again, if you look at that in the spectre of a 10-year time period or a bit better than 10 years, because I did bring up the copy that MTS actually had circulated, and I am sure the minister has read it. It makes reference to the myth of No. 2, if you like, provincial funding for public education has remained high because education has been a priority of the Manitoba government.

I think, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, that the minister would have a very hard time refuting that particular statement. Then it goes into reality by saying, operating funds from the Manitoba government have steadily fallen from 82 percent of the actual yearly costs of public school programs and services in 1981, to only 66 percent in '93-94.

After listening to the Minister of Education and the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) in their questions and answers, one might question some of the numbers that have been presented. I would seek to try to get some clarification on it, which I will bring up with the Manitoba Teachers' Society, because I noted that in 1982, the minister indicated that 54 percent came from general revenue, 27 percent was the provincial levy, which brought it

up to 82 percent. That is what the Minister of Education was saying for 1982. According to this graph provided by MTS, they said 78.2 percent for 1982. It is off, that is considerable. From 82 percent to 78.2 percent, that is a considerable difference. I believe that there is a need to seek some clarification on that particular issue.

It portrays 1981 funding at 82.4 percent. This is all from general revenues, and we will assume that they are taking into account the provincial levy on the property tax.

An Honourable Member: No. They are not. You cannot assume away 20 percent.

Mr. Lamoureux: In 1981, they are saying that the province facilitated 82.4 percent of education funding?

An Honourable Member: Right.

Mr. Lamoureux: Would that not include the general and the provincial property levy?

An Honourable Member: There is very little levy on them.

Mr. Lamoureux: Very little, but it still includes it? [interjection] Okay, it still includes it.

* (1550)

So they are saying, from 82.4 percent, 1981; 1982 to 78.2 percent; to 77.8 percent to 74.7 percent, 74.3 percent, 72.5 percent, 71.7 percent, 71 percent, 69.9 percent, 69.2 percent, 68.4 percent, 67.8 percent, and in 1993-1994, 66.1 percent.

Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, what that clearly demonstrates in their graph is that there is a significant decrease of monies coming from general revenues in favour of the school divisions having to increase the level of property tax, which points out a number of problems, two of which I take great exception to.

One is the fact that the property tax is a much more regressive tax than a personal income tax. The second one is that some school divisions, because the school divisions themselves have a limited base, to a certain degree some have a significant advantage over others. The socio-economic demographics of some school divisions will dictate some of the services that they have to

provide. So there are many natural inequities that are there to justify that what the government, not only the current government but the previous New Democratic administration, the direction that they have been taking, the whole funding of education in the province of Manitoba has been backward, that it is moving in the wrong direction.

Now I am not going to say that the actual percentages, as presented to me from the Manitoba Teachers' Society, are a hundred percent accurate, but I would ask the Minister of Education if he can clarify for the committee, just how accurate is this? Have we, over the last decade, seen a continuous shifting of responsibility for funding away from general revenues and onto the property tax? Has that been consistent?

Mr. Manness: Absolutely not. **Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson,** what is in dispute here is whether or not the ratepayer wants to pay all the funding, all the levels of taxation to the province and/or the local school division directly by way of local levy.

I am saying to the member, will the ratepayer feel better if all of a sudden we take away the movement of the money by way of the ratepayer paying the municipality, the municipality paying the provincial Treasury, the Public Schools Finance Board, in other words, adding to the provincial levy, and the province then being able to stand up and boast, we are now back to 80 percent from two sources, the Consolidated Revenue Fund and from the property?

Will the property ratepayer feel better? My answer is no. What difference does it make, because today, the ratepayer, as a percent of the education bill, pays exactly the same—as a percent of the education bill. That does not mean that the impact on his property or her property is not going up, because 30 percent of 200 is still twice as much as 30 percent of 100. That is why we are talking percentages.

So does the ratepayer feel better if all the money comes to provincial Treasury and then goes out to the school division, when the actual cost on the piece of property keeps going up year after year? Do they feel better? Not a bit. Who feels better in that situation? Well, the local trustees, because

they can say, well, it is not my cost. The provincial government levied it. So when the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) says the Liberals will do it differently, that they want it off property, fair, that is a different issue. That is a much different issue than I have been talking about, that he has been talking about.

What the Liberal Education critic is saying then, he wants that \$200 million that we raise by way of education support levy, the provincial levy, to do away with it. Of course, we will remind the voters where the Liberals stand on this, that they want an increase in the sales tax rate of 2.1 percent. They want to take it from 7 percent to 9.1 percent, or they want an increase of 10 points in the provincial income tax levy. Right now, it is 52 percent of the basic federal tax, and they then would want that increased by 20 percent to 62 points of the federal basic income tax payable. We will remind the citizens of that, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, or we can go through all of the other tax sources, because indeed we only have those tax sources.

So I would suggest to the Liberals—[interjection] Well, of course, it would double. It would double the rate of taxes, of levy. It would take the price of—[interjection] That is right, and tobacco tax. Of course, we know where the Liberals stand on that. So then we would have to turn to motive fuel tax, or not motive fuel tax, but gasoline tax, and we would jump very quickly. I think we have a levy in place today of 11 or 12 cents a litre, and you would double that over—no, you would have to more than double that overnight. These are the sources that you turn to. So maybe the Liberals are going to do that and say that this is the way they are going to do it; if they do not, we will.

But the bigger issue—and it is something the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) said. I can make an argument that when you start to compare '82-83 with '92-93, that right today, we are providing 80 percent of funding—today. The argument is no different than the federal government uses with the provinces when we talk about equalization and backing out in tax points—absolutely no difference.

What the federal government did—at one time, we had a provincial tax rate I think of somewhere around 40 points, 40 as a percent of federal payable tax. Then they let us jump to 50 percent, but they have never let us forget that they allowed us to move into that tax area.

I can make the same argument with the school divisions. We have held back our provincial tax and let them move in. [interjection] Well, I can make the argument, because the first chunk of the local levy is what we allowed them to move into.

An Honourable Member: You required it.

Mr. Manness: We require it. Same argument, and we are not quite—we are at 80 percent exactly. So when the member comes up and reading—I believe that came from the Teachers' Society—arguments, you can argue it either way, but the reality is today that, as a share of the consolidated revenue, what we are voting on today, 54 percent, is no different than it was 10 years ago. That is the issue here.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the Minister of Education says that currently it is 80 percent that we finance education, and I want to make sure that is clear in terms of what he is saying. I know what he is attempting to say is that by legislation he is telling the school divisions that they have to charge this amount in terms of a mill rate. That is mandated. He is saying that the provincial government is financing 80 percent today?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, through direct funding including equalization—and this is the key—and for backing out of local levy and backing out of provincial levy, allowing local levy to replace us, I can make the argument strongly that we are providing 80 percent of the funding. No differently than the federal government can argue and has argued, and because they hold the hammer most successfully, that when they backed out of income tax and allowed the provinces to increase their level of income tax, in essence they still should have the benefit.

* (1600)

I guess what I am saying is, we now then could levy that 7.29 uniform mill rate across all the

divisions; we could do it, haul that money out into the provincial government. The local levy then would drop like that, and we could boastfully claim that we are providing 80 percent of the funding. Is the ratepayer locally any better off? Definitely not. He is paying the same bill. Who is better off? The trustees. The trustees will say, well, it is not us that you should turn to if you have got a concern about property tax; it is the provincial government.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the Minister of Education says, look, if we took that 7 percent—

Mr. Manness: No, 7.29 mill.

Mr. Lamoureux: —or 7.29 mills and we accounted that as monies that we have raised. Well, the Department of Education forces a number of different things to all the different school divisions, but the individuals that are held accountable for that money that is being collected, including that 7.2 mill rate, are, in fact, the school boards. Under the property tax line, it will say that it is the school trustees that are doing the increases. From 1982-83, one could say from 19 percent to '92-93 of 27 percent because of the offloading, and that is what it is, offloading of the Department of Education. It is the school trustees that are now collecting the tax, not the province.

When an individual taxpayer looks at the property tax bill, he says, well, look I have this amount coming from my city taxes or municipal taxes; I have this amount coming from my school taxes; and I have the provincial levy of this amount. Sure the provincial levy might be maintained in real dollar terms and actually going down in percentage terms, but it is the school boards that are, in fact, having the constant increases. They are having those constant increases because of the funding decisions of this government.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the honourable member has got it confused again. What he is saying is you are not giving additional additional money. I said we still are supporting 54 percent, no different today than ten years ago, of the larger pie. If you want to move from percent to

absolute dollars, we have put in \$130 million more.

So the school board does not collect a dollar. The municipalities collect the dollars, as the member knows, but we cause to have collected today in support of public school education 80 percent of the fee. What do we do with this 7.29 mill uniformly? Well, we force the equal distribution through equalization, the sharing. We take from the rich and we give to the poor. It is called equalization.

So what the member says is then, why do you not do it totally, bring it all into the province? Bring it all in and remove it from the authority of the school divisions. But I want to point out this model we have, where did it come from? Did we develop it in isolation? No, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, we did it in concert with representatives of the trustees, with representatives of all of the educational groups, with the superintendents, and the reason it was developed this way was to allow the greater flexibility with the local area.

You know what has gone wrong, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson? Basically, you have school expenditures at the local level that outstripped the increase in revenue to the province, that outstripped, in many cases, inflation, outstripped inflation, and rather than face up to that, what local boards have done, in most cases, not all, they have turned to the local ratepayer as they wanted to have the right to do. I have given all the numbers with respect to our level of increase, outstripping inflation even during hard times, even during a tight-fisted government time.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I had read over—the Manitoba Teachers' Society also had a presentation to the Boundaries Review Commission, and in that particular presentation I wanted to quote one thing that they had on page 3, and they talked about this: Taxpayer equity depends on a standard and accurate assessment of all classifications of property throughout Manitoba, and property ratepayers being asked to make a similar effort toward the contribution of revenue for public

schools. Equity among taxpayers is best served when taxation is uniformly levied by the provincial government. When taxes are paid not by residents of any one school division but by all ratepayers within the province to support all public schools.

I would ask the minister if he agrees with that statement.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, what I read into that statement is that the Teachers' Society is saying that there should be no availability or no opportunity for local levying, and that indeed all of the taxes, all of the levies against property would be done provincially, one rate across the province, and all brought then into a common pot and redistributed.

I take it the essence of that statement means that local divisions should no longer have the local authority to tax. If there is going to be one provincial rate across all ratepayers, how else can it be other than building upon the model that is now in place, but increasing it significantly and allowing no variation as between local school divisions.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would highlight, I guess, maybe the operative words of being best served.

I would ask the Minister of Education what is being suggested here, and if one does not say, well, 100 percent, maybe there is a better percentage. What would the Minister of Education—what sort of a percentage does he believe that the provincial levy should actually cover, or is that the right direction? Should we continue to move downwards and have more reliance on the school divisions?

Mr. Manness: Under the present regime of revenues coming to government, where we are at right now is the perfect place.

Mr. Lamoureux: What about the direction? Are we going in the right direction in terms of provincial levy?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am referring specifically to the reliance on again more on the property tax, and just talking strictly within the

property tax. I do not want to confuse it. Just strictly within the property tax. There is more reliance on the school divisions raising the local levy as opposed to the provincial. Is that the right direction, and is that the direction we are going to see this government continue into the future?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there are two forces at work here. You have a case where for the provincial government, one of the basic planks of its framework for economic growth and wealth is that taxes will be kept down. That is across the board. That is the answer. So, when the member says, well, will you assume, as a province, will you take on the levying of greater taxes against property to allow relief for the local division, I am saying, well, listen, with autonomy and making local decisions and the right to tax comes a responsibility, you cannot have it both ways. Now the Liberals want it both ways.

He wants the local divisions to remain autonomous, have this right to tax, yet sort of hold the tax level. At the same time, though, he wants the province to be forced to increase the taxes on property. We have said—and the members have voted against us for seven straight budgets: No, we will do everything within our powers to hold down the tax levels, not only the personal income tax, not only sales tax, but also levies on property tax. Everything we can, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

We have been consistent in that other than the respect that we took away some of the rebate last year. We have been totally consistent, but when school divisions locally say that they still want have autonomy and maintain the right to levy locally for the purposes of program, with that comes incredible responsibility. They, then, have to make the decisions accordingly.

All we know as a province is basically two things: 54 percent comes out of consolidated revenue; and the total amount paid by the ratepayer across the province is no different today than it was 10 years ago. No, I am sorry. I will be distinct. When I say the total amount, in absolute terms, it is higher, in terms of percentages, it is the same.

* (1610)

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in 1982-83, the provincial levy was 27 percent. In 1992-93, it is 19 percent. Are we going to continue to see that trend with this particular administration?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that is in percentage terms. We still are expecting the ratepayers—in absolute terms, they are still paying more today on provincial levy than they were 10 years ago. The decision as to whether or not that continues to fall is purely held in two other centres: It is the vote that we do here with respect to the money coming out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund; and also how much, locally, decisions are made, reflected directly onto the ratepayers outside of the discussions that happen here.

The member seems to say, well, it is the only choice they have, once they find out how much funding you will give. I am saying no, they are equal partners; they are equal taxation partners. So to the extent that local levy increases and provincial support out of the consolidated revenue—the 54 percent I am talking about—remains fixed, then that number will continue to shrink. To the extent that local levy begins to decrease, local levy meaning a local levy by the school board begins to decrease, our share on the provincial side will increase.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I take it in the answer the minister then is saying that he is not prepared to give a commitment either way in terms of the actual percentage, whether it is going to continue to decrease or if in fact he is going to reverse the trend that has been happening since 1982.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am powerless to make the commitment because it is a variable. It depends on what the local school does. If the local school spends more, the amount that we are looking at will decrease. If the local school division spends less, then the level that we are providing by way of our share of the property tax will increase.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am not going to suggest to the minister that he put in a cap, but he has put in a cap in the past, and it would

be interesting to see actually if there was any variation for the last two years.

I would like to get a response from the Minister of Education with respect to an issue that I have brought up in my constituency dealing with this particular issue. I had sent out some cards, and I had tabled these cards to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) a month ago. I believe it was just over 750 cards. Each card represents a household, and I represent approximately 7,450 homes.

The card reads as follows: Dear Mr. Filmon: I—and it has a name; in many cases, it is a couple names, but from a household—believe you and your government should reform the way in which the school portion of property tax is being collected. Even though there may be different services in Winnipeg School Division No. 1, it does not justify the difference in property tax I have to pay over everyone else in the city.

Now, I have had petitions also, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, trying—[interjection] Well, the Premier has got over 750 of them.

Point of Order

Mr. Plohman: The member for Inkster has read from a document, from a card, and it is tradition that that must be tabled for the committee.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member did not have a point of order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would be more than happy to table this particular card, as long as it gets to the Premier, because I did make a commitment to ensuring that all the cards I did collect would go to the Premier.

Mr. Plohman: I would like to inform the member that we will photocopy it and get him his copy back.

Mr. Lamoureux: Okay. But, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am sure that even members of the New Democratic Party who have north end ridings, if they consult their constituents, will find that the support for the government of the day to take some form of action on—[interjection] I appreciate the member for Dauphin's vote of

confidence in dealing with this particular issue. I would just like to see his party take some form of action that would substantiate some of the talk that they make.

But, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I digress somewhat. To the individual constituents whom I represent, and I believe a vast majority of Manitobans would be onside, what is the minister doing to ensure that the taxation that is in fact being levied to finance Education is more fair and more progressive?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, again, we are talking about huge sums of money. If we remove the total property tax in support of education, the \$200 million that we collect plus the \$310 million—if we remove \$510 million from the property taxpayer, not just the 200 I was talking about earlier, 510 now, this is what it means. It means you take the sales tax rate from the 7 percent it is at now and you move it to 12.4.

