



Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



Vol. XLVI No. 19 - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 17, 1996

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 17, 1996

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): I must inform the House that Madam Speaker has been unavoidably detained and therefore I would request, in accordance with the statutes, that the Deputy Speaker take the Chair.

(Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Seasonal Camping Fees

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Sheila Nelson, Lois Kinsman, Dolores Cabernel and others urging the provincial government not to increase seasonal camping fees by such a large amount.

Home Care Services

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Percy Bird, June Doblyn, Linda Brazeau and others requesting the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Robert Hnatiuk, Cathy Walters, M. Feliksiak and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Dorothy Glover, Marion Marks, Alex Marks and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Seasonal Camping Fees

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and find that it complies with the rules and practices of the House (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS seasonal camping has provided an affordable form of recreation for many Manitobans; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has announced increases in seasonal camping fees of up to 100 percent; and

WHEREAS this huge increase is far more than any cost-of-living increase; and

WHEREAS this increase will lead to many people being unable to afford seasonal camping.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government not to increase seasonal camping fees by such a large amount.

Home Care Services

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

* (1335)

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

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dispense.

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

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

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to

request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

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

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

* (1340)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale). It

complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT on at least six occasions during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier promised not to cut health services; and

THAT on December 16, 1995, a plan to privatize home care services was presented to Treasury Board; and

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations, mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

THAT previous cuts to the Home Care program have resulted in services being cut and people's health being compromised; and

THAT thousands of caring front-line service providers will lose their jobs as a result of this change; and

THAT profit has no place in the provision of vital health services.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mr. Ben Sveinson (Deputy Chairperson of Committees): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered certain resolutions, directs me to report progress and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 201—The Aboriginal Solidarity Day Act

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), that leave be given to introduce Bill 201, The Aboriginal Solidarity Day Act (Loi sur le jour de solidarité à l'égard des autochtones), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Deputy Speaker, June 21 has long been regarded by the first peoples of this continent as being a very sacred day. I know in other cultures it is regarded as the longest day of the year, the summer solstice.

I know that in a time to come I will have an opportunity to speak about the meaning of this to First Nations people and other aboriginal people, and I will be calling upon colleagues from all sides of this House to support this bill. I believe that it will do all Manitobans proud, especially aboriginal people in this province, by being the first group of legislators to acknowledge and recognize the contributions that have been made by Canada's original inhabitants and also taking into consideration their history, their language and their aspirations. Perhaps other provinces and, hopefully, our national government will also follow our lead. Thank you very much.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I inadvertently missed Notices of Motion so I will just return to that.

* (1345)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before we proceed, I would like to draw the attention of the honourable members to the loge to my right where we have with us today the Honourable Harry Graham who was former Speaker and member for Birtle-Russell.

I would also like to bring to your attention that in the public gallery we have seated today from River Heights Middle School thirty-five Grades 7 and 8 students under the direction of Mrs. Mary Kirk and Mrs. Louise Gaston. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe).

We have seated in the public gallery from the Red River Valley Junior Academy twenty-two Grade 8 students under the direction of Mr. Landry. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Doer).

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Home Care Program APM Report Release

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

For the last couple of weeks we have been asking the government to release reports, and specifically we have been asking the government last week and this week to release the APM report that was paid for by taxpayers. The minister has said a number of things about this report: 1) he did not know whether there was a report, 2) that there may have been a report, that it may have had material in it, et cetera.

I would refer the Premier back to Hansard on May 27, 1994, where the minister specifically states, "... the work of APM with our department on the home care project last year arrived at certain recommendations."

Given the serious initiative of the Filmon government or the provincial government on home care and given that we have paid for a report by the APM consultants dealing and providing recommendations to his government, will the Premier now order his Minister of Health to make public the APM recommendations and documents so that all Manitobans can see what we paid for on this very important public service called home care?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the APM work with respect to home care was not the subject of a formal report. What the process involved and the arrangement involved was a

process to facilitate the people who work for Manitoba Health in the provision of home care services in trying to identify areas where improvements could be made. That is what was arrived at. There was no formal APM report as the honourable member's question suggests.

The work that was done by Manitobans working on this project led to the same kinds of conclusions that were arrived at in the Price Waterhouse report, some of the same ones. They did not obviously suggest user fees like the NDP-commissioned Price Waterhouse report did, but it identified problems, problems like gaps in services, inconsistencies amongst the regions, a sense of unfairness amongst staff and clients, and significant inefficiencies—the same kinds of findings as in the NDP-commissioned Price Waterhouse report.

Mr. Doer: The government is talking about a formal report. People have been quoted as seeing the documentation from the APM. The minister, himself, has said, we have recommendations. They have "... arrived at certain recommendations."—on May 27, 1994. He says it in Hansard on page 2556, in 1994. We do not want different answers different days to the same questions.

I would like the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to stop the cover-up of recommendations and documents from the APM on the home care system and order his Minister of Health to make public all documents on home care from APM so all the public can see it.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in that review the Department of Health found many of the same circumstances and conditions that the Price Waterhouse report found. I do not disagree with honourable members and others who comment and make very positive comments about our Home Care program. The difference is that we have—in my position and the position of honourable members opposite—not quite yet achieved perfection.

There are problems in the Home Care program, and yesterday the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) said, go back to the system we had in the first place. Well, he wants a system, which by his own commissioned report, the Price Waterhouse report, tells us that there is no strategic data plan, inadequate hospital discharge planning practices, inappropriate discharges to home care, lack of proper discharge preparation and

potentially unsafe client situations. That is what he wants us to go back to. No.

* (1350)

Mr. Doer: Over the last couple of weeks and over the last couple of years, we have had different answers to the same question from the same minister dealing with a home care consulting report that taxpayers have paid for on a vital service right now that people feel very strongly about.

The minister talks about caring about Alzheimer patients and other patients in Manitoba who require home care services. All of those groups, the seniors association, the disabled organizations that represent many of those people, have recommended against privatization. The government has commissioned reports; they have recommendations in their possession.

I would ask the Premier to stop the cover-up of the APM documentation and call the minister to account and release those documents and those recommendations right today.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I told the honourable Leader of the Opposition, there is no APM report. I told him that what that was was a process to facilitate the Department of Health in addressing some of the problems that there are in the home care system.

In his preamble the honourable Leader of the Opposition identifies people with Alzheimer's disease and multiple sclerosis and others. We are in a labour dispute right now and the union in this case has agreed to look after less than 1 percent of the people in our home care system, those people who are terminally ill who are going to die within three to six months. Those are the people that the union has agreed to provide services to.

Why will they not provide services to people mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, people with Alzheimer's disease, people with multiple sclerosis, people with Parkinson's disease, people with severe cases of arthritis and others who need these services? Why do they refuse to provide services to those people?