You see, that is the dishonesty inherent with politicians who say, well, we will do this and that. They never give the option. They never say to the householder, but do you know, sir, or do you know, madam, that what you are advocating is to increase the sales tax to 12.4 percent? Are you prepared to do it? Because when I have done that, all of a sudden, the homeowner says, well, gee, that is quite an impact—or to increase the personal income tax rate from 52 percent of the federal to 79 percent. That then will raise the \$510 million that the member wants to take off of property.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we are talking about huge amounts of money, and it is so easy to glibly throw out, well, let us take it off of property and make it a responsibility of the public purse. The individual is going to pay for it one way or the other. I guess what the Liberals are saying now, and we will begin to use this, we will begin to use it, that the Liberals will want to see an increase in this one area alone, will want to see the personal income tax rate move from 52 percent of basic federal tax to 79 percent. That is now a way we are going to target the Liberals as their policy in support of education finance reform.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I guess, ultimately, the Minister of Education can say whatever he wants in terms of what he believes the Liberal Party's position is, and until the Liberal Party says what its position is, much like the government or the New Democrats say, I do not believe the public is going to listen. I do believe the public will recognize, as the many constituents that I represent, that this government in 1982 collected 27 percent from the provincial levy which was applied through all of the local ratepayers. That was then reduced to 19 percent.

The difference was picked up from the school boards, the school levies. It went from 19 percent to 27 percent.

An Honourable Member: The ratepayer paid the same.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that is just it. You cannot say they are paying the same for the simple reason that it depends on what school division you live in which will quite often dictate. For example, Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has many other programs that are necessitated as a direct result of actions that are taken from government or lack of actions taken from government, and I will go on to that after I pose my final question with respect to the graph.

There are huge discrepancies that are out there, and the only way in which this thing could be handled in a fairer way—and we are not saying that you have to increase personal income tax or provincial sales tax—is that the provincial government has to take a stronger role in paying for education in the province of Manitoba.

* (1620)

What they have been doing is they have been consistently offloading it. The percentages that were pointed out in MTS' newsletter might not be accurate according to the Minister of Education and the comments made by the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), but, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do believe—

Mr. Plohman: I did not say they were not accurate. Do not put words in my mouth.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, okay, I will withdraw the member for Dauphin saying it, but I am sure MTS will read what the member for Dauphin actually pointed out. But, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it is fairly clear that there is in fact more of a reliance on the school divisions, which is a form of offloading, and the minister can say whatever it is that he wants but he is not fooling the thousands of teachers and the professionals that are out there, the school trustees, and I believe the parents that are out there.

I would end this particular area by asking the Minister of Education if in fact he can provide for me the actual percentage or to respond specifically to what I had put on the record earlier of the newsletter that MTS circulated, and I would ask that he include the provincial levy and the general revenue portion of contribution from the Department of Education. Not the mandated 7.2 mill rate that the province has said to the school division that they have to collect as a minimum. Would he take that on and provide me that detail?

Mr. Manness: Sir, I do not know what the member is asking for. He is all over the map here. Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not know whether we could have had a clearer discussion of ed finance in such a short period of time.

I will not let the record show for one second that there has been any greater percentage impact on the ratepayer. Today the ratepayer, as a percent of the total cost of public school education, pays the same as they did 10 years ago. Nothing has changed. The absolute amount. Just like the provincial government has thrown a hundred-and-some million dollars more, has had no impact on our share of the total amount. Even though we have put \$130 million more since we have come to government the amount we are funding, as a percent, has not increased. It is 54 percent.

See, the member, of course, conveniently tries to confuse the ratepayer from the school board. They are not the same. The school board does not pay taxes. The school board levies taxes. The ratepayer and the taxpayer pay all the taxes, and the ratepayer today as a percent of the total bill pays no more or no less than they did before. The local

school division, because they have decided in many cases to increase expenditures and not curtail expenditures, are having to levy a greater percent on that ratepayer, and the more they increase the levy the greater their share is of the total responsibility for collecting and, therefore, causing a diminishing share in the provincial levy against property.

Is the property taxpayer paying more today? Yes, he is. But are all the taxpayers who contribute to the consolidated revenue of the province paying more today collectively? Yes, they are. Slightly more, and that money, of course, is going into education.

So, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the member wants to try and make it a black and white issue. He is going to be the salvation. He is going to be the protector of the property ratepayer, but little does he state that really all he will be doing is forcing that same ratepayer now through their taxes, their income tax, their sales tax, all the consumption taxes, to pay this very same amount of money. He is going to get it from another source.

So, if he is the Minister of Finance some day in Manitoba—heaven help us—what he will be doing, of course, is increasing significantly the consumption taxes and/or the personal income tax across the board. If he does not do that, then he will edict that school divisions will not increase their expenditure, will reduce their expenditures, by maybe what? A Bill 22. Mr. Deputy Chairperson, is he going to take on the teachers because indeed they consume 80 percent? The Liberals of Atlantic Canada, they understand the basic arithmetic here. There is nothing terribly complicated—

An Honourable Member: Teachers do not make 80 percent.

Mr. Manness: No, no, I did not say they made 80 percent. I am saying—I will correct it. For all employees of school divisions, the wage bill, in other words, is 80 percent.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am not going to let the Liberals off the hook here. They are going to try and reach out and be on all sides of this issue, but they had better realize that when they talk about a significant change, the people whom they

are going to hit are the very same people that are paying the tax in a different form today.

If the member says, well, no, really I care about the school division now, then he is an advocate basically of the local authorities who do not want to collect locally, want to have the services; they do not want to collect locally, but have the province pick up the bill.

So what we are talking about here is the hot shell of taxation, and ultimately who holds it. But this government has been consistent in holding down, through seven budgets, the levy against individuals on property and also consumption tax level and income tax level. The consistency lies with this government.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the government provides funding for special needs II and III, and they will set—and I, but that is based on a percentage, if you like. If you take that particular funding and the actual cost of providing for the special needs, there is a substantial difference in cost.

As a result, Winnipeg School Division No. 1 and some other school divisions have an additional requirement for taxation. What has happened in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 is that, yes, there are some different services, but there are some essential services, some of which the Province of Manitoba mandates, which then dictates to a school division that they have to raise additional dollars.

Let me give a bit of a specific. In Winnipeg School Division No. 1, an individual who has an assessed valued home at \$98,000 to \$100,000 could pay up to \$320 more than someone in the same assessed value of a home that lives in another area of the city of Winnipeg.

Now, the minister will justify that by saying, well, it is the local school board, but, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, many of the programs that are being provided from the school board and the additional costs that are being incurred are because of the student population and because of some of the offloading that the province is doing. The more that you rely, as this government has been doing, on the local school divisions to be able to raise the

property tax, the more unfair the taxation collection, whether it is on the property tax, as in this particular case, is going to be. That is, in fact, what the Minister of Education is doing, and he is substantiating his argument by saying it is okay. We can shift it, if we want, from 27 in '82 to 19 in '92-93 to what, 14, 13 two, three years from now, and that is going to be justified because the ratepayer, after all, is going to be paying the same. Well, that is not true.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we have been through this exactly two weeks ago. Yes, we talked about the special needs support. I do not know if the member was here. At that time, I indicated that my predecessor, the member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach), brought in the new formula and shortly thereafter boosted up the base of support for special needs funding from \$67-68 million to \$91 million—at this point, \$95 million. Winnipeg School Division No. 1, I believe, from memory, consumed one-sixth of that. There was another fund of \$10 million where they had 60 percent of the funding, taking into account the arguments made by the member.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there will never be enough money for special needs students. There will never be enough. So, when school divisions decide how it is they want to reach out in support of special needs students, and if they decide that they want to provide services beyond what the province is prepared to provide equally, uniformly across the province, and they make the decisions within their free will to do so and to accordingly tax, that is a decision made locally. If we were to try and curtail that decision, I can tell you, hell would rain down because the very essence of local autonomy is that you can make those decisions and levy accordingly.

* (1630)

So the member says he has constituents who are on one side in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 and some that are not. Well, by virtue of the fact where they live, they have decided to be in a school district which is providing these services and levying locally. Because of that, they are paying higher taxes. Not because of anything we

have done or no shortage of funding. It is so easy to say, well, if we had more provincial funding, then it would not happen. That is an easy. That is like falling off a log. It does not take any great wisdom to make that statement.

Of course, the other constituents of the member here who are on the other line, probably in the Seven Oaks School Division—[interjection] All of Winnipeg No. 1, and where of course they have decided for whatever reason not to provide the services and have not gone to the local levy, well, that is the difference. That is the freedom in this country. You have a freedom of choice when you decide to live in one place versus another.

My goodness, you have a freedom of choice deciding whether you want to live in Ontario versus Manitoba, Manitoba versus British Columbia. That is the essence of choice. Indeed, when you decide to build or buy a home in the city of Winnipeg, one of the other choices is you can either build and locate in this school division as compared to this school division, and with that go consequences. Pure choice, nothing more, but the greatest choice is left with the local school division as to what level of services they want to provide beyond that which the province is willing to support. That is a free decision made locally.

I do not know why the member, the Liberal Education critic, would fight that unless he, of course, is for the provincial government to take back all the powers, disband local school boards, and now all of a sudden put the great heavy hand of equalization, in this case, provincial equalization in its fullest definition, across all the students, all the ratepayers of the province. We could do that. That is what happens in the Yukon, and some moves by other provincial governments, Liberal and the cousins of the members opposite in Atlantic Canada, are happening. I will tell you, there are voices in the Teachers' Society who would strongly support that so that there would be uniformity across the day. So then when Bill 22 impacts one school division differently than another, we would not have to listen to those arguments: one policy in place for all.

So, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I give advice. It is free advice, so maybe that is what it is worth to the member. He had better have an understanding on whose side he is on because he cannot be on all the sides of this issue. We will not allow him to. He has to pick one side and stand with it.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it becomes clear in terms of the side that the Minister of Education (Mr. Manness) is on, and I am not on that side, I can assure him of that. That is a continual decrease of the provincial levy or the continual support of the school levy increasing while at the same time the provincial levy decreasing.

Mr. Manness: Decreasing support of an increased levy. What kind of nonsense?

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not how many times I have read it into the record. The minister has stated that the provincial levy has dropped from 27 to 19; the school levy has increased from 19 to 27. The minister is saying that he does not see any problem with that and that will continue, and the reason why is because of local autonomy. That is fine. That is what the minister is saying.

I believe that the minister is wrong. I believe that most Manitobans would look at this and argue that the minister is wrong. He made reference to special needs again himself, and said, for example, that \$95 million was being used for special needs, but he does not point out that that includes special needs II and III. I should say that he said \$95 million for special needs, of which Winnipeg No. 1 is receiving one-sixth. He does not point out that the special needs II and III are higher percentages in fact in Winnipeg School Division No. 1, and the balance is with the formula for special needs I.

The additional \$10 million that the Minister of Education (Mr. Manness) just made reference to is for learning disabilities. At least, that is what he had indicated earlier, or two weeks ago, when we had that particular discussion, which was entirely different, as the minister himself had pointed out. There are, in fact, different services that are required that are mandated from the Department of Education that the school divisions have to have in

place. Special needs is one of those things that is mandated.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the MTS in the statement that they made said: Equity among taxpayers is best served when taxation is uniformly levied by the provincial government, when taxes are paid not by residents of any one school division, but by all ratepayers within the province to support all public schools. Well, I am not saying that we have to move 100 percent to provincial tax levy or to provincial general revenues. I do not believe that it is something that the Manitoba Teachers' Society is necessarily saying, but I am not going to interpret. The next time the minister meets with that particular association, maybe he should be bringing that particular issue up, but I believe that the MTS has brought a valid concern that I have attempted to bring up with the Minister of Education, who fails to recognize that it is not fair, that there are some inequities that are there.

An Honourable Member: Where?

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, I have talked about it, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. I do not know, I would suggest the Minister of Education maybe go to a more unbiased group, such as the Manitoba Teachers' Society or MAST. My understanding of MAST was that they, too, would like to see more of a reliance on the funding of education taken on by the Province of Manitoba and less on the school divisions. So, if the minister were actually having a dialogue, as opposed to just listening to the different groups that he is meeting with, and he had some dialogue, maybe then he would start to find out that there are some things that are not acceptable. The government's current course is not acceptable.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, because I do want to move on to, as I pointed out earlier, some questions that were raised with respect to Question Period, I would ask the minister once again, because he was very unclear in terms of what it is that I was requesting, all I am requesting from the Minister of Education at this point is—he has the graph. If he does not, I will hand this over to him. All I want is how the province would respond to that by putting numbers right above it. In other words, in 1981,

this particular report says 82.4—how much was it? The minister can put in those percentages. I would like the accurate figures because the Minister of Education says it is wrong, and I think it is legitimate. I hope the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) is not making light of it.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, how can I disagree with the presentation? It came right out of the Frame Report. We collect all those numbers. I cannot disagree with the presentation. I am saying, once we factor in the equalization portion by the forced mill rate—in other words, the taxation room that we have given up—I will start at a plateau of 82 percent and, using my methodology, I will come across that graph more or less horizontally flat, and nothing will have changed over the course of the year.

* (1640)

So we will do the numbers using our methodology. We will go to the same base of numbers as Frame. We will go to the same source per this discussion that we have had, and we will give the member our numbers under our methodology.

Then I do not know what he is going to do with them, but I can tell you one thing, when he reads me that printed version what he is saying is that the province, drawing money out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, should take more than 54 percent of the funding. That is what that statement is saying.

What the Liberals are saying now is that the provincial purse should find money, either increase the deficit significantly or, secondly, increase taxes significantly in greater support of public school education or else cut Health; in other words, transfer money over from the Department of Health.

I am not going to let the member get away, at least on the record, without saying where he is going to get the additional funding from in the Consolidated Revenue Fund, because, you know, he can dream all night, but, believe me, there is no way of getting away from bringing forward additional money unless you levy additional taxes somewhere. So he cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, not wanting to have it both ways, we can make it very clear that the Liberal Party has made a commitment to increase the reliance of funding public education through general revenues. That is very clear.

An Honourable Member: What is the source?

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I would suggest to the minister who begs for the source to ask himself, when he made the commitment to increasing general revenues, where was the source that he was committed to? [interjection]

Well, when the Minister of Education was in opposition, he said that we were going to increase it. [interjection] I do not want to borrow a Tory promise, but I do believe that you will see a commitment to increase general revenues under a Liberal administration.

An Honourable Member: What are you going to tax?

Mr. Lamoureux: The minister and the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohma) can say, what are you going to tax; where are you going to get it from?—and so forth. Well, in good time, they will know where the money is going to be coming from, because I believe Manitobans do have a right to know, and they will see that. But at least we are making a commitment that will be in fact fulfilled because it is the right thing to do, and that is to have a heavier reliance on the general revenues for financing of education.

But, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I wanted to move on to what the Leader of the Liberal Party had brought up during Question Period, and that was the special needs funding that was being given to independent schools. I am wondering if the Minister of Education might want to expand on that first before I comment.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am here to answer questions. I can talk for half an hour about this issue, but I do not know whether I would lend any more to the record than I have already put on in response to the questions in the House today and indeed other questions dealing with this issue.

Mr. Lamoureux: Let me ask the minister then, the 5 percent which all independent schools are given based on the percentage for special needs I, because the students do not have to be identified, the funding that is given to those in the school—some independent schools have a screening process that could and, I believe, in some cases, do eliminate the possibility of having special needs students attend that school. I am wondering if the Minister of Education could tell me if in fact it is fair or appropriate to give special needs funding on a percentage formula to schools that do not even accept individuals with special needs.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the principle that we used at work here—this is a block grant, so to speak, and we provided it for three reasons. Firstly, there was an historical—I am not even talking about the Constitutional historical problem—but when we entered into the agreement, there were some changes made in funding that had severe negative consequences to the independent schools. We tried to take that into account. Secondly, we became growingly aware that there is a growing number of special needs students who are finding their way into independent schools.

Thirdly, we are also well aware that even within the public school system, providing the general grant that we do, there are some school divisions, public school divisions, who do exceedingly well under Level I grant funding. It just happens to be that the set of circumstances, the population representative at that time is more beneficial to some divisions than others, but that changes and the next five- or six-year cycle could be exactly the reverse from division to division. There is no perfect science, and as perfect as we can get, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, is to start to set up an army and go into the schools and start to grade 200,000 students.

An Honourable Member: You would not need an army for that.

Mr. Manness: Yes, we would. We would need sufficient resources. I am talking now not only about the independent schools. I am talking about the public schools because there are some school

divisions that are held back because of the formula, some are supported around the margin. So taking that into account, those three factors, we realized it was time to make the policy with respect to Level I support similar as between the independent school system and the public school system.

Mr. Lamoureux: Can the minister indicate to us how much in special needs I St. John's-Ravenscourt would receive?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, roughly 500-and-some students times the grant of \$150 or \$154.

Mr. Lamoureux: Can the minister indicate how many special needs students they would have?

Mr. Manness: Well, the member would have to ask the school. I do not know how many special needs students today are within Winnipeg School Division No. 1 and Level I with certainty. What we do, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, is we divide the total population by 180—today, we do not count under Level I. We take the number of students within the division, divide by 180 and multiply by \$43,500. So we do not count anywhere under Level I, but we do a count under Levels II and III.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am wondering if the minister could indicate to us what he would believe would be the number of special needs I students that would be attending St. John's-Ravenscourt?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I did not realize now the Liberals were starting to focus in—out of the 53 independent schools, they are focusing in on one. I guess what they are saying—I do not know for sure. I would not hypothesize. I do not think it would be wise for me to speculate, but I dare say that if they have special programs in support of slow learners and/or gifted learners, it would not take long to use up the macro amount provided as a result of \$154 per student support.

* (1650)

Mr. Lamoureux: Can the minister provide—it is probably not the proper terminology—a definition of what special needs I, II and III are?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, we are looking around for Level I. Level II, for

each pupil who is severely multihandicapped, psychotic, autistic, deaf, hard of hearing or very severely emotionally and behaviourally disordered.

Level III support goes to pupils who are profoundly multihandicapped, profoundly deaf or profoundly emotionally and behaviourally disoriented.

Level I basically goes to some of the students who have some level of learning disability or those who have exceptional learning ability and who have difficulty fitting in to the regular classroom. That is also a special needs requirement.

Mr. Lamoureux: I want to stick with the Level I. With the Level I, if you take a look at the special needs that are disadvantaged, special needs students, not necessarily the gifted students, does the minister believe that the public school divisions as a whole have the extra dollars from the special needs percentage that is being allocated to be able to finance gifted children programs?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we are really rethrasing straw, I can tell you. We have covered this area in great detail the other night. That is why we are doing a special needs study because we want to, again, review where we are in this.

Mr. Lamoureux: Right, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the minister did not answer the question. He is rethrasing it; I am pleased to hear that, but maybe the minister could answer it?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, could the member ask the question again, please? I am sorry.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, can the minister indicate whether or not sufficient funds are there for school divisions in the public sector to be able to provide for gifted students? I was under the impression that they were having a tough enough time coming even close to getting those children that are in need of assistance.

Mr. Manness: Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there will never be enough money for those in need. So I do not know what the essence of the question is by the member.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, under Special Needs you have learning disabilities, is what the minister said, and gifted children. If the public school system does not even have enough funds to facilitate the learning disability, none, what percentage would actually go towards the gifted children? You compare that to independent schools, and you cannot use independent schools generally, because some independent schools or the majority of independent schools have a very open-door policy, that there is not criteria that has to be met and exams that have to be passed and so forth.

So I am asking the minister specifically if he feels that it is appropriate, given the lack of financial resources for the public schools, to be able to finance special needs children and not the gifted ones of special needs, but the ones with the more of the learning disabilities, and the minister at the same time is financing gifted children in one or two of the private schools. Does he believe that is fair?

Mr. Manness: No, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I believe it is an unfair assertion. I mean, I wish we had more money. I wish I had more money to put into education. Today the province puts almost \$1 billion into education.

As a nation we are amongst the highest if not the highest of the G-7 countries. Across the piece we spend an awful lot of money on education and what the Liberals are saying is that they intend to spend more. They are going to spend more. I wish we had more to spend.

The Liberals obviously are going to tax people at a much higher rate so they can spend more, because they cannot print money. I know that for a certainty. They may be able to move mountains, but one thing they will not be able to do is print money. So they obviously have no other source but to go to the people and increase the taxes significantly, so that they can put more money into a system which in all comparisons, when you compare it throughout the world, by all the measurements, percent of GNP, percent on per pupil basis, rates amongst the highest in the world, and by some measures is indeed the highest in the

world. So if the Liberals want to spend more that is the bottom line comment that I have to make.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not doubt for a moment that the arithmetic that you have given us in response to the Liberal critic's repeated search for some other taxation base other than property to make up the difference, the \$500 million that you speak of, whether it is a 12 percent sales tax or a 70 percent increase of the provincial share of income tax and so forth, but I do want to come to the aid of my friend and colleague the Liberal critic.

I do not really expect the Minister of Education of the Province of Manitoba to put himself on record on this, but surely if we are talking, and as it has been said, if you are talking about taking away the taxing authority from local school divisions, we are in essence taking away local autonomy, and if anybody, particularly the Liberal Party, is considering that, then surely the question has to be asked wherefore the local school divisions?

Would it then not be helpful to have these figures, property figures, as to what in fact would the elimination in terms of administration, infrastructure of the entire local school divisions would be about? That may somewhat influence the figures that you have referred to. So that in trying to support the Liberal Party here, my friend the Liberal education critic, there is a point to be made that some additional dollars need to be put to the education system if indeed the Liberal Party is at this point encouraging the Minister of Education to in effect dissolve and abolish local school divisions.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I always appreciate the advice from the dean of the Chamber. I have acknowledged that the Chairperson recognized him, and I did not get upset when that was done either because it is always words of wisdom. But at times, I must disagree in the sense that if you look at some provinces, you will see that there is actually 100 percent financing through general revenues. Through that 100 percent, you still have school divisions that have local autonomy.

I believe that if you check with other interest groups that are out there, both parents—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The hour is now 5 p.m. and time for private members' hour. I am interrupting the proceedings of the committee. The Committee of Supply will resume considerations at 7:30 this evening. Thank you.

FAMILY SERVICES

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be dealing with the Estimates for the Department of Family Services.

We are on item 2.(b)(2), page 58 of the Estimates manual.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Chairperson, I would like to go back to a question that I gave the minister and her staff notice for yesterday, namely, the Order-in-Council No. 880/1993, dated December 1.

I wonder if the minister is now prepared to explain this to me.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Chairperson, the Order-in-Council was not an Order-in-Council to change the agreement at all. It was an administrative change to allow the Minister of Family Services the authority to sign rather than a generic minister, and that if the Department of Family Services does change its name in the future, we will not have to amend the agreement in any way to give the minister responsible for that newly titled department the ability to sign the agreement. It has been done in other provinces too.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you for that explanation.

I wonder if the minister could tell us what benefits or entitlements recipients of social assistance are entitled to who are either HIV or AIDS patients. The reason for my question is that I have been contacted by someone who frequently advocates for these individuals and finds that they are having trouble getting sufficient resources, particularly to pay for the high cost of drugs.

Now, I know that there are some programs that they should be able to access, like the Life Saving Drug Program, but one of the specific problems, I guess, that they are experiencing is that they are on a CPP disability benefit, and income security is clawing 100 percent of it back.

Maybe I should make that my first question and say, is that correct? Do people normally have their CPP disability clawed back if they are on provincial assistance?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, CPP is considered income, so they would not be entitled to keep both. It is either welfare or Canada Pension benefits.

Mr. Martindale: I guess that my assumption was correct, and that is really the crux of their problem, because their drug costs are so high that after they are—well, they do not really get any benefit from the CPP benefit. What they are left with is a very minimal amount of provincial social assistance, and yet their costs are very high, and their needs are considerable, including home care and transportation, which I would like to get into in a minute.

Do these individuals get any special consideration in recognition of their extraordinary costs of living?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, anyone who is on social assistance does have their essential medical needs covered. I do not know whether you are referring to someone who is not on social assistance who is having to pay for drugs. That might be a case of them having to apply for social assistance, if they were not on social assistance. All drugs, medical essential needs are covered if you are on social assistance.

Mr. Martindale: Okay, well, that is helpful. My understanding was that it was people who were on social assistance and getting a CPP disability benefit and were having trouble making ends meet because of the high cost of drugs. Is the Life Saving Drug Program under the Department of Health or Family Services?

* (1430)

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is the Department of Health, but going back to the other issue, if there are specifics around any one individual that my honourable friend would like us to look into, we can certainly do that, but it is my understanding that all of their essential medical needs are covered under social allowance.

Mr. Martindale: What about extraordinary transportation costs, such as having to use a taxi rather than a bus because of their medical condition or other special needs, for example, a special mattress to prevent bedsores, special clothing needs, a trolley for oxygen, brighter lights, turning the heat up higher, are they entitled to any of these special needs?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, each individual case is assessed on individual need. If there are medical circumstances, we would consult with a physician and get an opinion on whether that was the kind of thing that should be covered.

Mr. Martindale: My understanding is that there has been a change in the special needs budgets. It used to be that the \$150 a year, although inadequate, was fairly automatic, but now I understand that there has been a memo and quite a substantial change and that now people are greatly restricted in what that \$150 can be spent on. I do not know the date of this change, but I think it is sometime in this calendar year.

I wonder if the minister could explain the change that was made to the special needs allowance.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, this was a change that was made through this budgetary process. The things under the revised policy that will be covered under special needs include a newborn allowance, a one-time allowance within three months of the date of birth of a child up to \$250 for the first born and up to \$75 for each subsequent child for necessary items for newborns.

Also, what will still be covered is appliance repair and purchase where no other alternative is feasible; one-time, start-up household allowance if recipients cannot find furnished accommodations. Beds and bedding are still covered. Moving costs such as moving costs that might accommodate

confirmed employment and school supplies are still covered under special needs.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us why this change was made?

Mrs. Mitchelson: This change was made to provide enhanced targeting of benefits and tighten guidelines for items which are provided above and beyond the regular monthly social allowances budget. By limiting these benefits to those situations where the most need exists, we can still provide a good range of benefits while helping to ensure that funds remain available to maintain our overall social safety net. Clients can still wish to budget appropriately for purchases using some of their exempted sources of income where available or some of their liquid assets.

I believe, if I can continue, just that there is enough flexibility maintained within the policy that we can provide in extenuating circumstances over and above the items that I have listed that are still included in special needs on an individual basis.

Mr. Martindale: Enhanced targeting really means saving money on the backs of the poor, does it not?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I think it is incumbent upon all of us to spend all of the dollars that we have wisely no matter what program it is. We have included, or left included in our policy, special needs—the items that I listed previously—and have indicated on an individual basis that we can, in exceptional circumstances, look at other approvals. There will be some savings on this side, but I think it is an area where we have thought through very carefully ensuring that those special needs that are required for special circumstances will still be met and we can over and above that. It is tightening of controls, yes.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask about the flexibility, since it is my understanding that all other requests for special needs funding will be considered on a case-by-case basis. So what is the criteria when someone comes forward on a case-by-case basis? How do frontline staff decide what fits the department's policy and what does

not? It seems that the minister already read the list of items that are allowed. When I inquired with staff, I was told all of the requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. So how were those decisions made?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, we will look at individual cases on a case-by-case basis, and if there are extenuating circumstances that indicate that we should allow purchase of cutlery or pots and pans, those things will be assessed on an individual basis looking at the background of the circumstances, the situation surrounding the individual.

I might just add to that, we still with this change in policy have one of the most generous special needs policies right across the country.

Mr. Martindale: Well, is it not true that it is not as generous as the City of Winnipeg, which I understand used to be about \$135 a year, and after standardization of rates, although they could have lowered it to—no, I am thinking of something else. I guess I had better not finish that question. Everyone is entitled to one mistake, including the minister. I was thinking of some other category, it will come to me.

The member for Osborne (Ms. McCormick) is delayed, so I would like to keep this line open, Madam Chairperson, if we can.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (River Heights): Well, I have a few questions that I want to ask in this particular issue, and I do not want to be repetitious, but it seems to me that there is a significant difference between the figures for Social Allowances and the reduction there and the Social Allowances, Health Services proportion. Is that correct?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, could you just indicate what line we are looking at?

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, I see a 3 percent reduction in Social Allowances a fiscal year, year to year, but there seems to be a greater percentage of reduction in terms of Health Services. I would have thought that the two would have gone hand in hand, and I wonder why they seem to be disproportionate.

* (1440)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, the reason for the difference is that they are parts of a program. They do not run absolutely parallel; they both provide for different circumstances. They both provide for different things in the Social Allowances budget, so they do not run absolutely parallel, so there would be different reasons for different amounts.

Mrs. Carstairs: Well, then, for purposes of clarification, is that not the line that in fact takes care of the Health Services for those on social allowance?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, it is.

Mrs. Carstairs: Well, presumably it was decided by the government, and I do not know on what evidence, but they obviously decided that they were going to have 3 percent less need for social allowance monies, presumably because there were going to be fewer people on social assistance. I certainly hope that is the case, although I am not as optimistic as the minister seems to be. One would think, therefore, that there would be a proportional change then, bearing some reference to the demand on health services of those same social assistance recipients, and yet this seems to be skewed.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, understanding that the two lines, as I indicated earlier, serve different purposes, and the Social Allowances Health Services line does include services of pharmacists, dentists, opticians, and I guess in the analysis on the cost-per-case basis they do not run exactly parallel, so there is a difference in the amount.

There are a couple of changes that we have made in the drug program, and that is that the drug program for social allowances recipients will be brought more into line with the drug program for all Manitobans. The same drugs will be covered, and we are looking at generic substitutes in instances when it is warranted rather than high-cost prescription drugs. We are also looking at providing larger quantities of medication for those that are on long-term medication. We are moving to a 100-day supply in some instances

rather than a 30-day supply. When someone is on a drug for a long extended period of time, and it is not a drug that—for chronic conditions so that the dispensing fees would be less often as a result, so there is some saving in that respect.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, in terms of the changes to the drug program itself, what drugs have now been removed from payment to social assistance recipients?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I have a list here of Amytal, which is a sedative, which is a highly addictive medication, and it is not covered by Pharmacare. There are alternative products available in these instances. Seconal, Ponstan, which is an analgesic, and in most instances there is a less costly drug available. I will just read the names and if there are any questions on what specific drugs are—Idarac, Imitrex, Azogantacin and Anusol.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can the minister tell me if the whole category of drugs known as antihistamines are covered for those on social assistance?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, we still have a more extensive coverage list than Pharmacare does. We still provide products specifically designed for children and expectant mothers will not be affected or impacted in any way.

* (1450)

Mrs. Carstairs: So, just to clarify, because I was, in fact, given alternative information, and I want to get the minister on the record, because I think what she is saying is what I want to hear her say, is that children who have asthmatic allergic conditions or allergic conditions who have, in fact, been prescribed antihistamines, which are over-the-counter drugs, will in fact be eligible to have these covered by social assistance?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I have a list here of antihistamines, pediatric products for pediatric use are allowed.

Mrs. Carstairs: Madam Chairperson, if the member is agreeable, I am willing to pass this line.

Mr. Martindale: I too noted what the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) noted about a

reduction in the appropriation for all of the Social Allowance budgeting. So I would like to ask the minister if she has figures comparing last year's budget item, which was \$371,952,700. Does the minister have the fiscal year '93-94 actuals for Social Assistance?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I am told we do not have the final figures yet, but we are underexpended on the Social Allowances line.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I think that is a first. Could the minister tell us why her department is projecting less money to be spent in this fiscal year from last year?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I think we have every expectation that with some of the initiatives that are upcoming that there will be less people on social allowance. We certainly last year did not require all of the money that was budgeted for social assistance, and we were underspent, but we already have announced a \$10-million infrastructure program that has a Welfare to Work component.

We are looking at other options and alternatives to get people off of welfare and into the workforce. We will have some pilot projects on the single moms, single mothers side of things that hopefully will allow us the ability to reduce even further our social assistance caseloads.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us if her department has calculated what it would cost if all of their clients in the city of Winnipeg were to be given a free bus pass?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, we are just doing a rough guesstimate, but it would be probably over \$10 million a year.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us what it would cost to give everyone on social assistance a telephone? I understand, and I cannot remember whether it is at the city level or the provincial level, but there is already a very high percentage, I think something like 85 percent, already have a telephone, either authorized and paid for by the department or that people are paying for themselves out of their budget. What would it cost approximately if the department were to pay for a telephone for everyone?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, for the provincial caseload I am told it would be about \$4 million per year.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to move on to 9.2 2.(c) Welfare to Work, but leave the previous line open since the member from Osborne is going to be back, and I would like to give her an opportunity. I am told we can pass it.