Home Care Program Advisory Committee/Appeal Panel

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government, the minister, with much fanfare, set up an advisory committee on home care, a hand-picked committee, and he told us in the House that he did not want to tell them what their advice ought to be and he thinks we should show a little respect for this process and hear from the advisory council or the appeal panel.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we now find out that this advisory committee was not even given the plans to privatize before the government decided to privatize. They were given final results of privatization.

My question for the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is, how does the Premier expect the people of this province to have any confidence in this minister, in this government, when the minister's own advisory committee is not even given data and information about privatization when that committee is the very one that is supposed to make recommendations concerning home care in this province?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the advisory committee has been consulted repeatedly and will continue to be consulted, as will the appeal panel, which is, by the way, I remind honourable members, something they never thought to have for the clients of the Home Care program. Since having an appeal panel, we have been able to solve a lot of problems in the home care system, and our clients have been pleased about that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we ask all kinds of people for their views. We ask people in advisory committees for their views. Sometimes we take their advice; sometimes we agree. Indeed, in the present situation, there is no evidence that there is even consensus amongst the members of the advisory committee on the issues that we are discussing here.

So, while I have great respect for each and every one of them—and they were chosen for the advisory committee capacity because of their backgrounds representing consumers, representing providers of services; their advice is always going to be valuable to us—ultimately, the people of Manitoba asked this government to make

decisions that are in the best interests of all Manitobans, and that is what we will continue to do.

* (1355)

Advisory Committee Report Release

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister will not make public the Connie Curran recommendations. He will not make public a single report or article—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member that there is no need for a preamble or postamble to his question.

The member could put his question now, please.

Mr. Chomiak: My question to the Minister of Health is, will the Minister of Health today release the report and the recommendations of the ministerial advisory committee since it is being paid for by taxpayers' expense and we have a right to know what his own advisory committee had to say about the government's ill-fated plans to privatize?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to know the view of the committee with respect to whether they want to have their report released to the honourable member for Kildonan in view of the fact that it seems that there is not a consensus in that committee. In any event, on the point being raised, I would suggest the honourable member address that question to the committee itself, remembering, as I have said, that it is my understanding that the view expressed is not one that is the subject of unanimity or perhaps even consensus.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Deputy Speaker, my final supplementary to this Minister of Health: Can the Minister of Health explain to the people of Manitoba why he refuses to make public the Connie Curran recommendations, the recommendations and advice of his own advisory committee, and why he was afraid to give his own advisory committee his plans to privatize home care before he privatized home care and gave it to them as a fait accompli? Can the minister explain that to the public of Manitoba?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no Connie Curran report or recommendations. I have answered the question already about the advisory committee. If the honourable member wants to access that, he can ask the committee himself for that.

The APM contract included a process, not a report with recommendations. It included a process which might well have brought forward recommendations from within the department, but they are not APM recommendations.

Home Care Program Labour Dispute—Contingency Plan

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Deputy Speaker, on April 12 this government tabled their home care contingency plan, both the Minister of Health and the Minister of Labour. Since that time, we find that there actually is no contingency plan in place and that the system or the process that this government has said they are putting in place is a total mess, and this government in fact is responsible for initiating the strike in their attempts, their ill-conceived attempts to privatize the home care system in this province. Now we find that the Minister of Health has asked other government employees with no training, absolutely no training, to take over the jobs that were performed by the home care workers.

I want to ask the Minister of Labour, is he aware by his government's action that he is breaking the labour code of the province of Manitoba? In fact, he is in contravention of The Labour Relations Act of Manitoba.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government of Manitoba is very concerned that these patients and clients receive the appropriate care, and we have asked the government union in this case to provide essential services. Their response to the government is that they will provide care to 1 percent of the clients, those who are terminally ill and will die within three to six months. We have asked that the government union consider an appropriate essential services agreement. The union has consistently refused. I would ask those union members who care about patients to deliver that care.

* (1400)

Mr. Reid: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to table some documents that the government is utilizing to find replacement workers to replace those home care workers.

My question is for the Minister of Labour. How can he tell the clients of the home care system in the province of Manitoba that taking the clerical staff and other office working staff out of various government departments without training is going to provide for the safety of those clients who rely so heavily on qualified trained staff to perform the necessary functions and duties that the home care service has been providing to the clients in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will take every reasonable step to ensure that the patients and clients who deserve care receive that care and I, for one, have great faith in our civil service that they are properly trained and when we ask them to perform tasks that they can perform those tasks. I have great faith in our civil service to do the right thing.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Deputy Speaker, my final supplementary is to the Minister of Health.

Can the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) tell the clients of the home care system, the public home care system in the province of Manitoba, how it is to their advantage on the safety and the service delivery to have people who are coming from other government departments untrained and unskilled in the delivery of the home care system, to have those people go out and attend to the needs of the home care clients in the province? How is that going to attend to the safety and the needs of those home care recipients?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I indicated earlier, we are taking all the reasonable steps to ensure that these clients receive the care. What concerns me more is the attitude of a union that would call a strike vote before it even attended the first negotiating meeting that it scheduled. I have the schedule here of the meetings that it asked us to participate at and when we said we would come to the table, they have a strike vote and refuse to negotiate at all. Who is in fact caring about the people of Manitoba and these patients? I will tender this letter.

Health Care System Advertising Campaign

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps the Minister of Labour would care to put a vote on this issue to the clients of home care in Manitoba. Perhaps he would care to do that.

My question is to the Premier (Mr. Filmon). We are seeing increasing chaos in our health care system, whether it be the home care situation or Pharmacare or the cuts to eye exams. Day in, day out, we are seeing this government is creating chaos, because less than one year after the last election they are breaking virtually every promise they made in health care.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

But, Madam Speaker, at the same time they have not refused to continue with the advertising campaign that has been developed with one Barb Biggar, the former communications secretary for the Premier.

I would like to ask the Premier, given the chaos in our health care system, will he at least now permanently cancel this PR campaign which is attempting only to deflect the real attention of Manitobans away from the chaos we have currently under this Conservative government in terms of health care?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, as long as honourable members opposite and their friends at the head of the unions in this province continue to feed the people of Manitoba with information that is not correct, I think it is necessary for the people of Manitoba to understand what is really happening. But I do not think I could possibly put it—if I practised for a week, I do not think I could put it better than Kelli Paige.

Kelli Paige wrote a letter to a radio station and a couple of the newspapers. In one very brief paragraph she puts it better than I could: I am presently still an MGEU member who voted no to strike action and am disgusted with the union and members who chose to walk out on thousands of sick and disabled seniors who need them.