Madam Chairperson: 9.2 2.(b)(2), Health Services, \$13,947,400—pass; 2.(b)(3) Municipal Assistance, \$106,905,600—pass; 2.(b)(4) Income Assistance for the Disabled, \$9,410,000—pass;

9.2 2.(c) Welfare to Work.

Mr. Martindale: I have some questions for the minister on the recommendations to the government regarding single-parent families, namely the Single Parent Families Report, 1990. I think it was released publicly. I have a press release dated April 23, 1991. This report was put together by the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Since this minister is talking about and has talked considerably about new initiatives to help single parents, I would just like to go back to this report which had, I think, 28 recommendations to help single parents. Since it is in four categories, I wonder if we could start with the first category, of Income Security, and ask the minister what, if any, of the recommendations her department has implemented since the fall of 1990.

* (1500)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, as a result of the recommendations, I could list the things that have changed over the last three, four years as a result.

We have adjusted the basic benefit rates for inflation. We did in 1991, '92 and '93. The federal child tax benefit and goods and services tax credit has been exempted, the health benefits have been extended to sole-support parents moving to employment, liquid asset exemption levels were increased significantly for most cases, provincial tax credits were converted to a monthly supplementary benefit. January of 1992, we, as a province, assumed responsibility for sole-support

parents during their first 90 days of separation. That was a change in 1992, '91-92.

Children's earnings have been exempted from consideration as income. Children's trust accounts have been exempted up to \$25,000 if established due to personal injury or death of a parent. Income assistance for the disabled has been introduced. I guess the one thing that I can recall that was very positive, of course, was the maintenance of health benefits for the first year as people move from welfare into employment.

So there has been change made. I think as we look toward the pilot projects that we might be implementing or introducing, we may see some further changes in the way we deal with social allowances and support single parents.

Mr. Martindale: Well, it sounds like a familiar list. I think I had it read to me several times in Question Period and Estimates last year, but under Income Maintenance, of the first seven items listed, this government has acted on one.

Under Income Supplement there are five items. The government has acted on one.

Under shelter programs, there are four recommendations. The government has closed the Flin Flon crisis shelter and possibly acted on one of the items. I guess I should ask a question. The recommendation was that the number of subsidized housing units for family renters be increased. Now it may have been increased in '91 and '92, but then the federal government eliminated funding for social housing beginning in 1993, I believe, and that has been continued in '94.

Under child care, there are four recommendations. I would like to ask a question about a couple of them. One of the recommendations was that child care programs must also be enhanced to accommodate disabled children and children who may be temporarily ill. Has there been any funding to implement that recommendation?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, there have been some changes, and there have been major changes and major improvements in the number of subsidized spaces in child care and the number of licensed spaces, of course, and we have

heard that—I am sure those answers have been heard by my honourable friend on many occasions.

Also, we have targeted our resources for child care to those that are specifically in need. There are presently over 400 children with disabilities integrated into daycare centres and homes with a budget of over \$2 million. So there is support for disabled children through our child care system.

Mr. Martindale: Well, what the minister says is true comparing 1991 with today. On the other hand, there were severe cutbacks to child care spaces in last year's budget in spite of this recommendation to expand the number of child care spaces and to enhance programs.

Under Education and Training, well, this minister is not responsible for ACCESS programs, so I guess there is no point in asking that question.

To return to child care. You know, this minister talks about having child care in place for single parents to access the job market, but there have been cuts in the number of spaces. So in order to achieve this minister's goals for single parents, do you plan to expand the number of spaces so that spaces are available when single parents want to get back into the paid labour force?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I think we had some discussion around the child care issue yesterday when we were talking about single moms and the need for child care. As we move people off of welfare into the workforce, obviously they are going to need somewhere for their children to be looked after, and that will all be taken into consideration as we develop the pilot projects. That is one of the things we have discussed also with the federal government. Both the federal minister and I believe that, you know, you cannot get women into the workforce and off of welfare unless there is some ability to ensure that those children are looked after in a safe and secure manner.

Mr. Martindale: I am happy to hear that. Does that mean that the minister is expecting or hoping that there will be new federal money to expand the number of child care spaces in Manitoba?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I have not received those assurances yet, but I think any of the pilots that we

proposed to the federal government will have to have a component that looks at safe and secure care for children in those circumstances.

Mr. Martindale: So it is the minister's goal or intention to expand the number of child care spaces, but it is contingent on federal funding. Would that be 50-50 funding through CAP?

Mrs. Mitchelson: As I have indicated, normally speaking, when different levels of government get together and negotiate any type of an agreement, like the infrastructure agreement or the new Winnipeg development agreement and as will be the case with single mom pilot projects, negotiations are ongoing at the officials level and then at the ministerial level. As governments approve those initiatives, there are announcements made. As we move closer to that date and when we have a proposal that we put forward to the federal government that they accept, we will be able to make announcements accordingly around what services will be available and what the pilots will actually look like.

* (1510)

Mr. Martindale: So I take it the minister is not able to tell us yet what is in the Manitoba proposal.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, it would be premature to put forward a proposal to the federal government without a consultation process of some sort. We have just ended that in the last week or two weeks I guess, a major consultation with clients, with service providers, with the community, with the private sector. Those are finished now and we are in the final stages of getting a proposal put together to present to the federal government.

Mr. Martindale: In the budget line 2.(c) Welfare to Work, \$3 million, is the minister hoping that this will be matched 50-50 with federal funding?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Absolutely.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell us if indications are that this money will be matched?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I have every expectation that any new initiative that was proposed, that the federal government wanted to partner with us on would be cost-shared.

Mr. Martindale: I have a copy of the Federal-Provincial Framework Paper, Sole Parents Pilot Project. I think I gave the minister two pages of it. It is probably getting pretty dated now. I should probably give the minister a copy of the whole thing, but it is very interesting. It talks about the storefront, single-wicket access for single parents.

There are some wonderful expressions in here. Single-wicket is just one of them. Another expression is, visualize the storefront clearly. I do not know what bureaucrat thought that up, but I can just visualize this storefront where all these single parents come in and they are assessed and there are pamphlets in racks on the wall and there are trained counsellors there and there is somebody who can tell them where to go for this program and where to go for upgrading and where to go for this program and this training and this life skill, according to what their needs have been assessed as, et cetera.

But at the other end of the store, what happens to these people? Are there any goals as to how many are going to get jobs? So far in this pilot project, all we see is a storefront and assessment and no clear job goals or even numbers of people who will be into paid employment as a result of going to this storefront, which we can see quite clearly, but we do not know what is going to come out the other side. So I wonder if the minister can comment on the Sole Parent Pilot Project. What stage is it at? What goals do you have for employment for single parents?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, it is interesting. I certainly did not recognize the paper that, or the first two pages of the paper that were shared with me by my honourable friend. That paper, I understand, is a paper that was developed in the federal bureaucracy somewhere. It is not a provincial document in any way, and it is not exactly the process that we have followed in our deliberations and our consultations.

I think it is imperative and important to realize and recognize that we do have 12,000 single mothers on social assistance, that anything we pilot will indeed be that, a pilot project. We are not

going to be able to assess and immediately put to work every single mother on social assistance, but I do believe that through the process that we will develop and the proposal that we will put forward, we will see several single mothers. I do not have a number yet.

I have to indicate to you that there is no absolute number yet because we found out, through our consultations, that the issue was not quite as simple as just putting people to work.

There are things that are ongoing right now. There might be some enhancement of some of the programs that are presently in place. There might be some brand new programs. We are working with the private sector. I guess one of the issues, one of the reasons we consulted with the private sector was to find out indeed where the jobs are going to be, and are there any disincentives for them to hiring single mothers. We have got some answers to that.

How can they play a role in ensuring that when there are job opportunities available, some portion of our single parents can have access to opportunity, whether it be on-the-job training, whether it be, you know, part-time work, part-time training, or there are community-services opportunities? There are all of those things.

How many are actually going to be in the workforce, I cannot tell you today. We will, when we put forward our proposals, target a certain number, and we will work towards that goal of meeting that objective.

I do want to say to you, though, that as we started to do our consultations, we did find that, you know, some of the issues surrounding our adolescent single parents are big issues. I do not think that, realistically, we could hope to see too many of our adolescent mothers into the workforce and off welfare. I think we are going to have to target a pilot that does not necessarily mean a short-term quick fix but a long-term strategy that we talked about last night, which was the up-front intervention delaying pregnancy, preventing pregnancy. I mean we have to look at that.

We also have to look at what we do with our young adolescent moms who are in the system

today. Most of them, as we said before, do not have a high school education, and most of them are not nearly job ready. We are looking at a long-term process, so I am seeing very clearly that there will be a component where we will get some single mothers into the workforce. There will be a component of those single mothers who will have to receive some training or some further education. There will be some who need very basic skills initially and a long-term process that hopefully will result in a positive end result, but no easy answer.

I do not think you can deal with every age group of single moms in the same manner. I think we are going to be looking probably at smaller pilot projects, smaller numbers focusing in on specific needs around demographics, age and educational needs and, you know, ability to adjust.

Then there are different issues, very complicated issues surrounding, you know, do you have children at home who are school age or are they preschool? I think there are different programs that have to be looked at for those circumstances, too. So no easy answer, and I would love to see an overnight solution. We are going to have to see some long-term—we are going to have to look at some cases that will be long term. Some people will be long term; others, I think we can accommodate in a short term based on assessment, assessment of their needs, assessment of the support systems that they need around them. Then how do we find the job opportunity to place them into—or the training that will get them into job placement?

Mr. Martindale: So I take it that, since this paper that I have is a federal proposal, the minister is not committed necessarily to a storefront. Visualize the storefront clearly, a single wicket. I can see it clearly now. It reminds me of a song.

An Honourable Member: Can you sing that for us?

Mr. Martindale: I will get the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) to sing it.

Does the minister have something else in mind if she is not committed to a storefront, which apparently is the federal government's proposal?

How do you plan to spend the \$3 million? Do you have some other proposal that you are putting forward to the federal government?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I hate to be repetitive, but I guess I would like to indicate that, as we formulate that proposal which we are in the process of doing, and go to the federal government with that proposal, there will be negotiation and there will be give and take. We know it is like that with any negotiation process. Ultimately, hopefully, we will come up with pilots made in Manitoba that will serve the needs of the client group that we are trying to serve.

When you talk about storefront, I think in the past we have not done a good enough job of co-ordinating services in some ways. We do have federal programs. We do have provincial programs. We have programs in different departments within government that need to be co-ordinated in a better fashion, and I would say just from talking to clients who are served in our system, that we have to focus a little more on a user-friendly service.

* (1520)

I am not so sure that—I do not know if I should be saying this with staff from Income Security sitting here, but I think they would probably tend to agree with me that in the Income Security offices, it is sometimes not the most user-friendly office to do a needs assessment on. I mean, that is reality. Income Security offices are there to assess the financial need and provide a sum of money.

I guess I am looking at a little more user-friendly service where we can sit down and talk to young women, maybe have a bit of an onsite opportunity for them to bring their children and leave them in a room while we do that kind of an assessment.

All of the people that we serve right throughout government, they are people and they do have needs, and I think we have to look a little more sensitively at the customer that we are serving, and that is really what we are doing. We are trying to provide a service to a customer, and I would like to see it done in a very sensitive manner that does look at unique circumstances.

I think sometimes government offices are somewhat intimidating for people, and if we can look at a softer, more sensitive approach, I think that we might be doing a better service.

Mr. Martindale: I think we are going to end up with a user-friendly storefront. I can see it clearly now, a single wicket; I can see it clearly. I would have to agree with the user-friendly part of the minister's remarks. It also says that it will be contracted out to a qualified third party.

I guess for me I have no problem with its being contracted out, depending on whom it is contracted out to. It seems to me that, if it is a pilot project, particularly targeted at aboriginal single parents, if it is contracted out to an aboriginal organization, I would be entirely supportive. If it is contracted out to some organization that has no experience with the target group, or no track record with the target group, I would have some concerns.

So I would like to ask the minister what plans there are, or if the minister has had discussions with any group that might receive a contract to provide service to this group.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, no, there has been no discussion. As I indicated before, that is a federal document that is there. It has not had my input or rather the input of staff at the provincial level. I might agree with the comment. I mean, we have to look sensitively at the people that we are dealing with, and what their needs are; and, if there is a way to do it where we are using those that they might trust and respond to in a more positive manner, I think we have to look at that.

I have no preconceived idea at this point in time. We are not quite that far along in the process.

Mr. Martindale: The minister mentioned that existing programs or current programs would be enhanced. I wonder if the minister could tell us which ones. I think there are some that lend themselves to being enhanced, such as the work incentive program, but I wonder if the minister can tell us which ones are under consideration.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, although we do not have responsibility for what has been transferred over to the Department of Education, I am hearing that Single Parent Job Access Program

has been a good program. There are certain components of it; there is a COPE component to it that I am quite impressed with and it is just with teaching young girls how to act in public, how to conduct an interview, how to do those kinds of things.

Those are some of the very basic things that some of our younger girls need that have not had the opportunity or the exposure to build their self-esteem, make them feel better about themselves and learn how to manage in day-to-day life in the community. Some very basic skills are needed in some instances before we can even move on to thinking about work opportunity.

Mr. Martindale: I am sorry that I was not invited to the private sector forum on May 6, I guess because I am not part of the private sector, although I notice from the agenda almost everyone who spoke was from the public sector except someone from the Royal Bank.

I am particularly interested in what Dr. Fraser Mustard had to say, partly because I heard second-hand reports of his speech and partly because the minister referred to him, and also he is quoted in the press release of May 5 that the federal and provincial ministers put out. Apparently he is an expert on social assistance costs, causes and solutions, so I wonder if the minister could summarize briefly for me some of his observations.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I think he has a good background and a great understanding of how the economy and our social safety net do go hand in hand. When things economically are good and there are lots of jobs, and obviously governments today do not create wealth, it is the private sector that creates wealth and the opportunity for people to pay taxes to support the social safety net that we do have in place, and through difficult economic times things do become more difficult.

I think Fraser Mustard talks about the concept of early child development, early intervention, and how the first six years of life are extremely critical in the development of all of us, and that we need to focus more on early intervention and early child

development; that governments are only players in the whole overall picture; that there is a role for community to play also in partnership.

The private sector has to understand the issues around poverty and the issues around how important it is to get our kids off to a good start in life. A very interesting gentleman. I should invite you at some point in time if he is in Winnipeg again to sit down and talk. I think you would be extremely interested in what he does have to say. He talks about, well, supports, and how we need to be working sort of horizontally right throughout the community so that it is government departments working together and co-ordinating, and it is external agencies, it is the community. Everybody has to be thinking and working together horizontally, not top down driven with those at the top not talking to each other.

I do not know what more you want to know, except that I honestly believe that. He also does talk about evaluation and measurement of outcomes and how important it is to assure that the kinds of programs that we are going to change and put into place are the kinds of programs that we can justify based on positive outcomes.

Ms. Norma McCormick (Osborne): I have been listening to this with great interest, and I am still not clear on the philosophical underpinnings of this work-to-welfare approach. I think we do recognize the importance of supporting these young parents as they find an alternative to, as you have said once before, to being a single-parent mother as a career option. What we do know is that the power and the overwhelming need for support has to be very powerful.

I am wondering, like I pushed yesterday around some of the child care component, but today I am curious about, what kind of expectations are there for these young women? Are you looking at getting them through business type courses? What is the skill level? What is the training support you are looking at? Are you looking at, for example, a two-year community college program or something that would be kind of a six-week sort of basic level of entry into a nonskilled job?

* (1530)

The reason I am concerned about this is that we have to be very careful not to frustrate people, not to provide them with an opportunity or an illusion at the end of the training, which means that they are not able to earn a sufficient income. Their poverty circumstance has not changed. The only difference is that they now have a marginal income, still inadequate to support their family. They still require income supplementation. They still have to lead the dual life of a parent and of an earner, and in absence of powerful supports which make that tolerable for these young women, I really do question whether it is going to be worth the investment and will have the expected outcome.

So I know I have kind of babbled here, but if you could give me some indication about what kind of training you are thinking about and what kind of outcomes would be there, what kind of jobs you will be preparing these people for.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, that is why it is so critical for us to find out where the job opportunities are going to be into the future, and I think that is part of it when there is high unemployment. We do know that there have been training programs that in the past have been great training programs, but you train people for two or three or four years and find out at the end of that training that there is no job for them, that the job market has changed considerably. We all know that jobs are difficult to find for many of us. I might agree with some that say that certainly in many instances a university degree today does not prepare you for the real, working world out there and the job opportunities.

We see a lot of our youth graduating from university and have great difficulty finding jobs. Unless the private sector—and we know that government is not going to be a creator of job opportunities into the future; it is going to be the private sector, and self-employment too is another area that we have to look at, self-employment for women.

We do know that we are a province with small business, and that we also do have a track record that indicates that small businesses that are started

by women are often more successful than those started by men, and so that is an area that I think we have to pursue, we have to look at that.

Unless you take an individual and you sit down and talk to that individual, and you find out where they are in their life, what the problems are that they have to deal with to try to get them educated to a point where they can start a business, or what do they need, and I do not think you can say there is one plan that will be available or should be put in place for everyone. It has to be on an individual basis with a needs assessment, finding out what supports are needed. Do they need full-time child care? Do they need shift—evening or weekend day care? We do not have a system today that provides enough flexibility for some of those job opportunities.

We see the call centres that are coming into Manitoba, and some of them are high tech jobs, some of them are entry level jobs, there are some in between, and is there an opportunity there based on their skill level? Is there an ability to do some on-the-job training? As we look at more community-based services on the health care side of things, is there an opportunity in the health service sector for jobs for young women.

I guess the key to all of this is even if we do not get young single mothers completely self-sufficient, even if there still is some subsidy that is needed—I mean, I would have to think that if we do provide an opportunity and they are willing, and I think many of them are, they do want an opportunity, if they can at least, on a part-time basis, do something really positive and make them feel good about themselves and build their self-esteem, there is that opportunity to move up the ladder. But if we just leave things the way they are and do not do anything, we are not going to see dramatic change.

Ms. McCormick: There is nothing, Madam Chairperson, that I have heard that I disagree with. In fact, I am quite pleased to hear that these things have been identified and have been thought through.

I guess what I am concerned about is that we not create expectations that the program cannot

deliver. I worry as much about expectations to the parents who are going to participate, as I do to the public who really do not want to have another casualty. If the conclusion is that it is one more initiative that just shows that this is a recalcitrant group that there is no way that we can do anything, I am very concerned about a blame-the-victim approach here.

I guess with respect to the availability of jobs, we have a shifting labour market. We have a labour market which is now progressively more part time, more nonbenefit-type jobs, you know, places where you would not get a dental plan or anything like that, more and more situations in which the jobs are not in standard working hours. If you are doing telemarketing, the best time everybody knows is over the dinner hour, and yet our support systems are not in place to accommodate those, and you have recognized all of that, and that is entirely to your credit.

I guess what I am questioning is, what would be the balance in your Welfare to Work initiative? How much of this initiative do you anticipate would be devoted to the target group of sole-support parents, and how much of the initiative will be targeted to other unemployed employable persons? How much of the money that is being appropriated is for the actual wage subsidy, and how much of it is for the broader supports which are going to be necessary to make this work?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, your questions are just a touch premature. You realize that in some of the instances though—and there are things that we might be able to do on our own as a province—as we developed the pilots, and the federal government has expressed an interest in pilot projects for sole-support parents, we are going to have to see when our proposal goes forward what they are prepared to cost-share, how big a program they are prepared to look at, and we will have to go from there.

So we are not quite at a point yet where we can say definitively this is the number of dollars that will go to single parents. If we go forward with the proposal that the federal government does not like,

they may only say they will cost-share a portion of it, and then we might have to look at different ways of allocating dollars in some other direction.

So it is sort of an allocation at this point that we have to make the determination on whether we will move ahead in one way or another.

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chairperson, just as a final then, I do hear though that the pressure is off the program to get these people fully off welfare and into employment. You are still looking at the possibility that these will be subsidizable, other income supplement programs will kick in, and that it is not an either/or for many of these people.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I do not think that we realistically can think that overnight we will get people into the workforce earning enough income that they will be completely independent initially. There will be some, I believe there will be. How large that percentage will be or that number will be, I cannot say at this point, but I think this is progressive.

I mean, we have had a policy and a position in place from the beginning of time almost that has not promoted work as an option, a career option in many instances, and we have got to change that mindset. I honestly believe that the desire is out there, all we have to do is talk and assess and we will be able to find many young women that will really welcome the opportunity.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Chairperson, since there are such a large number of single parents, it is certainly a good group to target for a special program. At the end of March 1994, there were 27,124 social allowance cases, of whom 12,589 were sole support parents, so it is a very large group.

But it just occurred to me that if you were to spend \$10,000 per individual, and that might be, you know, giving them another \$10,000 a year income, which they could use for child care or clothing or transportation or education, or whatever, or if you were to give them \$5,000 a year extra income and the program costs were, say, \$5,000 per individual per year, for every \$100,000 you could help 10 people. For every \$1 million you

would be helping 100 people, for \$3 million you would be helping 300 individuals.

If it is cost-shared by the federal government, so there is \$6 million available, you would be helping 600 people out of 12,589 clients.

Does the minister have any guesstimates about what the individual cost or the approximate amount of money per individual that might be spent out of this \$3 million allocation?

* (1540)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, at this point in time I could not give a definite answer to that question, and as we assess needs we will have to make that determination.

You might find a very small support or supplement in addition to a full time employment opportunity would be enough; in some instances it will require more. So we cannot make—and as I have indicated, you cannot generalize and you cannot just lump all single parents into one bunch and say that this is the program I think we are going to have to tailor-make initially, and as we test—and I have got to reiterate again that these are pilot projects, and these are sort of test projects, and if, in fact, they work, and we find that we are having positive success, then it is the kind of program that can be expanded.

We are not at a point where we are saying that we can assess every individual single mother at this point and see whether we cannot put in place a comprehensive plan. We are going to start and do an assessment and look at different age groups, different demographics, different parts of the province, and test-pilot small projects. Evaluate them, measure outcomes and expand if they are successful.

Madam Chairperson: Item 2.(c) Welfare to Work \$3,000,000—pass; Less: Recoverable from Education and Training \$1,000,000—pass.

2.(d) Income Supplement Programs (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell us if she knows what the take-up rate for 55 Plus would be? For example, since 55 Plus is income tested, the universe of the people who qualify for it would be

100 percent, but because only those people who know about the program and apply for it, receive it, the number of people enrolled in the program would be much lower than 100 percent. I am wondering if the minister can tell us what the take-up rate is, if there are any estimates or percentages on that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I understand on the senior component that, as a result of applying for Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement at the federal level, and because it is based upon income, there would probably be 100 percent take-up. Because there is a tax form that is submitted for Old Age Security purposes, I guess it would, and our benefit would automatically click into those that fell within that income range.

The junior component, I guess I could not really tell you what the uptake is on that component. We just do not have that information.

Mr. Martindale: It is my understanding that CRISP is a targeted program for low-income families who are working. It is available to people on social assistance, but the amount of the benefit is deducted from their income. Is that correct, that it is basically a targeted program to working low-income people?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes.

Mr. Martindale: Does the minister know what the take-up rate would be for CRISP?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The same problem exists for the 55 Plus junior component. We do not have that information.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to make a suggestion to the minister. One possibility, I think, would be to inform people through the income tax system that they are eligible for these programs. I have talked to a computer programmer in the private sector, and I have talked to someone in the Manitoba government, both of whom say that this is possible with the existing system and basically it can be done.

The way it would work is that it would print out a notice to everyone saying—not to everyone, to some income tax filers—based on your age and

income you may be eligible for 55 Plus; please phone such and such a number. For CRISP it could say: Based on your sources of income and the amount of that income and the number of children, you may be eligible for CRISP.

I am wondering if the minister would consider raising this possibility with her colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), and ask him if his staff could look into it and if they would consider doing that. I realize that this would probably add a cost to her budget, and I know that the minister does not want to do that. On the other hand, these programs are there for people in need. The problem with programs like these is that they are not universal. They are targeted programs, and quite often people do not know about them.

I find that when I go knocking on doors in low-income neighbourhoods and people complain to me about their low income or feeling that they are forced to use food banks. I ask them, well, have you applied for CRISP or do you receive CRISP or have you applied for 55 Plus and sometimes they have not. They do not know about these programs. So I give them the phone number or get them the pamphlet and they apply.

I am wondering if the minister would be willing to talk to her colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and pass on this suggestion and see if it is feasible.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I commend my honourable friend for his commitment to his community. I know that he knocks on doors and has the ability to dialogue on an individual basis, and he sees the need. He certainly advocates on behalf of and works for his constituents. So I really commend him for that.

I do want to say, though, that we are one of two provinces that have this kind of a support program. I think Saskatchewan has a program, not exactly the same but somewhat similar, so this is not something that is available right across the country. It is something that is in place in Manitoba at this point.

* (1550)

I would have to say that, if the member opposite is asking for advocating our spending more money

in our social services budget, I would like to ask where he might recommend that we remove money from our budget in Family Services, to look at greater support or a higher profile of this program. I toss that open to him, because we are in very difficult economic times, and it is very easy to sit in opposition and say, well, just advertise more and let more people know that there are more programs available, and you will get a higher uptake. I question and I ask, and it is a legitimate question, too: What other part of the department would you see that we might reduce funding so that we might be able to enhance this program in some way?

Mr. Martindale: I would not take money out of Family Services, but I would take it out of questionable grants under Workforce 2000, for example. I am not asking the minister to advertise. I think there is a difference between advertising and programming a computer so that people are made aware of a program that they are entitled to.

I will repeat the question: Would the minister at least talk to her colleague the Minister of Finance and ask him if it is feasible to do this? My information is, yes, it is feasible to do this.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I guess we could get into asking questions back and forth, and I think I might just put a question back. Departments throughout government are allocated budgets based on programs. We have placed a fairly major priority in this year's budget on support for child welfare systems, support for the mentally disabled in increased and enhanced supports. That is where some of our money is going. We are looking at trying to get people off welfare and into the workforce. That is where we have placed our priorities this year.

If my honourable friend would think that we maybe should not spend quite as much money on the mentally disabled and look at reallocating more resources and heightening the awareness of this program, I guess I would like him to indicate to me whether that might be his policy or his preference.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Chairperson, I can hardly believe that a minister who is so good at

answering questions instead of giving speeches, and I commend her for that, is not willing to ask a very simple question of one of her colleagues in cabinet, whether or not something is feasible. It seems to me that it is a good idea, that it would work. I have talked to someone in government in Manitoba familiar with computers who says it would work.

I wonder if the minister can say why she is not willing to raise the question with her colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson).

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I will certainly take that recommendation, I suppose, under advisement as we move into a new budgetary process for next year's budget and go through a Treasury Board process thinking around the issues in Family Services and trying to determine where the priorities might be through next year's budget process. There is a process that we do go through on a year-to-year basis. We have allocated through this year's budget X number of dollars for these programs based on what we presently do on the uptake that we would expect.

I can certainly indicate that, as we move into next year's budgetary process, we can look at all the programs again in Family Services and see whether there is a desire at that point in time to take to Treasury Board an option around these programs.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to thank the minister because I think she moved a little bit.

A few years ago, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg put out a report in which there were recommendations about CRISP. I do not have it in front of me, and I am just going by memory, but I think their basic recommendation was that all families with children who were low income should be eligible to receive CRISP. The report did not get very much coverage, including in this place. I think the main reason was that the cost would be something like \$85 million.

Now I am wondering if the minister or her staff have any estimates of what it would cost if all families received the CRISP benefit.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, within the department, we have not done any financial

analysis or any detail around trying to determine what those numbers would be. I guess when you see things like the family allowance cheques at the federal level having been changed and means-tested at this point in time, I do not see governments moving into the direction of more universal programs without accountability or assessed need.

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chairperson, I too would like to do some questioning around the CRISP program. I think the intent of the program is laudable. It was intended and certainly developed to address the issue of child poverty and to ensure that there is sufficient income going into a family to maintain the family in less than impoverished conditions.

However, when we began to prepare for this Estimates process we got some information with respect to the number of people on the caseload. We were told that at the end of March 1994 there were in fact 7,128 recipients with 16,190 dependants.

I had some questions again around how this program is brought to the attention of people, given that there are so many more families raising their children in poverty, and we are astounded at the depth of poverty in this province. How is this program brought to the attention of the people who could potentially benefit from it?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I understand that agencies and organizations throughout the province do have application forms on hand. There are referrals on a regular basis, social service agencies, anyone that has been on the program in the preceding year receives an application automatically. That is the way it is advertised mostly.

* (1600)

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. I have had a request, and I wonder if there is a willingness on behalf of the committee members to take a five-minute recess. Agreed?

This committee will reconvene at 4:05 p.m.

The committee recessed at 4 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:06 p.m.

Madam Chairperson: Will the committee please reconvene.

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chairperson, it is difficult for me to tell from this line how many of the staff are assigned to the Carberry operation and how many assigned to the Killarney operation. I am at this point more interested in the CRISP program headquartered out of Killarney. Can you tell me how many people are involved in the CRISP program?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, there are 10 staff in Killarney and seven in Carberry. There are five term staff that are used in both offices.

Ms. McCormick: With respect to the provincial caseload in excess of 7,000 recipients, can you give me some indication of what number of that 7,000 would be social assistance recipients?

Mrs. Mitchelson: About half are welfare recipients and about half are not.

Ms. McCormick: I had received information that about 4,000 of the 7,000 for the stats ending March '94, which is actually over half, are social assistance recipients. My understanding is that the benefit is clawed back dollar for dollar for social assistance recipients.

Can you tell me why one would have a program which employs 10 people when more than half of the people who receive the benefit do not get to keep it?

* (1610)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I understand that when the program was first implemented, it was implemented not meant to be discriminatory, so there was not a sense that welfare recipients could not apply. I guess that, because the welfare caseloads do change and people do go on and off welfare, should they go off welfare, it would be then a benefit and a supplement to their income. So, whether you might consider it an incentive or not, I guess that might be questionable, but in fact they still do have the

ability. It would not be clawed back if they were in the workforce and not on the welfare rolls.

Ms. McCormick: I guess this begs the question of the administrative sense that this makes to have a program that costs money to administer. You have to put a stamp on it to send it out to these people, only to have it, in the long run, make no difference to the economic circumstance of the social assistance-receiving family.

What are the cost-sharing arrangements with respect to the CRISP benefit? Is there an advantage to the province to use a portion of the income that goes to a family to keep them at the social assistance rate, leveraging it through the CRISP program with respect to what is cost shareable under the Canada Assistance Plan? Is this a bit of a shell game with respect to federal cost sharing?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, it is cost neutral to the province. There is no additional benefit to the Province of Manitoba. If people were on social assistance, we would be getting the full benefit. Their CRISP payment when they are not on social assistance is paid for by the Province of Manitoba. It is clawed back when they are on social assistance, yes. But, if they should come off and go into the workforce, not need social assistance any longer, they would still get that payment, and the province would be paying that.

Ms. McCormick: As I understand it then, there is no advantage to Manitoba to give it and take it away with respect to recovering costs from Canada. There is no benefit to the family who receives it if they are on social assistance, because it is clawed back dollar for dollar. So the expenditure of this money for half of the people in the program is done on the hope that it will provide sufficient incentive to go into the paid workforce?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I guess you might consider this something like a maintenance payment, where if you are on social assistance, all other additional income is taken into consideration. When you go off social assistance, that money is there and available for you to use. We do have people on a regular basis that do come onto social assistance and then do get off social assistance. It is there for them as an enhanced

supplement when they are off social assistance, and it is not there when they roll back onto social assistance rolls.

Ms. McCormick: I guess the basic difference between the analogy of the child support payment received through maintenance enforcement or through a maintenance agreement and this is that one is the obligation of the individual to their own family. This is the obligation of a social program to poor children in Manitoba.