Honourable members opposite want no services in these circumstances. Madam Speaker, I am with Kelli Paige.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, a lot of people were disgusted at this government for running—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson has been recognized for a supplementary question which requires no preamble.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health if for once he could answer a very straightforward, serious question, and that is, in this particular case, will he agree to put on hold the PR campaign to be run by one Barb Biggar? Will he take that money and reallocate it to the health care needs of Manitobans?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I do not think there is anything that has been done the last eight years that honourable members opposite have not asked us to put on hold. Where is the vision amongst honourable members opposite? Where is the leadership over there? It just does not exist. If there is leadership, it is in the union halls of this province and it is very questionable leadership at that.

Kelli Paige said something else, Madam Speaker, that I think honourable members opposite would like to hear—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, Beauchesne Citation 417 is very clear: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

Madam Speaker, I raised the question about an advertising campaign to be run by one Barb Biggar. Whatever rantings and ravings the Minister of Health wants to put on the record with his decade-old vendetta against the working people of this province he could have done yesterday in an emergency debate which we had requested, but he should not abuse Question Period by refusing to answer a very direct question about the priorities of this government putting forward—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I recognize this is a very serious issue and sensitivities and emotions are running high. However, it is not in the best interests of the 57 leaders of the province in this Chamber, nor in the interests of the public, to continue to not come to order when requested to do so.

* (1410)

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): On the same point of order, Madam Speaker, I would refer you and I would refer my honourable friend from Thompson, the opposition House leader, to Beauchesne Citation 416.(1), the last line of which I think puts it very succinctly: "A Member may put a question but has no right to insist upon an answer."

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson indeed has a point of order. I would remind the honourable minister to respond to the question being posed with relation to the reference cited by the honourable government House leader. Indeed the minister does not have to respond, but the minister started to respond.

I would also ask—order, please. Perhaps if there were less disruption in the House, everyone would clearly hear the question being asked and the response being given and there would be less interruption of the proceedings in terms of points of order.

Now, are we ready to proceed?

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I am not going to ask that the question be read back, but the question was something to the effect that the public needs to know what is going on, except that the honourable member for Thompson does not want us to tell the public what is going on. But the public needs to know how Kelli Paige feels and Kelli Paige writes: I do not want to work for the union or follow their directions. I want to work with all our clients that they have walked out on. I have been very tactfully threatened by my supervisor with regards to my job and with work after the strike. She suggested—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, you just ruled that the Minister of Health was out of order. You indicated he did not have to answer questions but that he had not been following the Citation 417. The Minister of Health is now rising again after your ruling and continuing with exactly the same nonanswer he gave previously.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask if you will once again ask the Minister of Health to come to order and either answer the question or sit down.

Mr. McCrae: On the same point of order, I was answering the honourable member's question about information for the public. The public needs to understand that there is another side of the story besides the one that is put out by honourable members opposite. Is he telling me that Kelli Paige's opinion does not count in this province, because the last I checked, we all had an opinion and we all had a right to express it, Madam Speaker.

Public Sector Workers Essential Services

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): My question is for the First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

The threat of spring flooding still looms in Manitoba. To complicate matters, Manitobans are not protected by an essential services agreement and during the spring of '96 a number of Manitoba's public unions have opted for a recorded strike vote. Has the Premier issued any instructions to the Emergency Measures Organization regarding the possibility of spring flooding and a public sector strike coinciding during the spring of 1996?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): The Emergency Measures Organization is working in co-operation with all affected communities and potentially affected communities, and certainly we are of the opinion at this stage that preparation that can be made is being made. A number of possible scenarios could unfold in this province. Of course, all of us are hopeful that whatever the events that unfold, they have the least possible impact on Manitobans, their property and, of course, their well-being.

Mr. Kowalski: In the absence of an essential services agreement and the potential for a strike during a spring flood, has the Premier (Mr. Filmon) approached Manitoba's public sector unions to negotiate an essential services pact before placing Manitobans at risk?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): As you know, there is no legislation in place in this province in respect of essential services agreements. We work these things out voluntarily with our unions, and we see no reason why the negotiations in respect to the civil service, should there be any concern in that respect, that we cannot work out an agreement, Madam Speaker. We are in the process of doing that now.

Mr. Kowalski: In light of the previous strikes where essential services agreements were not in place, the hospital strike, the home care strike, would they reconsider approaching the Manitoba public sector unions and negotiate an essential services agreement in the event of a spring flood?

Mr. Toews: I appreciate the question, and if the member wants any details as time goes on in respect of what we are doing in the area of essential services, I would be happy to sit down and discuss that with him. I know he is a very reasonable man, and he would want that information.

Home Care Program Privatization

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, I would like to table a letter sent to the Premier on March 21, from a woman whose husband has muscular sclerosis, in which she states: What you are doing to the old and handicapped and the sick and their caregivers is cruel, callous in the extreme and beyond understanding. It shows a lack of understanding of a patient's needs for security and constancy. It shows a total lack of concern on the part of your government for a group of people who are defenceless and without a spokesperson.

I would like to ask the Premier what his response is to this woman whose concerns reflect those of thousands of caregivers, clients and families throughout the entire province of Manitoba.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, our intent is always to provide for the client's needs. Our

intent is always to ensure the services that they depend upon, that they turn to government for, will be provided. Unlike the member opposite, who supports the right to unions to withdraw these essential services and who puts people such as she reads the letter from in jeopardy by her actions, we believe that there is a responsibility and we take that responsibility, and I would wish that the member opposite would support the patients and the ones who need care, rather than just stand in solidarity with their union boss friends.

Ms. Barrett: I would like to ask the Premier, will he not listen, why will he not listen to the caregivers, the families and the clients of Manitoba, who have said with one voice that it is the Premier and the Minister of Health who are jeopardizing the health of Manitobans, not the workers in the province of Manitoba, instead of listening to the blandishments of those who would profit by the home care system?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): I believe the honourable member referred to multiple sclerosis, I think it is, and I believe that might be one of those areas that the union will not agree to provide services under an essential services agreement during this strike.

I do listen to home care providers such as Kelli Paige, for example, who writes: I am presently still an MGEU member who voted no to strike action and I am disgusted with the union. I will repeat that: I am disgusted with the union and members who chose to walk out on thousands of sick and disabled seniors who need them.

The honourable member claims to care for the client. If that is true, why will she not stand up for people who have multiple sclerosis? Why will the honourable member not do that?

* (1420)

Post-Secondary Education Government Policy

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, in other parts of the world one of the recognized keys to the new economies is the expansion of higher education, and it can even cross party lines. In Britain, in Singapore, or Paul Keatings's Australia, all made substantial commitments to the expansion of higher education, in

some cases doubling the participation rate. This is the real world of the 21st Century.