What I am curious about, you have said that there is movement between social assistance and work, which justifies keeping this rather bizarre arrangement in place. Can you tell me, or is there a way you could take as notice and give me some information on, in fact, how true it is that people go on and off? Do they go on and off for purposes of seasonal employment, or do they go on and off for other reasons, or do they not go? What is the degree to which they go on and off social assistance and into keeping more of CRISP?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, we have on our provincial caseload on a monthly basis about 1,200 people who do go on and off of social allowances. So there is rollover or a turnover. I guess the question that I might ask is, would my honourable friend support denying those on social allowance the opportunity to apply? I guess what you are saying is, is there so much administration involved that it is not really worthwhile doing it? Would you recommend that possibly we take a look at not allowing social assistance recipients to apply or to receive, even though it is clawed back, the benefit? I guess what you are saying is that once you come on to social assistance, should, in fact, we not go through the red tape of administering and clawing back?

Ms. McCormick: My understanding is that this program was originally intended to be income supplementation for the working poor. I think that this distills the very essence of what you began speaking to us about when we opened the Estimates process, that we really do need to examine the utility of our programs to make sure that they are in fact delivering to the people who need what they are intended to be delivered.

If I am correct in my understanding that half of the people who get this see no useful benefit, that the only advantage to giving it to these people is in fact getting something from a program connected to income support because their net financial situation in the family does not change, it just comes from a different pot of money. I wonder about the utility of maintaining a program, more than half of whom, as I can see this, do not benefit from getting the money, when in fact we have got other kinds of things that could be done to the benefit of families.

Now you have asked me a question of what would I do? What I would do is I think I would examine the administrative costs of this program. I would examine the long-term utility of this sort of giveth and taketh away mentality and do some kind of cost benefit analysis to determine whether in fact it is having the intended outcome which is income supplementation to the working poor.

If you can assure me that it is worth the expenditure of about half of \$802,000, then I would be satisfied with that, but at this point in time, I think that is something that should be challenged and should be examined.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think we could probably undertake as a result of some of the questions that you have asked—I know I am new to this department, and you have raised some concerns that I think we need to look at. So we can certainly undertake some sense of evaluation of a cost benefit of this program and do some analysis and see whether in fact we should take a look at a different way of delivering it.

I guess the one comment I might make is there might be a human rights issue around denial of some people to have access to the program, but we can look into that too.

* (1620)

Ms. McCormick: I would expect that any analysis would keep us well within the law and also within the bounds of humanitarian concern. Perhaps the other alternative to clawing it back would be to recognize that the purpose of providing a child-related income-support program is that families need more money. Rather than clawing it

back, the option might be to ensure that the family situation benefits. Again, this harkens back to the discussion we had last night around maintenance enforcement. The purpose of providing maintenance and child support to families is to ensure that kids have a decent quality of life.

Again, I think that I have the same philosophical problem with the CRISP program that I have with this approach to maintenance is kids never win, kids never benefit. If we are going to call it a Child Related Income Support Program, which makes a dandy little acronym, then there should be some way of ensuring that the children who are the intended recipients of it have their quality of life improved, which in fact all evidence exists to tell us we will make their futures more positive.

Mrs. Mitchelson: You put some good points on the record, and I will certainly take your comments into consideration as we take a look at the program.

Madam Chairperson: Item 2.(d) Income Supplement Programs (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Martindale: I am prepared to pass this.

Madam Chairperson: Item 2.(d)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$802,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$441,000—pass; (3) Financial Assistance \$13,872,700—pass.

Item 2.(e) Regional Operations.

Mr. Martindale: It is not particularly relevant to this line, but I would like to talk about the federal government's social policy review anyway. There are some goals of the social policy review that I could agree with. In fact, I was just reading an editorial in the Winnipeg Free Press from February 2, 1994. It talks about some of the obvious reforms encouraging welfare recipients to improve their skills and take part-time work without losing benefits, keeping the unemployed active even when they are not gainfully employed, keeping a good balance between benefits to the elderly and benefits to other age groups.

Now, if that is the goal or the main thrust of the federal social welfare reform, then I would be in favour of it. But I guess for the time being I am a

skeptic. Earlier today in Question Period I mentioned that the public strongly supports our current social safety net. In fact, the public opinion polling that the federal government has done is very interesting. I do not know if the minister has seen it, but I would be happy to share it with her. It is quite a lengthy document of many detailed questions. It is also summarized in this document that I quoted from today, Social Security Reform Communications, dated March 21, 1994, Draft, Confidential. Perhaps I should share this with the minister as well. I think she would find it interesting too.

I would just like to put on the record the support that Canadians give to our social safety net, because the opinion polling that the federal government did showed that. It is really quite interesting. That is the first point that this paper makes. It says: Public strongly attached to current social programs. There are percentages, and all of these are percentages by which the public supports these programs: 94 percent for benefits for disabled; 90 percent for benefits for seniors; 78 percent for young people to get jobs; 73 percent for unemployment insurance; 72 percent for assistance to students; 71 percent for workers compensation; 62 percent for skills upgrading; 50 percent for welfare; and the only one that does not have a majority or at least 50 percent is relocation assistance, which is only supported by 44 percent of Canadians who were polled.

I think the conclusion is that all of our social safety programs are supported and most of them are overwhelmingly supported by Canadians. So, when we get a document that has to do with selling this program to Canadians, I become very concerned. I guess—well, I do not guess; I know that we should be concerned not just as Canadians but as Manitobans when we start to read about the amount of money that the government plans to take out of social programs.

This has already been a part of the federal budget. In fact, one of the figures that I did not read into the record in my preamble in Question Period today is even larger than the two figures that I did read. It is from The Globe and Mail article of today where it points out that in the February budget of

the Liberal federal government this year the government plans to remove \$5.5 billion from the unemployment insurance system over the next three years.

* (1630)

I think that is a good place to start my line of questions, because if fewer Canadians are eligible for unemployment insurance and they lose their jobs—and we know that this is already happening because, like their Conservative predecessors, the Liberals are changing the rules of unemployment insurance. The number of reasons that you are eligible to collect unemployment insurance is decreasing. So, when those people who are no longer eligible lose their jobs, if they do not find another job in short order, they are going to be applying for provincial social assistance. Even though that is cost shared under cap 50-50 with the federal and provincial governments, there is still a cost to this provincial government.

I am wondering if this minister has had a chance to look at any of the implications of these budget changes because the budget came down in February this year. There were estimates that 40,000 Canadians would no longer be eligible for unemployment insurance. Now, I think we are only about 4 percent of the Canadian population, but our unemployment rate is a little bit higher, I think, than the Canadian average. I am wondering if the minister has had a chance to analyze the budget of February, first of all just in the area of unemployment insurance, as to what increased cost to the taxpayers of Manitoba there may be from these federal budget decisions.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We have done some analysis within our department, and we did get some figures from the federal government that indicated that their expectation would be that in Manitoba the impact from the recent UI changes would be around \$2 million, I think. Our analysis indicates that it might be somewhere close to double that, \$3 million to \$4 million. Now that is gross costs. So then when you look at 50 percent cost recoverable, it would be back to the \$2 million gross. They have projected \$2 million gross. We are saying, it is

closer to double that. The cost for Manitoba, we would anticipate might be \$2 million.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Chairperson, that is a very interesting figure.

I wonder if the minister shares my concerns. I know, on the one hand, she has to work with the federal Minister of Human Resources. She has talked about co-operating with him, and there needs to be co-operation between the federal and provincial governments on things like the sole-parent project.

But, on the other hand, does she share my concerns that this exercise of social policy review is really about saving money or offloading to the provinces? Does the minister have any concerns in that regard?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I guess we all have concerns right across the country. We have seen and experienced in the past, and I hate to say it, but it was under a Conservative administration at the federal level that offloaded considerably social supports for aboriginals off reserve, Status Indians off reserve, where in the past they had picked up 100 percent of the cost for welfare and child welfare. That was reduced to 50 percent, just cost-shared.

It has cost the Province of Manitoba upwards of \$25 million per year over the last three years. It is an issue that I have written to the new federal minister about asking whether there is a willingness on their part to accept the traditional responsibility that we believe is their responsibility for the funding of welfare and child welfare to Status Indians, both on and off reserves. So that is an issue. It has happened in the past, there has been a fairly major significant resource allocation needed to account for that offloading. So there always is that concern.

I do not think it would be terribly smart to just sit back and say that we will just go along with whatever happens or whatever is proposed. We know though that our social safety net does cost a lot of money, and as we have indicated—and I think even my honourable friend has indicated—that from time to time you have to take a look and assess, and we want to make sure that we are

spending our dollars wisely, and they are going to the areas that are most in need.

I have no question in my mind that we need to evaluate some of the programs that we have in place and maybe change the way we do things into the future. We cannot continue, we certainly cannot in Manitoba, and I do not think we can in Canada or any other province, and we are seeing that right across the country, that we cannot continue indefinitely to spend more on Health, Education and Family Services as a proportion of our budget year after year to the detriment of every other government department.

When there is no more money to be had unless we increase taxes, the three largest-spending departments within government have to take a look at how they are spending their money and see whether there is not a better way of doing things. I could certainly see more co-operation, more co-ordination between the two different levels of government that might allow for some cost efficiencies as a result of working a little more closely together. I can certainly see that we have to evaluate programs and ensure that we are providing the support for the most needy and the most vulnerable Manitobans and Canadians.

There is a concern. Are we looking at true reform? I do not have a copy of the document that you have. I would love to have a copy, if I might.

The question that we raised, both the Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Manness) and myself, when we were in Ottawa meeting with the federal minister and other provincial ministers, was: Is this going to be true reform? Are we really looking at new ways of doing things, providing the same service to the most vulnerable Canadians at reduced costs because we have been able to find efficiencies, or is it going to be just an offload of what has been traditionally federal responsibility on to the provinces? If it is true reform, we want to be a part of that process. If it is simply an offload, I think we might have very serious concerns.

When you ask if there are concerns, yes. I think I indicated earlier that, when we met in Ottawa back in February, the federal minister was quite clear in saying that they needed a vision at the

federal government for a national program, that he was appointing his own advisory body. There were concerns raised by some provinces that they should have some input or some access to that advisory body.

He made it clear at the time that it was his advisory body, and they were going to present an action plan as a result of the advice that the experts gave to him. They were going to develop an action plan that could be—and he used the specific words “action plan,” too, that it was not another consultation process. It was time that they put something into action, and that action plan would be shared with the provinces in draft form before it was released. Then there would be a process in each province whereby there could be input from Canadians into the action plan before legislative changes were tabled in the fall.

We have seen a major delay in that whole process. We were to get together again at the end of March. That meeting was cancelled, and to date there has not been another ministers’ meeting set. There was some talk that there might be one mid-June. I am not sure where that is at. We have not got any definite dates. I do know that the deputies were to get together next week, and that meeting has been cancelled or postponed at this point in time.

I would be interested—I think we were there around the table saying, yes, we want to co-operate, we want to work together. My comments to the federal minister at the time, too, you know, if you are going to put forth your vision, we would like to see that done. We can share our comments on that vision with you and then move into some sort of a process in provinces where we got input from people in the community around reform.

* (1640)

We are a bit in limbo right now, I suppose. Things have been delayed, but I know that. In all fairness, I guess, to the federal government, I do have to say that it was a fairly major undertaking to announce very quickly major reform in an area that affects many, many Canadians.

If the process has to be slowed down, I guess that is something we have to take into consideration, too. I think it is critical that we see what their vision is going to be and then have an opportunity to react. I say that with every indication that if there would be criticism, it would be constructive criticism, and if there were things that we did not like, we would have to make that known.

I think what we want to do is see provinces and the federal government working together to ensure that we have an efficient and effective social safety net to meet the needs of most vulnerable Canadians in the most cost-effective way possible, because that does then look to ensuring the taxpayers are well served.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. I am wondering if those engaging in private conversations might do so in the loge or outside the Chamber. There has been indication that the participants are having difficulty hearing the minister’s response.

Order, please. I wonder if those honourable gentlemen at the back of the room who are engaged in a private conversation to my right might do so either in the loge or outside the Chamber. I have had indication that the critics are having difficulty hearing the minister’s response. I thank the honourable members for their co-operation.

Ms. McCormick: Madam Chairperson, I guess I am a little troubled by the introduction of the remarks from the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), which seem to indicate that we should maintain the status quo based on public support for the status quo. I think the illustration that we came up with this afternoon indicates clearly that many of our programs are not meeting their desired objective. In fact what we have created in this country is a poverty industry. We employ a great number of people at a great deal of expense with the intended consequence not reaching the people that the money is spent to improve, whose condition that the money is spent to improve.

I am troubled by his going from a leaked federal document and putting back to the minister, again,

concern about the transparency of the federal process. What I would like to encourage is—again, and this is the third time I am on the record saying it—if the process is to turn out as intended, then we all have to participate in it. I would encourage both the member for Burrows and the minister to examine ways in which we can have a public and productive dialogue, rather than relying on leaked information, as setting out a recipe or some kind of diabolical plot.

I think what is troubling me is that in fact up until now we have had remarkable philosophical compatibility as we have talked about some of these issues. But now, again, we are back to alleging that this is some kind of a secret deal intending to dump costs back onto other levels of government. I would encourage the minister to see what ways she can find to get rid of some of this and to get this into a public process and to allow for this dialogue to go on, more than just with the people in the Estimates process. With that, I hope that you will look for other options and that you will find some alternative.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I welcome the comments that have been made by my honourable friend. I would indicate again, though, that I think we discussed this to some degree last night, and I went back and sort of discussed what happened at the meeting back in February. It was made clear at the time that there would be a federal vision. There would be a federal action plan presented and that we would have the opportunity then to respond. That is why ministers were going to come together again and respond. That was sort of the plan at the time, that we would have an opportunity at that point in time, once we saw what the action plan might be, to have some input before it was finalized and moved out into the public forum.

I understand that there are delays. Things do not happen often that quickly within government. There are certain things that take a lot of time, and when you are embarking upon a major reform process, it does not happen overnight. So I can understand, but to date we have not seen the draft of that action plan even as provinces to have any input into it before it comes out in its final form. So

I think that it is important that we see that. I know that Lloyd Axworthy has had his advisers provide him obviously with a plan of action. I guess they have to get busy now at the federal level and put that draft action plan in place and share it with the provinces so we have something to work with before a final document becomes official and becomes public.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to join the minister in saying that I too am looking forward to the action plan or the white paper so that we know what is actually in the minds of the federal minister and the federal government. Right now all we have to go on is the budget decisions, and we see that large sums of money are being taken out of the budget for one of the major social programs.

I wonder if the minister has any concerns about offloading in other areas besides unemployment insurance. We really do not know whether this exercise, as the minister has said, is really about reform or not or whether it is about offloading, but I wonder if there are any other areas that the minister has concerns about.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess I have already expressed my concern, and we certainly cannot blame the Liberal federal government for this one, but it was the issue around Status Indians and the offloading of welfare and child welfare onto the provinces. We may be able to get onto this later under Child and Family Services, but I suppose it pertains to welfare and to all parts of my department.

I am wondering what the devolution of power and the devolution of the Department of Indian Affairs nationally, what impact that is going to have through negotiations with allowing Status Indians to have more control over their own programming. It affects my department in a major way when you look at welfare, you look at child welfare, abuse, spousal abuse, domestic abuse—all of those areas within my department.

I guess it is bilateral negotiations, Indian bands to federal government, but I have some concerns about what the implications might be for Manitoba and for the Manitoba government and Manitoba taxpayers as a result of the devolution. I do not

think we have a clear understanding yet, and we may be a long ways away, but that is an area that I feel we need to get some clarification around how the process is going to work and what in fact will be the funding arrangement by the federal government to individual bands or to Status Indians, in whatever form that might be, whether it be through AMC or individual negotiations with individual bands for specific services.

That is one area that I would like more clarification around. I have written to the federal Minister of Indian Affairs by the way. I have attempted to get a meeting with him in the past without success to discuss some of these issues and see what direction they are planning to take.

Mr. Martindale: I believe we are on line 2.(e). Is that correct?

Madam Chairperson: Yes, that is correct.

* (1650)

Mr. Martindale: Okay. I do not have any questions here, because I think that for a lot of the activities here the questions can be raised in other sections, so I think I will wait and do it later

Madam Chairperson: Item 2.(e) Regional Operations (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$22,535,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$5,203,300—pass.

Resolution 9.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$405,057,100 for Family Services, Income Security and Regional Operations for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1995.

Item 3. Rehabilitation, Community Living and Day Care (a) Administration.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to start with Community Living. I presume the minister's staff are on their way in. I guess, first of all, I am interested in knowing, is this the area that the minister has been talking about a large increase in budget expenditure?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, it is.