I want to ask the Minister of Education to tell us why the impact of her policies has been declining enrollments, downsizing and the reduction of educational opportunities for young Manitobans in post-secondary education.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I am sorry, Madam Speaker, I listened to the speech and I heard the last part of the sentence at the end of it, which was a declining enrollment, but I did not hear the few words that just went before that. I wonder if the member could repeat them. I think it was the beginning of a sentence. If she could repeat that last sentence for me, so I understand what it is she is wanting me to say, I would be glad to respond, but if she could dispense with the speech, I would be grateful.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley, to quickly repeat the question asked.

Ms. Friesen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Perhaps I could repeat the carefully worded sentence that I had.

In other parts of the world, one of the recognized keys to the new economies is the expansion of higher education, which crosses party lines, whether it be in Singapore, Australia, or in Britain, whose leaders have made substantial commitments to the expansion of participation rates in post-secondary education.

Would the Minister of Education tell us why the impact of her policies has been declining enrollments, downsizing and the reduction of educational opportunities for young Manitobans?

Mrs. McIntosh: The words that I missed hearing the first time through were the words "would the minister tell us why," and I now have those words. Of course, implicit in the question is an assumption which, unfortunately, is an erroneous assumption because the member infers that declining enrollment at universities across Canada is all attributed to me. While I appreciate the inference that I have so much power, I should indicate to her things that she probably knows, first of all, that trends always show when there are more jobs created enrollment at universities go down. That is historically

true, and we have created many, many more jobs in Manitoba this last year, the same as is happening in some other provinces.

The member also knows that we have a larger enrollment at the community colleges because people are very interested in technologies and trades, and we appreciate that. We think that is good. But, Madam Speaker, I have to indicate that the initiatives we have been putting in place have been encouraging enrollments at universities, 10 percent learning tax credit which will see 10 percent of all tuition fees paid refunded to the students being just one of many examples to encourage students into university.

Ms. Friesen: I would like to table recent information from Statistics Canada showing that over their past five years of numbers, every province except Manitoba has achieved clear increases in post-secondary participation.

Will the minister tell us why Manitoba under her government is at the bottom of the league, below Newfoundland, below Saskatchewan, below New Brunswick, below Nova Scotia?

Mrs. McIntosh: Again, I did indicate Manitoba's superior performance in job creation vis-à-vis other provinces. I believe I started off by saying that, that we have one of the best records for that in Canada. I also indicate, Madam Speaker, that depending upon which area you look at, if she wants to look at just university enrollments, which is what she normally does, then she can see that enrollments are down in other provinces as well because that is the trend.

All post-secondary, of course, you will see a wide variety of things happening, including in Manitoba, workforce training, et cetera. I have to indicate that we have Scholarships for Tomorrow to encourage young women into sciences and engineering. Those were implemented by our government, and this is the second year for those scholarships, targeting women in science. I will continue on with the next question.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister explain how her refusal to maintain or even expand post-secondary education in Manitoba, and I am sure she will look at the Statistics Canada material I offered her, is this in any way linked to the creation of a low-wage, low-skill economy that is developing in Manitoba?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, as with many of the things that have been tabled in the House, the member forgot to mention just one little tiny fact about this chart she has just tabled, and that is it is restricted to an age span, and we know that in Manitoba a large majority of our students do start university and post-secondary education in their mid-twenties. They do not necessarily always go straight from school. She has these in the late teens and early twenties, and she is neglecting the very people she has talked about many, many times, all those older students over the age of 23 who do begin university in Manitoba. They are not in these statistics. A little oversight—I am sure she did not intend to create a different impression with the House. Unfortunately, she did.

I have to indicate, Madam Speaker, that as far as tuition fees are concerned, Manitoba rates extremely well with Canadian averages, and we do have a number of opportunities at colleges that are new initiatives and very much appreciated.

Disaster Assistance Municipal Compensation

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Government Services.

Today, we are on the verge of peak flooding conditions that may well exceed those of last year. Municipalities must cope with this year's flooding without having received full compensation from 1995, and federal officials state that they have yet to receive a claim from the province, even though guidelines for making a claim have been in place for 25 years.

Why did the Disaster Assistance Board tell municipalities they would be compensated for using their own equipment and personnel when federal guidelines and your own provincial guidelines clearly provide only limited compensation for uncontracted services? Why were municipalities not warned about these guidelines that could now cost them thousands of dollars?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): I thank the member for the question, Madam Speaker. Clearly, he is unaware of the historical reality in this province and in others that have told us that they share the position and the concerns that Manitoba has taken.

There is a well-established practice that exists among federal and provincial governments and municipalities in terms of cost-sharing. It has, for many, many years, allowed for the inclusion of costs incurred by municipal partners in using their own staff, in using their own equipment where they deem it appropriate. The member clearly is taking the uninformed position that the federal government is taking at this point in time, that the guidelines are to be interpreted religiously and meticulously but that precedent means nothing. However, precedent should and does mean something to our people of Manitoba's municipalities because it is they who must face up to the challenges of responding to these floods, fires and other disasters when they occur, and it is they whom I stand up and support and this government stands up and supports continuously.

We asked the federal government to resume its well-established case, well-established precedents for supporting those municipalities when they encounter unpredictable circumstances that cause costs to be incurred. We asked them to join with us in sharing that responsibility among all ratepayers and not isolating it to just those affected by flood and fire.

Mr. Struthers: Madam Speaker, I am supporting the R.M.s who are suffering because this minister cannot get together with the federal people and work out their squabbling.

I would like to table two letters—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I have been very, very lenient. I allowed, without interjection, the honourable member to have postamble. Would the honourable member please pose his question now. He was recognized for a supplementary question.

Mr. Struthers: I have tabled these letters, Madam Speaker.

I would like to ask the minister, if he has had these grievances with the federal government and the federal guidelines which are virtually the same as his own, why did he not accept five invitations to discuss these matters with federal officials? Why has he waited till the flooding is up to our ears before he—

* (1430)

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

Mr. Pallister: Thank you for the question, Madam Speaker. The member, as is all too common, is profoundly confused.

The federal government responded to our request to return to well-established precedents in the interest of fairness, and they came back to the province and asked for examples. They said that they had never cost-shared with municipalities. It appears to be the position that the member is taking as the lap dog of his federal friends who refuse to stand up for the municipalities of this province. The fact is that our officials here in co-operation—and I should mention with the unanimous support of the Union of Manitoba Municipalities and a resolution just passed the day before yesterday by the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities, we have the full support of our municipal partners.

The member opposite takes the position that precedent means nothing. This is the position currently being taken by the federal government. They came back to us in Manitoba and asked us what examples we could provide them with where the federal government had cost-shared. We gave them over one thousand examples. We await their common-sense response and return to sanity.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Law Day

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (River Heights): Madam Speaker, today, April 17, is Law Day. This is an annual initiative of the Canadian Bar Association to celebrate Canada's legal system.