Mr. Martindale: Well, that is a good place to start then. How does the minister plan to spend this new increased funding?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The increase is mainly going to community residences for those living with a mental disability and also for more day programming for those with a mental disability. There will be some support also on the children's side, but the majority of the resources will be going in those directions.

Mr. Martindale: I am glad to hear that answer from the minister because I have had correspondence from a number of these community living facilities, particularly group homes, and they have even sent me their budgets. It is quite obvious that their per diems or however their funding comes is not adequate to cover their real costs. In fact, their costs were broken down, their different categories including utilities, and there was even a shortfall in that area.

I am wondering if this minister has consulted with the groups that will be getting this new funding and if they feel that the increase will be adequate to cover their realistic costs.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I do want to clarify my comments by saying that the financial assistance, the extra \$4.5 million that is in this budget area, is going to go towards serving more mentally disabled in the community. I think I should put that on the record because in fact we have many, many requests. I have met with many people from the disabled community who have indicated clearly—and I think I talked about it when I spoke on the budget or throne speech. I cannot remember now which one it was, but I did talk about the number of meetings I have had with people, older parents who had looked after in their homes children with mental disabilities who are now in their 50s and the parents are in their 70s. They are becoming very old and very tired and have made a major contribution to society. They are now looking for some respite or some ability to ensure that their 50-year-old child who is going to need support is going to have that support when they are no longer able to provide it.

I talked about the age of majority, too, where we have those in the child system who are turning 18 and are needing different kinds of support in the community than were available under the

children's program. It only goes up to age 18. So we are looking in those areas to providing additional services for more individuals in the community, also on the day programming side. Once those who are within the school system no longer have access to the school system; at age 21, there is nothing for them to do during the day. So we are enhancing our ability to provide more day programming services to those with mental disabilities.

Mr. Martindale: I thank the minister for that clarification. I think that is an important distinction to make. What I see so far are three categories of people who are going to have enhanced service, I guess.

Are any of the people who are going to benefit from this new funding moving from institutions into the community?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, primarily these are people who are in the community presently. There may be the odd one who does move out of an institution. We only now have MDC and St. Amant, and MDC has been downsizing over the years. So there may be the odd person there, but most of them are people who are in the community who do need supports, as I indicated, for earlier reasons.

Mr. Martindale: So what about the group homes, some of whom have contacted me? I am sorry I do not have the correspondence here. I will look it up over the supper hour. One was from Portage la Prairie. Hopefully, they also tried to enlist the support of their MLA to lobby the minister to get increased funding. Will they benefit at all from the increased budget in this area?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, the way those group homes that presently exist might benefit would be if there was expansion of their programming, expansion of their ability to take in more clients or provide more day programming.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to use, as an example, Brandon Community Options. I think they are doing an excellent job. I visited some of their homes and workshop and met some of the staff. I do not know if they are typical or not, but they did put in a request to the Brandon office for

increased funding because, for example, they have night staff that need to be paid, but they do not have adequate funding for that night staff. Because of government cutbacks, they have had to decrease or cut back on staffing, but their other expenses are increasing. Are they going to get the funding that they need?

* (1700)

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., it is time for private members' hour. I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that this committee will reconvene this evening at 7:30 p.m.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., it is time for Private Members' Business.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 11—Riverton Personal Care Home

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie),

WHEREAS Riverton is a gateway to the northern and central areas of Manitoba; and

WHEREAS Riverton is the logical place to locate a personal care home for the communities on both sides of Lake Winnipeg north of Riverton; and

WHEREAS Riverton has the population and the need to warrant a personal care home; and

WHEREAS communities such as Matheson Island, Pine Dock, and communities along the eastern shore of Lake Winnipeg, such as Bloodvein, Poplar River, and Pauingassi all have historical links to Riverton; and

WHEREAS the people of Arnes, Riverton, Matheson Island and Pine Dock have joined forces with communities on the eastern shore of Lake Winnipeg to support the construction of a personal care home in Riverton; and

WHEREAS there are currently over 300 seniors over the age of seventy in the area; and

WHEREAS there are already at least 26 Riverton residents in personal care homes in other communities; and

WHEREAS according to the Manitoba Health guidelines, Riverton should have a personal care home with roughly 30 beds; and

WHEREAS while the number of personal care beds in communities surrounding Winnipeg have increased, rural areas have largely been ignored; and

WHEREAS the Riverton Personal Care Committee has put forward a thorough proposal which should be acted upon by the Minister of Health.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Health to consider acting on this proposal on a priority basis so that construction on the Riverton personal care home can begin in 1994.

Motion presented.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to bring this resolution to the members of this House for their support today, terribly important to the community of Riverton and of course to the surrounding communities such as Matheson Island, Pine Dock and some of those that I have mentioned in the resolution.

A little history on the proposal, Mr. Speaker, and what has been accomplished by the community of Riverton and, of course, I made mention of the community of Fisher Branch. Back in 1990, the then-Minister of Rural Development, the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), stated in his presentation in Hecla, at the resort in Hecla, that the future for certain small communities was the ability to provide for the growing elderly population either by seniors lodges or personal care beds.

At that time, the presentation was made stipulating the fact that so as to maintain and expand the population within a community, not only should communities perhaps look at other

rural economic benefits to the community, such as the Highways department or Rural Development or Natural Resources, but that they should look at taking care of the increasing aging population within their structural areas and at the same time, Mr. Speaker, provide a home and a community-based health care system for those whose age and health has forced them from these areas and these communities to seek alternative accommodations and have to leave their communities, something which nobody—I am sure, members on this side or on the other side, rural members, know the effect of the loss of population within their communities, whether it be the young and of course the elderly.

Now forcing the elderly to leave their farms, to leave their homes, to have to go to other communities miles away, being away from their family, further away from their families, further away from their friends, people who have formed their roots in communities having to leave and go many, many miles away from their loved ones to have to go to larger communities, larger based communities, makes it difficult for their family and friends to either visit or just be close enough, so that they still have that home-based feeling.

That, I think, is the main point or one of the main points of the resolution, and, of course, the need for personal care beds and seniors lodges in the different rural areas where the people do not want to have to take their parents 100 miles away, because that is where the accommodation may be. An important part of their lives would be gone. That important part, again, as I have said, is the fact that they are not near their families as much. They are not there, and it is tougher and harder. It makes it harder for the families to be able to provide for their parents or for their relatives.

Mr. Speaker, after the presentation was made that I was present at, as mayor of the community at that time, I went back to my community and we discussed this, and I found out that Riverton had put together a proposal some years before. At the same time, the community of Fisher Branch and the community of Riverton—right after we discussed it—we undertook, along with Fisher Branch, to begin studies just to see whether such personal care situations would be viable for our

community and for the community of Fisher Branch. We kept in contact, I kept in contact with the reeve of Fisher Branch, and we discussed certain areas and situations and just where we could go with this.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Fisher Branch began with a survey and meetings, formed a committee and even went so far as to—and I had the opportunity to meet with the committee. During their survey, they were able to accomplish pledges from the residents, pledges that would provide financial support to a certain level towards their personal care home. I thought that was an excellent idea.

I am hoping and I believe that the community of Riverton and the area is planning on doing the same thing. They have gone ahead, and the work that they have done since 1990 has to be commended for the dedication that they have put in, to be able to go out to the communities, provide the sources, provide the accessories, provide all the necessary paperwork and review that was necessary, to be able to present it to the government.

* (1710)

Right now Fisher Branch has been approved to a point, and I certainly hope that we can go further with the Fisher Branch personal care home as well and, especially, as well as Riverton's. They are both needed; one is not going to interfere with the other. The population of the aged is there, unfortunately. The population is there, and it is growing.

The community of Riverton in 1993, after many discussions with community leaders and with conversation back and forth with government and myself, formed a committee, pooled financial resources together between councils, between organizations, between some fund raisers, to be able to hire a consultant to meet with them and do a complete study. They felt that there is no sense going ahead with a half-baked idea, but by going ahead with something concrete, Mr. Speaker, and something concrete has come out of this.

The viability of a personal care home in Riverton, according to the study, the proposal that

was presented to the minister, is there. The community feels it is there, and the community wants to go ahead with this.

One of the results that we got from this study was that, as I mentioned in the resolution, right now at this date in time Riverton could use at least 30 to 32 beds. Now the proposal for Fisher Branch is 30 beds. That is according to the study. That is 60 beds in an area, I would say, of around 50 kilometres distance or perhaps further: 30 to 32 beds that are needed right now in Riverton and 30 beds that are proposed in Fisher Branch through the study. It just seems, unfortunately, that we have that need to maintain the rural community base; and, if it has to be through personal care homes or seniors lodges, so be it.

The guidelines from the Manitoba Health is for 90 personal care beds for every 1,000 residents age 70 and older. According to the study, they are considering a 1987-to-1992 population of 70-plus. The availability of personal care beds in the north Interlake, not the entire Interlake, will decrease to 86.4 beds per 1,000. Past the year 2000 it will decrease even more. So the study is showing us the need is there. The study is showing us that the availability of personal care beds is dropping for our elderly people, our 70 to 75 and further.

We want to keep these people in the community. We want to provide them with the health care. We want to provide them with some care, whether this is right, right now for our population and for the future. You have to consider for the future. The population is growing. The age of the population in our communities around the Fisher Branch, around Riverton, around Matheson Island and Pine Dock and Ashern areas is growing, and that is unfortunate. They are growing in population from 70-plus years of age.

We seriously have to consider it. If there is no other alternative to be able to provide for these people, then let us look at a service, at a system that can provide and maintain these people within their communities.

Mr. Speaker, the proposal itself does not just come from the community itself because the community initiated it; the community went out

and got support from other communities. At one of the meetings that I attended, the people said: Let us go out and let us talk to the communities around us; let us talk to the communities a hundred kilometres away north of us, northeast of us; let us talk to the Matheson Island people; let us talk to the Berens River people.

The support is there. Letters of support, the explanation from these communities directed to the minister, I am sure, and through the committee state that at least if there were a personal care service in the community of Riverton, for these people who have contact, family contacts in the community of Riverton, it would be more viable for them to come that distance and establish themselves in the community of Riverton if the personal care service were provided.

Mr. Speaker, again I said the support was overwhelming. It was overwhelming four years ago, but not to the intensity that it is now. We are seeing an exodus of elderly people, and our pioneers having to make decisions to leave the community that they have grown up in, the community that they have their roots and their families in. I feel that the best way possible now to be able to provide and revitalize a community or revitalize the situation that we have within our communities is to provide some sort of service.

In Riverton alone, 10 percent of the eligible population are currently in personal care homes outside of Riverton and outside of the area. That number will increase to 30 percent by 1995 and 33 percent by the year 2000. Should location, should area, should size of community, should that make a difference as to whether a community of 600 people such as Riverton and Fisher Branch, a community of 1,000 people such as other communities—should that be a deterrent to the smaller communities so as not to be able to have and provide for these elderly people?

The community and the committee of Riverton understand the needs, and I would like to just quickly read to you a paragraph of how the community of Riverton feels towards the health care system.

I quote: In our quest for a personal care home in Riverton, we wish to work with Manitoba Health to ameliorate the impact of health reform and jobs in the health care sector in the Interlake, rather than seeing health reform in a negative light, as has been the experience to date. We want to work with Manitoba Health and our neighbouring communities to allow for the transfer of jobs to a personal care home in Riverton.

With this as the goal, the strategy would be to open a personal care home in Riverton as a substitute for the more costly, less appropriate facilities and programs elsewhere in the Interlake and Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, what I feel that that paragraph tells us is that the community of Riverton wants to work with this government, with any government, and is willing to work with any government. They want to be treated fairly. They want to work alongside with the communities near to them and the people within their own communities.

We are looking for an answer from this minister. We are hoping for an answer. We are hoping for a meeting. We are hoping for discussions. We are hoping, Mr. Speaker, that further discussions with Fisher Branch continue so that we may be able to provide those health care beds. The community leaders, dedicated citizens and volunteers want to work with any responsible group, agency or government to meet their objective.

Unfortunately or fortunately, if you want to say, this community has dedicated itself not to go away, not to go away until they are heard, until they get a chance to meet with the minister and discuss this very, very important issue for the communities of the Interlake, for the community of Riverton and the community of Fisher Branch. Thank you.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to have a part in the discussion today on the resolution brought forward by the honourable member for Interlake on Resolution 11 with respect to the community of Riverton and the desire expressed through the honourable member of that community to locate a personal care home within that community.

* (1720)

I would like the honourable member to be aware that my schedule of late has been a little more restrictive, but I have visited in some 45 Manitoba communities, and at the earliest opportunity I would not be adverse whatsoever to a visit to the Riverton community to discuss health care issues with the people there. That has been very much part of my work over the last number of months as a Minister of Health, that being to hear what the concerns are in our province, in the communities and from the people most directly affected.

I have been listening to consumers of health care services and many, many different kinds of providers of health care services in Manitoba, as well as concerns of those interested in preventive health issues to get a clear understanding of how the health care system of the future will benefit future generations, indeed, should there be a future health care system. Because, indeed, if we had carried on, on the path we were on, it is a virtual guarantee that there would be no health care system in the future.

In my view, having been fortunate enough with Darlene's very able assistance to bring five Canadians into this world with the assistance of our health care system, I do not think it is fair to those children to leave them nothing for the time when they will need a health care system to assist them in whatever health issues that they may be presented with in the future, and indeed their children and those who come after. This generation of Canadians owes something better to future generations than to squander away our health care resources in such a way that we leave nothing for those who come after.

Mr. Speaker, the honourable member's resolution is specific and talks about a personal care home for Riverton. I want the honourable member to be reminded that, in this particular budget year, we are providing to the health care sector \$1.85 million in health initiatives for Manitobans that has an emphasis on community and nonacute-based health care services. Indeed, Home Care services will receive \$2.6 million more this year than last.

I remind the honourable member of the \$5.6 million increase in expenditure for the Pharmacare program and the Drug Program Information Network to improve the system and to control abuse. I remind the honourable member of the \$4.3 million additional for community-based Mental Health Services. I remind the honourable member of \$500,000 additional going into the development of Support Services to Seniors.

I do not know if the honourable member was present in this room when we discussed the Estimates for this year of my department. We went over a list of all of the Support Services to Seniors organizations, and if my memory is correct, which I believe it is, the honourable member's constituency has a large number of Support Services to Seniors organizations. That is to the credit of the people of that constituency, but it is also something supported by our government. I do not see anywhere in the honourable member's resolution where he makes any comment or acknowledgement of the level of support this government provides to his constituency.

I remind the honourable member that there will be \$2.4 million more in this year's budget for dialysis treatment. I remind him of \$1.3 million for bone marrow transplants, that there will be a breast cancer screening program to help reduce risk for 100,000 Manitoba women. I remind him of our lung transplant program here in Manitoba so that people do not have to go so far away for that kind of health care service. I remind the honourable member that in the almost immediate future there will be the announcement of an appeal panel and an advisory committee on home care. I remind the honourable member about the implementation of a regulated midwifery program.

All of these things are part of this year's planning of our government and in this year's budget. So I ask the honourable member, why did he not support the budget brought forward which provides all of these community-based health initiatives? If he wants us to continue to develop infrastructure in the way of personal care which we are doing in Manitoba, why does he not support that when the time comes for him to register his support? He did not, Mr. Speaker. He spoke out

against all of these measures, and I find that reprehensible as he stands in the House today to make a case for his constituency.

I certainly do not quarrel with him for doing that, because I am sure if I were in his place, I would do the same thing. You know, this whole process is a teamwork thing. It is a partnership between me and between communities and health care providers and health care consumers. The honourable member is a member of that partnership, too, and that is what we need in this House and in this province, more partnership and less of that partisan approach that sometimes characterizes discussions on these issues. I would ask the honourable member to join with me in supporting measures that will improve circumstances in our province.

I remind the honourable member that since this government took office there have been 732 additional and new personal home care beds put into place. That is a lot of new jobs, too, throughout our province. We have enhanced the number of adult day club programs and the number of spaces available in such programs. Recently the government identified a need for personal care beds in the Interlake. To address this, the government has committed to the construction of 77 additional beds in the Interlake communities of Fisher Branch, Teulon and Stonewall. This government conducts a rural district analysis to assess the appropriate volume of personal care home resources for a region.