As part of Law Day activities, the Manitoba bar will be holding free legal clinics, one at Eaton Place and one at the Convention Centre. Both of these clinics will be open today until 5 p.m.

In addition, from 11:30 p.m. until four o'clock on Sunday, April 21, the Bar Association and the Department of Justice will be holding a free open house

at the Law Courts Building. This year's theme is Access to Justice, and the open house will feature tours, information on justice issues, booths and displays from agencies working in the justice system, a special sitting of the Citizenship Court and mock trials conducted by elementary, junior and senior high school students in English and French.

I congratulate the Manitoba Bar Association and the Department of Justice, and encourage all Manitobans to attend. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity.

Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba Annual Symposium

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, on Saturday, April 13, the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) and I attended the Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba's annual symposium entitled, *Immigrant Families Facing the Realities of the 21st Century*. Over 100 women and young people participated. Three keynote speeches were given by Dr. Ying Hoh, Rocky Gushuliak and Paula Prime.

There were four workshops addressing the impact of family violence on immigrant families, youth gangs and violence, adult education and training and youth career planning. Many specific recommendations came out of the day's work. However, one theme threaded its way through the speeches, discussions and workshop activities. If men, women, children and families are to succeed in the 21st Century, they must have hope—hope that there will be a job for them at the end of their schooling; hope that women and children can live lives free from violence; hope that families can be reunited in Manitoba; hope that will keep young people studying their books rather than how to become a gang member. Without hope, no one will be able to face the challenges of the next millennium.

The Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba's symposium gave us hope, as well as excellent ideas and suggestions. It is up to all of us to ensure that there is hope, for without hope, these ideas, suggestions and recommendations will not come to fruition. It would have provided us all with more hope if any member of the government benches had participated in this important event. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Home Care Services

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House as the MLA for Pembina. I support home care. Like those who make up the Manitoba Government Employees' Union, I support home care, and I support a home care that is sustainable.

Madam Speaker, this government seeks to take the monies collected through taxes and to spend them as wisely and as prudently as we can. After all, there is no money tree, and I would like to comment just briefly on that.

During the last three years that the NDP formed the government, they ran a deficit of close to half a billion dollars just on health. Imagine, they spent close to half a billion dollars on health that they did not have. This government, on the other hand, is living within its means and we are spending more on health care than the members opposite ever did.

The amount of money that we direct to home care has more than doubled since we came to office in 1988. As a result, Madam Speaker, I can stand here proudly and say that I support home care. I support a Home Care program that will be here in the future because we acted responsibly in the present.

This government is currently moving to see how efficiently taxpayers' money is being spent on home care. To that end, 25 percent of Winnipeg's home care services will be the subject of competition. My constituents tell me that they use their money as efficiently as they can, and they expect the government to do the same.

We have been asked by the people of Manitoba to run this province with a balanced budget while simultaneously providing services such as home care, and that is what we will do. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1440)

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, this provincial government cannot find anyone other than the owners of We Care who donated \$2,000 to the Conservative campaign, who recommended the privatization of home care in this province. Even this government's own—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind all honourable members that this is the time for members' statements and as private members every individual member deserves respect. I would ask for the co-operation, order and decorum in the Chamber to the member who has been recognized on that privilege.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that our side of the House did respect the honourable members—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. James does not need to debate. Although I appreciate her support, I would ask that she continue with her member's statement, and she has approximately one and a half minutes remaining.

Ms. Mihychuk: Even this government's own advisory committee's recommendations were not taken into consideration regarding the very serious issue of privatizing an essential health care service. Connie Curran was paid \$160,000 by the Tory government to do a report on home care. The Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) does not know where or what is in the report, or if the report is even completed, Madam Speaker. The lack of consultation from the public, coupled with the Minister of Health's blatant incompetence, must be terrifying to Manitoba residents.

A letter was written to Premier Filmon from a woman whose husband has MS and relies on home care. She wrote: Have you any idea how stressful it is for the primary caregiver to constantly have to explain to a stranger the workings of your household, how he likes his tea made, where the dishes are kept, which mug he can hold, why he cannot use a glass, what his likes and dislikes are? Have you any idea how stressful it is to go out and not know whether you will come home to find your husband still in bed because he is unable to explain what he wants?

When your government's plans were first made known, Mr. McCrae said that the client would see no difference in service. Believe me, when a stranger walks through our door on July 1, I will immediately see the difference. I have lain awake at night worrying about the future. The quality of care cannot possibly be the same when you propose to cut salaries by 40 percent. Every report, Madam Speaker, that has been released publicly says that

Manitoba has the best, cost-effective system in North America. This government is picking on the poor, the sick and the elderly in this province.

Health Care

Mr. George Hicke (Point Douglas): During the 1995 election campaign, the Tory government promised Manitobans that there would be no cuts to health care. However, according to current actions undertaken by the provincial government and as reflected in the 1995-96 provincial budget, this promise to preserve our health care system has been broken. Pharmacare has been cut by 34.4 percent in the last Tory budget which is a \$20-million cut to Manitoba's Pharmacare service. As a result, 100,000 Manitobans have lost Pharmacare coverage. In addition, under the Filmon government, Pharmacare deductibles have risen by more than 52 percent despite the Conservatives' 1988 promise to tie deductible increases to the level of inflation. These increases impose new taxes on the poor, the sick and the elderly within this province and in particular within the core inner-city areas of Winnipeg.

This government has also eliminated subsidized eye exams for everyone who is 19 to 64 years of age. This elimination of such an essential service was done without any public consultation. This government has unilaterally targeted those who suffer the most within our society, the poor, the sick and the elderly.

It has become clear that this present government does not believe in medicare. In support of my assertions, I point to another very important issue, the privatization of home care. Once again, the government has made this decision with no consultation from the people involved. According to the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), there will be no savings to taxpayers by privatizing a \$91-million contract.

However, with the privatization of home care will come fees for so-called noncore services. The government, however, will not say what these noncore services are. Every report that has been released publicly says that the Manitoba Home Care program is the best in North America and cost-effective. So why is the government privatizing this public service? It is because this Tory government is giving favours to their friends at the expense of all Manitobans. The government wants to

privatize home care so that their friends can make large profits off the sick and elderly. This government should be ashamed of itself.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty, with the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinsson) in the Chair for the Department of Health; and the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Executive Council.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

HEALTH

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

When the committee last sat it had been considering item 1.(b)(1) on page 71 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass? The honourable member for Kildonan, I believe, though, in recognizing the honourable member, he would remember that he had asked a question and the minister was going to answer it when we last left the committee.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, just for clarification, as I understand it, I had just wound up asking the minister whether he would table his studies and documentation justifying and indicating his recommendation to privatize the home care services.

* (1520)

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Yes, I have been sharing a lot of information with my

honourable colleague, and I intend to continue to do that, Mr. Chairman.

We have the view today made known to the Winnipeg Sun, the Winnipeg Free Press and CJOB the point of view of a unionized caregiver with the Home Care program. I discussed this briefly in Question Period earlier on, and I think I would like to share this in its entirety with honourable members.

The letter is dated April 16, 1996, and it is addressed To Whom This May Concern. It is from a home care worker by the name of Kelli Paige-P-a-i-g-e. I expect that both responsible newspapers in the city will have this printed in its entirety promptly, as well, but I would like honourable members to have it on the record of this committee.

To Whom This May Concern, This is a copy of a letter that I have sent to the Winnipeg Sun and CJOB-

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: A point of order, Mr. Chairperson, just for purposes of clarification, I am wondering if the Chair might give me some advice or some direction in this regard. I believe I asked the minister a question about his studies, a very specific question about the government privatization of home care, and asked the minister to table or to provide these documents to members of the committee with respect to the privatization of home care. While I appreciate the minister does not have to answer the question, I am not sure if the minister can go off in tangent and simply read into the record documentation that have no relevance whatsoever to the question.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. I am ruling that the honourable member does not have a point of order, and I will explain why.

When we started these Estimates, we said there would be a wide-ranging scope of questions and answers, and it has done just that. The member is asking a question, and the member for Kildonan asked a question. The preamble takes him approximately five to 10 minutes of questions, comments and in some-no, I guess not answers, but the questions are put to the minister. Now we are asking for one specific question. Those questions were put yesterday. So, indeed, I am letting the minister answer it in his way today, and I would ask that if we

want a particular question answered, put that question and not five others.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, are you ruling that if I ask a specific question on a specific point, the specific question and the specific point should and must be addressed by the minister? Because that is how I hear your ruling.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: That is not what I said.

The ruling within Beauchesne—order, please, while I get this. To further elaborate, questions and answers put in committee can indeed be far-ranging, but it has to be relevant to the Estimates at hand, and the minister may answer that question however he chooses, just as the members have the right to ask that question however they choose.

Mr. McCrae: I will do my best not to try to bully the honourable member for Kildonan and tell him what questions to ask and how to ask them, and I would appreciate reciprocal courtesy.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: I will begin the letter again from Kelli Paige. It says: To whom this may concern. This is a copy of a letter that I have sent to the Winnipeg Sun and CJOB. I have previously sent one to the Free Press which was not published. I am presently still an MGEU member who voted no to strike action. I am disgusted with the union and members who chose to walk out on thousands of sick and disabled seniors who need them.

I will pause there briefly.

Mr. Chairman, earlier today, the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) made it clear where he and his colleagues in the New Democratic Party stand when he took great exception to anyone who would actually report to work and provide service to needy and vulnerable Manitobans.

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, I believe you just referred to the question of relevance.

I am wondering what the minister's comments in the House or reference to a comment of another honourable member in the House have any relevance whatsoever to either the question that was posed by myself or in fact the attempted answer and response by the minister, because surely it is obvious that the minister's comments completely are outside the scope of relevance. Comments of other members in the House do not bear any relevance whatsoever to the question posed by either this member or by the minister's initial response.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I want to remind members that their remarks should be kept relevant to the matter before the committee.

I will read for the benefit of the committee—[interjection] No, I will not go into that part; it is not necessary to go into that part. I would ask all members to keep their remarks relevant to the matter at hand. I would also like to point out that in the Estimates book, we have started out on 1.(b) (1) on page 71. It leaves it quite wide open for questions and answers.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, the honourable member's repeated interruptions to raise technical and legalistic type arguments with respect to what I am trying to say here today remind me of the story of a senior lawyer telling the younger lawyer how to proceed in court.

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: A point of order, Mr. Chairperson, I would ask you to call the minister to order. Not only is he challenging your ruling by commenting on the ruling, but he is again totally irrelevant to the point at hand. I wish the minister would address the very serious issues that we are posing on behalf of the public.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. I do rule that the honourable member for Kildonan does have a point of order and would ask the minister to be relevant in his answers or to keep his answers relevant. Thank you.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: With regard, Mr. Chairman, to the point raised by the honourable member, I am reminded of the story of the senior lawyer telling—this is in respect to the

honourable member's question and if the honourable member would be courteous enough to hear me out, as they say in court, I will try to link it up. The senior lawyer said to the junior lawyer, well, when you are before the judge and the jury and you do not have much in the way of evidence, pound the law, and when you do not have the law really working for you, pound the evidence, and when you have neither law nor evidence, pound the desk. I think maybe the honourable member is either pounding the law books or pounding the desks today because he certainly does not have much else. I will continue the letter I was reading, but I was making a comment, and this is very relevant because the honourable member is asking me questions about home care.

The point that was raised today by the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) made the position of the New Democrats clearer than ever if it was ever necessary to be clearer, because their activities with their friends in the union movement are well known and they are not even red faced about it, Mr. Chairperson. The position of the member for Transcona enunciated on behalf of his colleagues in the New Democratic Party is that they object to services being provided to vulnerable people in Manitoba. They absolutely object to people with multiple sclerosis, for example, mentioned earlier today by the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), that they should actually get services during a labour dispute when the precious rights of union bosses have to rule supreme in this province and make victims out of the clients of our home care system. I could not disagree more, but I think it is important and very relevant that it be very clearly on the record the position that the NDP takes in this matter. They do not even want me to read into the record a letter written by one of the union members. Now, I do not quite understand. I guess if you are a union member who disagrees with the union boss, you are supposed to be intimidated, you are not supposed to be heard.

Where is the democracy in the union movement and where is the democracy in the NDP? They will go to the people and tell them that we are here to represent the interests of the people. Yet, every time there is a competition between the rights of the people and the rights of their union boss friends, their union boss friends prevail every single time. It is sad to watch. It is indeed disgusting. I agree with Kelli Paige, and it speaks

volumes about exactly where the New Democrats are coming from and where they would like to take us.

* (1530)

The letter continues: I called your office last week to continue working through the strike and was helped and told what to do, but, thanks to my supervisor, who is pro union, that was not possible. She will give me some assignments, no doubt the union-approved ones with palliative care, but not the regular run. I do in our block project where I can care for several people instead of one. I do not want to work for the union or follow their directions. I want to work with all our clients that they have walked out on. I have been very tactfully threatened by my supervisor with regard to my job and with work after the strike. She has suggested I find work in a hospital or somewhere.

That part of the letter, Mr. Chairman, is handwritten. The next part of it is typewritten. It is from Kelli Paige, and it is to the Winnipeg Sun news desk.