I appreciate very much that the honourable member should raise this matter for the Legislature, but he ought, by his actions, to be consistent with his words. Through those actions he ought to be supportive of a government that has put such very, very significant amounts of dollar resource commitments into health care initiatives in Manitoba and certainly a very greatly expanded emphasis on community options to acute care such as personal care and such as all of the others that I have mentioned.

All I ask, Mr. Speaker, in this partnership is that the honourable member get with the program, get with the partnership in building a health care system that will be sustainable for many, many

years to come. That system has to be there for our elderly citizens when the time comes for them, when an adult day club is not enough any more, when home care is not enough any more, when personal care is necessary. It would be nice if we could have personal care spaces in every community.

However, is that the approach we should be using, or should we be using that rural district analysis approach to the planning of these facilities which do cost many, many dollars on an annual basis to keep in operation to provide the kind of care that communities want and expect for their senior citizens and those who need that kind of care?

I compliment the communities the honourable member referred to. I compliment them for their foresight and vision, and while I say to them that I will indeed meet with them at an appropriate and mutually agreeable time, these kinds of items the honourable member raised in his comments today will be the kinds of items that would be raised in such a discussion. I look forward to that discussion.

* (1730)

In the meantime, I would like to move an amendment to the honourable member's resolution to more appropriately reflect the circumstances as they exist today.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister),

That Resolution No. 11 be amended by deleting all the words following the first WHEREAS and replacing them with the following:

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba has provided 732 new and additional personal care home beds for Manitoba residents since election to office; and

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba is addressing the personal care home needs of the Interlake by committing to the construction of 77 beds in the communities of Fisher Branch, Teulon and Stonewall; and

WHEREAS the government remains diligent in monitoring appropriate volume of personal care

beds in all communities throughout the province; and

WHEREAS previous governments have ignored equity and efficiency in the distribution of personal care homes causing inequitable and inefficient distribution of personal care home space; and

WHEREAS this government uses a rural district analysis planning model to avoid irrational and inefficient personal care resource allocation.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba encourage the government to remain vigilant in the monitoring and assessment of personal care home needs in Manitoba, and that the government continue to observe equity, efficiency and appropriateness as the determinants of personal care home resources in Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable minister's amendment is in order.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in favour of the original motion. Like so many of the resolutions that are put forward by the opposition, the government sees fit to put a partisan nature on a resolution which, quite frankly, I do not think was particularly partisan. I think here was an MLA who was putting forward a concern of members of his constituency and the needs of his constituency.

His remarks—and I followed his remarks very, very carefully—quite frankly, were very much tied to the need of the community of Riverton and surrounding area. There was one particular aspect of his resolution that struck me personally, and that was the WHEREAS that called and indicated that there were 26 residents of the community of Riverton and surrounding area that were in personal care elsewhere in the province.

We spent a lot of time talking about the fact that our rural communities are dying and that our young people in those communities are seeking to move elsewhere. But somehow or other it is even more tragic, it seems to me, because I think we all recognize that young people often like to sow their oats, like to move to other communities, like to

move away from the family and necessarily the control of the family and seek to make their livelihood and their living, raise their families in communities elsewhere.

Those who have lived in communities for decades and decades usually would, if they were given their choice, seek to live their remaining years in that community. That is, I think, what the member was so clearly addressing today, that there is a genuine need, it appears, in this community for a personal care home to meet the needs of those senior citizens living or previously living in that community and who would like to return to that community if such a facility were available to them.

Nowhere in the resolution was any criticism of the government's move to the construction of an additional number of beds during their mandate in communities throughout the province, many of them in the city of Winnipeg where many were required. Nobody has criticized the construction of 77 beds in the communities of Fisher Branch, Teulon and Stonewall. Those are all positive initiatives. They are all important initiatives for the residents who live in those communities and their surrounding areas.

What this resolution simply did, I would suggest, was to lay before the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) in a clear and concise manner, 15 minutes being the limitation upon the presentation, of the research that had been done in this community, the data that had been collected in this community, the support which this community had been given from Matheson Island and Pine Dock and other communities along the eastern shore who would also, knowing that their own community was not large enough to have a personal care home, choose to have their seniors, if they needed to move into a personal care home, in one that was closest to them, and that would be in the community of Riverton.

Mr. Speaker, there is a commitment on the part of this government, a commitment that I frequently do not see in either dollars or policy initiative, to move to a more community-based health care system. What can be more community based than

having senior citizens, when they reach Levels III and IV in their quality of care and can no longer be dependent upon home care because their care needs to be so intensive? What is more community based than to allow them to live out their final years in a personal care home close to their community, and hopefully close to their loved ones?

Frequently, we know that one partner finds themselves in a personal care home long before the other partner does, but partners are frequently close in age, not always, but frequently. If one of the couple is 75 and is placed in a personal care home, then the chances are pretty good that the other partner is in their 70s and, therefore, if that individual is placed far away, the other part of their partnership, their long-term partnership, is often prevented from having contact with them.

That is why the government quite wisely, and quite rightly, has built many personal care beds in communities close to where the need exists, and there is no fault for that, only appreciation that they have moved in that direction.

* (1740)

So I would like to support the motion originally put forward by the member and, unfortunately, cannot support the amendment put forward by the Minister of Health, not because I disagree with much of what he has stated, but because it is so self-serving in contrast to the original resolution, which is not self-serving, which has set forth in clearest possible terms the reasons for the need in his community, the documented evidence, and has urged the government, perhaps a little strongly in the final BE IT RESOLVED, to get the construction up and running in 1994, when that is perhaps not very practical at this particular point in time.

To suggest that certainly the government should examine the needs, should use its own guidelines to evaluate the needs, should use its own guidelines to make a decision with respect to this community, all of those I can support without any difficulty at all, and I thank the member for alerting the House as a whole to the community problem that exists in Riverton.

Riverton is a community that I have visited on a number of occasions. Certainly I, too, had been told by those Liberals who live in the area of their desire for a personal care home—yes, indeed, there are some—for a personal care home in the community, some with aging parents about whom they have concerns.

I want to put on the record the support of our caucus for the original resolution and not for the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, we have, on a number of occasions, expressed concern over the government's tendency, predilection to amend private members' resolutions when amendments are clearly not necessary, not helpful, and in this case not supportive of a resolution that I think all members in this Chamber should be supporting.

Mr. Speaker, the member of the Legislature for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) who proposed this has made it very clear that he wanted this debate to be nonpartisan, that he wanted the discussion around a very specific proposal coming from the community of Riverton to focus on the issue— [interjection] The Deputy Premier from his chair says, well, throw away your New Democratic Party affiliation, your membership, and we will maybe consider this.

Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of language that gets the member for Arthur (Mr. Downey) in trouble. That is the kind of language that has made him so popular in northern Manitoba by telling us that the North does not vote right. Well, now he has just told the people in Riverton that the people in Riverton do not vote right.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Interlake raised this without once mentioning [interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I just want to make sure that the record clearly states it was the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) that said that, not me.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) who raised this, raised it out of genuine concern for the community and the region around Riverton, concern because his community and members in the community and the surrounding area have spent a huge amount of time and effort in supporting this proposal. I think it is important to put on the record that this proposal is supported by not only the community but by the health planner who developed the proposal with and for the community.

I think that it is important to recognize that, when the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) amends the resolution created for the people of Riverton by the member for Interlake with an amendment that really belittles the efforts of the people of that community, other members of the Chamber should join in this debate.

Mr. Speaker, this is simply wrong. It is not fair to the people of Riverton. It is not fair to the people who live in the surrounding area. It is not fair to the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) who attempted to bring this debate to the Legislature in a reasoned and intelligent and thoughtful way, out of concern. For members opposite to belittle it, for the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to undermine their effort does a disservice to the many people who take this issue very seriously and to the people who would like to have a personal care home in their area to look after the needs of their seniors, but also to look after the needs and the interests of the people in their community, the family and friends who want to visit people who are in personal care homes in their own community.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Flin Flon constituency have the same problem. A personal care home has been promised since 1988, and we await a personal care home in the community of Flin Flon. So there are many of us who are in the same situation as the member for Interlake. It is not good enough for the Minister of Health to get up and by resolution discount, in effect in an offhand way, everything that the people of Riverton have tried to do,

everything that the people in the area have tried to do. I should point out that it is not just the people in Riverton who have supported this proposal, it is the people of the Interlake. The region supports this proposal.

The health planner who did the initial study made it very clear that the proposal should have been accepted, that the number of potential users of this facility warrants the construction of a personal care home in Riverton, and the minister's amendment, although it technically may not be out of order, is out of order as far as I am concerned because it really belittles the work and the effort and the need of a group of people who deserve the support of this government as much as anyone else.

The political affiliation of the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) should not be an issue. He did not make it an issue. He brought the concern in a genuine nonpartisan way to this Chamber, looking for support, and the response unfortunately from the government has been less than honourable in this case. Some people in the Interlake are going to view it as insulting. That is all I have to say on this issue.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to add a few remarks to the resolution put forward by the member for Interlake, and I want to compliment the member for Interlake for bringing this forward. I think it is an important issue, and I certainly want to commend him for bringing it forward, to working for his community. I think the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) made some remarks, and I also want to—the former member, MLA for the Interlake was the Honourable Bill Uruski, and some of you probably remember him. He was the—

An Honourable Member: No, I do not remember.

(Mr. Jack Reimer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Mr. Helwer: He was the MLA from 1969 to 1990, and 14 years he was the minister under two NDP governments, Ed Schreyer and Howard Pawley as Premiers. Why in that 14 years or 21 years actually, 14 years as a minister—[interjection]

Why did Mr. Uruski not build a personal care home in Riverton? Here was a town in his own constituency. He built additions in Arborg, Lundar, Ashern. He looked after those communities. He did a good job of looking after the constituency as a whole, basically—why did he not build one in Riverton? You know, I am not saying the need is not there. The member for the Interlake outlined the need, and I believe him. I commend him for that, but I think he was shortchanged by the former government, the Howard Pawley government, and the former member for the Interlake.

I do want to say that our government is certainly serious about services to seniors, and actually in my constituency, the constituency of Gimli, runs within about, I do not know, eight or 10 miles from the town of Riverton, I believe, and Riverton is a good community. It certainly deserves to have some services there for seniors. I know they have some senior citizen homes now.

But I want to tell you a little bit about the seniors in the Interlake, Mr. Acting Speaker, because just last week the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Ducharme) and I were in Gimli, as a matter of fact, providing some other services to seniors. We offered to lease the old training centre that the province has there to the Gimli New Horizons club. Because Gimli is such a great place and the whole Interlake is such a great place to live and retire actually, we have so many seniors in the area. The New Horizons club in Gimli is so active and does so many things and has so many members that they have to expand. So the Minister responsible for Seniors, or the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Ducharme), and I were in Gimli last week to sign a lease for 20 years with the New Horizons club there so that they can have a clubhouse and an area whereby they can serve the seniors' needs for the whole area, not only for the Gimli area. This will also serve part of the Interlake, and it is great we were able to do that.

*(1750)

I also want to say that this government is very serious about the services to seniors, and we look at the improvements we have made to the Home

Care Program and increased funding for home care and the Seniors Resource Centres that we have provided. We just announced some new ones, additional Seniors Resource Centres, and these are great. They do provide services to seniors so that seniors can enjoy their own homes with some home care possibly and with some services provided by the Seniors Resource Centres. Also, there is a congregate meal program that is great, which provides meal service for some of the seniors if they need it, and I will tell you these seniors really appreciate it. They do not mind paying a few dollars for their meals or a few dollars for their services that they receive, but they really do appreciate these services that are provided by these resource centres. We have some excellent people in the Interlake who do provide these services for seniors. They do an excellent job, and we certainly appreciate everything they do for them.

Also, on the personal care side, I certainly appreciated last year the former Minister of Health announced that we would have an addition in Teulon and in Stonewall. This is great. These are really needed. Stonewall is one of the fastest-growing towns in Manitoba, and these services are really required there. We certainly appreciate the fact we are going to get a new hospital in Stonewall. It is under construction now, and once we can move into the new hospital, the old hospital will be torn down and a new personal care home built on that site, in addition to Stonewood Place there at Stonewall.

This is a great addition for that community, because it is growing, and it also is a good retirement place, a good retirement centre. We have a lot more seniors now in Stonewall, Teulon and Gimli than we have ever had because of its proximity to Winnipeg, close to Winnipeg, and just a great place to retire.

So it does put more pressure on the services, such as the services for seniors, such as the personal care homes, the senior citizens' homes, the New Horizons clubs, that they need better facilities and more activities to do.

But we do have a very active group in the Interlake and in the Gimli constituency. As a matter of fact, Gimli has bid for the 1996 Manitoba Society of Seniors Games. I understand that we were not successful, that they were going to Killarney. But that is great. We will let them go to Killarney in 1996, and perhaps we can get them in 1997 or in 1998 in Gimli and in the Interlake, because these games are for people 55 plus and certainly it gives those people who are retired an opportunity to still take part in the sports that they are active in. It is great for their health and keeps them active and gives them something to do and makes their life very challenging. So it is great to see these events, such as the Manitoba Society of Seniors.

I also want to commend our Minister responsible for Seniors for hosting the Seniors Day, such as we are having in the Legislature here in early June. He is having them around the country in different places. These give seniors an opportunity, it gives us an opportunity to show our appreciation for the contribution these seniors have made to Manitoba. We certainly appreciate everything they have done to build this country and to make it the country that we have and that we enjoy.

Also, the minister spoke, in his amendment, of the volume of personal care beds that we provide in the province, some 732 new personal care home beds since we first came to office in 1988. So it certainly shows that there is a demand, and we are really pleased that we were able to help and provide some extra beds for them.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I believe that is about all I have, but I want to commend the member for bringing this resolution forward and for the community of Riverton. Thank you.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Acting Speaker, I rise to make some comments on the amendment by the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae). It is unfortunate that we were not able to deal with a resolution such as this where—and it was gratifying to hear the compliments and the direction from some of the other members in indicating the nonpartisanship by this member with regard to a necessity and a

need and a personal feeling on this matter. I regret that the minister's amendment was so backslapping for his government, as he is so partisan as what this government has done.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that is all well and fine. Had the minister at least said that he was going to support the personal care home in Riverton, if he had provided an amendment that would have moved the proposition along, then perhaps I could have gone along with that. But I cannot because my resolution, you can read it from now until the cows come home, says nothing perhaps as the minister indicated about what the government has done and that I voted against the budget. It never said anything in the resolution negative to this government when it came. There was nothing negative there. There may not have been anything there, but there was nothing negative against this government about the personal care homes or about the health system as far as personal care homes and personal care beds or seniors lodges.

The member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) mentioned the previous member for Interlake, and I am sure that the previous honourable member for Interlake, Mr. Uruski, will get copies of the honourable member for Gimli's statements. When I go around my constituency and I walk into a lot of the seniors homes that are in my constituency, they were as a result of this Mr. Uruski, the previous member for Interlake. That is who put most of the seniors homes in the Interlake.

An Honourable Member: Why did he forget about Riverton?

Mr. Clif Evans: Perhaps at that time, there was not as great a need for personal care beds as there is today.

An Honourable Member: He wrote it off.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Acting Speaker, the previous Minister of Health also makes comments, and the comments he makes I cannot take very lightly because this member was trying to speak on behalf of a community, of a region, of an area.

I was pleased when the Fisher Branch community came to the previous minister and discussed the proposal with them, using the same consultant as what our community used, so why,

Mr. Acting Speaker, not deal with this matter nonpartisan? Members opposite have indicated that they support and commend the fact that a resolution such as this was brought forth. The member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) supports it. The member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) from the Liberal Party supports it.

Why do they support it? They support it because it is a nonpartisan, very basic, very requesting resolution. Not a demand. It was not demanding anything of the minister or the government. I was not insisting anything. I was requesting on behalf of the community, on behalf of the people in the Interlake region around Riverton and the Riverton community, requesting on behalf of the people

who have worked so hard in the last four years to put this proposal through in a nonpartisan, most sincere way, on an all-party basis, support as I have, as the member on this side of the House supported, certain resolutions that members opposite on the government side have done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Reimer): Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) will have approximately 10 minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that the House will reconvene at 7:30 p.m. in Committee of Supply.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 25, 1994

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