I have been fortunate enough to have been a continuing student in health care over a period of time and have always maintained employment at the same time. In some of the courses I took and lectures I attended, we were aware that our health care system, as is, was going to have to change in the future in order to be able to continue servicing people. However, this is not what I want to elaborate on, so I will get to the point of my letter.

I am fed up with the media's coverage and advertisements on the MGEU strike over contracting out health care services by Jim McCrae. All the advertisements clearly state that the government home care workers are the only people qualified for the job of caregivers to the thousands of sick and disabled clients out there and that staff from private companies are untrained, unqualified and incompetent as caregivers. The staff from these private companies are being humiliated daily because of the union's strategy plans to acquire public backing and support. First of all, if you watch the advertisements, these private companies are running or talk to them, you will find out that all but one of these private companies require trained, qualified, licensed, certified staff with minimum Grade 12. They

are also reputable companies that have been established for a long time.

I am an MGEU member who voted no to strike action. Why? First of all, Jim McCrae is taking responsibility for his actions. Now, the union and its members that choose to strike should take responsibility for their actions instead of trying to tell us that this is also Jim McCrae's fault. You do not turn your back and walk out on thousands of sick and disabled clients. You just do not do it and then turn around and blame someone else for it.

There is a line you draw, an unwritten rule for humanitarian reasons, because nothing you can say justifies what you have been doing to these clients. Nothing you can say justifies what you have been doing to these clients. A job I can get anywhere, but my principles and standards along with the morals that I have acquired through my life do not belong to the union to use for their sham they are trying to pull off on the public. They are good. I will give them that, but I am hoping that the public, especially the seniors, start to realize that there is something wrong with this picture.

If you have what it takes to be able to walk out on all your clients that you are saying so desperately need you, you do not turn around and in the same breath tell them that you are doing it because Jim McCrae made you or that you are mad at the government or there is no other alternative and then expect the public to buy that garbage. Please do not start with your slogan of we care about the quality of care our clients will receive from private companies if the government contracts out home care. I have sat at your union meeting when you found out home care was planning on being privatized. I sat with staff who were predicting deaths of clients in the event of a walkout. I talked continually to union reps and volunteers who phoned continually leading up to the strike, and I am saying to you, this strike has nothing to do with privatization or the quality of care clients will receive as a result of privatization.

This strike is about wages, benefits and jobs and that is all. The union is using all of these seniors as pawns in their game with the government to keep from losing their jobs. I wonder if the public knows that the government home care system uses untrained, unqualified, staff as home care attendants for our clients. Our head office at

189 Evanson Street has in the past and has presently held one-week courses, three hours a day, to train people as HCAs and then put them out to care and work with their clients. Sure, there have been some clients who have complained about a worker they might have been sent from one of the private companies, but I can assure you that there are many, many clients who have complained more about the government home care workers they are sent.

* (1540)

I have heard these complaints from clients. I have been called in to replace them, and I have watched other government employees complain about them also. In the time that I have been employed with our provincial government Home Care program, I have been double booked with clients involved in mixups from the office and seen clients forgotten about completely. None of this was done deliberately, nor was the government's fault. What it all boils down to is that there is good staff and bad staff in every health care facility in Canada. Some places are better screened for staff than others.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, can the minister table any studies or reports recommending the privatization of home care?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I will refer at length to a report commissioned by the New Democratic Party that points to the need for improvements which it is clear can be brought about by the kind of flexibility that can be brought about through the introduction of competition.

The honourable member is not talking about privatization. We already have privatization. The private nonprofit organization Victorian Order of Nurses has been handling the nursing function in the Home Care program for many years, the program the honourable member—

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, when I asked for a ruling and clarification several minutes ago, we indicated that the minister ought to be answering specific questions within the specific questions as posed.

I had posed a very specific question about tabling reports with respect to the privatization of home care, and as is usual the minister is off on a tangent that is not relevant to the specific question or even closely relevant to the question that was asked.

Now, Mr. Chairperson, I specifically asked that question because in your previous ruling you had talked about the breadth of questions. So I specifically asked a specific question asking the minister for a specific answer, and I ask you to call him to order and try to deal with the question as posed.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Chairman, on that point of order, I believe the member for Kildonan asked if the minister could table any studies that would indicate why the government should look at privatization. The minister responded, what we are looking at is not privatization but rather flexibility and competition, and, indeed, he did have a study that showed why we needed to move in that direction because of flaws in the current system. He was beginning to quote from that study, which happened to be commissioned by the NDP and recommended user fees, when the member for Kildonan said he did not want to hear the answer to the very question he put.

I submit he does not have a point of order but rather was trying to prevent relevant information from being put on the record.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. To try to make it a little bit clearer for the member for Kildonan—[interjection] Order, please. I will take your point of order as soon as I am finished.

I have asked all members to try to keep their questions and answers relevant to the matters at hand. I have also stipulated and stated right from the beginning of these Estimates that, in fact, this particular area that we are discussing now is far-ranging. The member for Kildonan can ask the question that he chooses, and I said that the minister has the right to answer that question in the way he chooses. Once we proceed further on in the Estimates, in the next part, if you will, I will then ask the members to be more relevant in their answers and the questions, but at this point, the minister is not out of order.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, the honourable member and his colleagues support a movement which bullies and intimidates ordinary people. Well, I will not let the honourable member for Kildonan bully and intimidate me. I am here to represent the people of Manitoba. I am here to represent the interests of the clients of the Home Care program, and I will not let the member for Kildonan and his union friends bully and intimidate me. They can do that to ordinary working people and scare people who are clients of the home care system, if that is what they think will help them achieve their ends, but I will not sit here and allow the member for Kildonan and his colleagues in the New Democratic Party bully and intimidate me.

I will continue reading the letter that has been brought to my attention, written by Kelli Paige to the Winnipeg Sun, which I am sure will be printed in tomorrow's edition in its entirety, as follows:

I have heard people say that Jim McCrae is just lining the pockets of the private companies with privatization while the taxpayers have to pay for it. What about the phenomenal amount of taxes you are paying now for a health care system that is set up and structured to allow for horrendous abuse by every level of employee? You do not think it is being done? You are paying more taxes now than you ever will by having a private company care for our clients.

I had a union rep who worked with us as an HCA in the block project we do. She is sitting alongside Peter Olfert on the union panel right now. I was told by her to bill for full time allowed even if it is not required because it will ruin it for everyone else. Another time, I received a page from her on my pager telling me that someone was cancelling, but it was not going through the office so to still bill for it and get paid. We get generous time for safety checks, bathroom calls, baths, et cetera, that do not require anywhere near the time we are allowed, but I was told to bill for it anyway.

This is the kind of stuff that members of the New Democratic Party want to have us preserve.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. I am having trouble hearing the honourable minister because of a number of members at this committee table, and I would

ask that we maybe move out into the hallway or over into the seats over here, so that we can carry on with the Estimates.

Mr. McCrae: I will read this last one again because I think it is important to emphasize that this is the sort of thing that the NDP wants to preserve, because you see yesterday the member for Kildonan said, go back to the system we had in the first place. He wants to see this sort of thing continuing.

We get generous time for safety checks, bathroom calls, baths, et cetera, that do not require anywhere near the time we are allowed, but I was told to bill for it anyway.

This was brought to my supervisor's attention. Nothing was ever done about it, to my knowledge. We have clients who no longer require the amount of care or time originally allotted them that are not being reassessed. Why? Well, one reason is that this keeps all of us casual, classified employees employed full time right from HSWs to supervisors and case co-ordinators while you as taxpayers pay for it. This is what the members of the New Democratic Party stand for, Mr. Chairman, and they will fight and fight and fight.

(Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

You know, when I think about it from the client's point of view, I think the New Democrats would rather fight than win, because here we are looking at an opportunity to make improvements in a program that is so important to thousands of our fellow Manitobans and they want to stand in the way of it; in fact, they want to stop it. In fact, in the process they would like it if people received no service and, I guess, by extension, see their conditions deteriorate or perhaps worsen. That is what the NDP stands for. They are so firm in their principles that they will use elderly Manitobans and disabled Manitobans as pawns. They will not let their interests get in the way of their relationship that has been described as organic fusion with their union boss friends.

My honourable member says I know about relationships. The honourable member for Kildonan has ample opportunity to counsel his friends in the union movement to put a stop to this foolishness. He has done nothing. In fact, he has been actively engaged in trying

to deny clients service. So let him not tell me too many things about relationships.

The letter continues: There are hundreds of us, home care direct-service workers who want to work and are not intimidated by the threats—

* (1550)

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: The minister indicated that members of the Legislature were actively engaged in trying to deny service to home care clients. I wonder if imputing that kind of motive is in fact a parliamentary statement and, if it is not, I would ask the minister to withdraw that.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): The minister would like to speak to the point of order.

Mr. McCrae: On the point of order, I do not wish to impute any motives that are not there, but what else am I supposed to conclude when I heard not a peep from the New Democratic Party when the union decided to set a strike date before discussions even began. I did not hear a peep from the members of the New Democratic Party when the union would not agree to provide essential services to people with Parkinson's disease, people with multiple sclerosis, people with Alzheimer's disease, people with serious cases of arthritis, people who need home care services. I did not hear a peep from the New Democrats. So I can only conclude what I can conclude from that sort of thing, Mr. Chairman.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): I will put a rule on the first point of order first. The member for Kildonan does not have a point of order. To the second point of order, please.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I will withdraw that second point of order, Mr. Chairperson.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Thank you. The minister, to continue, please.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, there are hundreds of us home care direct-service workers who want to work and are not intimidated by the threats and intimidation tactics

of a corrupt system organized by these union bosses and inside staff in professional positions that are working together to further confuse the emergency plans trying to be set up.

Mrs. McIntosh: Just for clarification, is the Minister of Health now beginning to read again from Kelli's—[interjection]I am sorry, the woman there speaking, I cannot remember her name, but I wish she would not. Is the Minister of Health now quoting again from Kelli's letter to the Sun or whomever she wrote it to? I want to know if those are your words or hers that are coming through.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): The honourable minister, please, for clarification on that.

Mr. McCrae: I thank the honourable Minister of Education and Training for wanting to get that clarified because indeed these are not my words, although many of them, it is easy for me to adopt. I know that while the honourable Minister of Education and Training was trying to get that important clarification, the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) felt that she would like to get involved in the discussion, and I remind the honourable member for Osborne that it might do her good to listen to what this particular union member has to say about this matter.

This is a card-carrying person into whose pockets the union has its hands to take her money on a regular basis, and this is the way the union represents the interests of Kelli Paige who simply, maybe—I assume Kelli Paige is a woman, but I do not know that. I do know that the union has its hands in her pockets taking money out, and the union movement provides all kinds of dollars to New Democrats across this country. I think that this person is entitled to be heard.

If the honourable member for Osborne does not think that Kelli Paige has a legitimate view to be made available to members of this committee, then let her say that. If she thinks there is something wrong with Kelli Paige wanting to provide services to people who need those services, let the honourable member for Osborne say that. The honourable member for Osborne only speaks with the microphone turned off. She will not put her views on the record. That is unfortunate.

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, with reference to the Chairperson's recent ruling on relevance, I wonder what possible relevance the minister's constant attack on members has to do with the answering of the question whatsoever. I know the minister likes to bully, but I think that he ought to answer the question as put.

On the same point of order, Mr. Chairman, at the risk of some repetition, I am like Kelli Paige, I guess, because I refuse to be threatened and intimidated by members of the New Democratic Party who, by organic fusion, are joined to the union movement in this province. I refuse to be intimidated by the tactics of the member for Kildonan who decides to pound the law books every time he turns on the microphone because he does not have anything else to pound. They can object all they like. They will hear in this committee room the views of ordinary working Manitobans who simply want to provide services to vulnerable Manitobans. If they do not want to hear it, they can close their ears, but they will not stop me from putting on the record the views of ordinary Manitobans whom I am here to represent.

(Mr. Ben Sveinson, Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. On the point of order, I would ask all members, again, to keep the questions and answers as relevant as possible. The minister now has about thirty seconds left to finish his answer.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: It is a downright shame that time does not permit me, at least at this point, to complete putting the views of Kelli Paige on the record of this committee, but I want Kelli Paige and the clients of home care to know that there are people in this Legislature who do care about them and who care about their interests.

Mr. Chomiak: The minister was unable to table any documents or studies supporting the government's move to privatize, and one could only conclude, therefore, that there are no documents or studies to privatize, and one can therefore conclude—

Point of Order

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I maybe misheard part of the dialogue, but I thought I distinctly heard the Minister of Health, when asked if there was any study that would verify or justify the actions of the government, I distinctly heard him refer to a 1987 report, a study commissioned by the NDP which amongst other things recommended user fees. I distinctly heard him say that he made reference to that study. So when the member for Kildonan says—[interjection] He did. He has a point of order on something that did not happen.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Chomiak: I think it is fairly clear that the member has no point of order, Mr. Chairperson, with respect to—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member for Kildonan, I will make the ruling—[interjection] Order, please.

Mr. Chomiak: —and I am making that argument on the basis that it is a dispute over the facts.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Education does not have a point of order, it is a dispute over the facts. The honourable member for Kildonan, to finish his question.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if the minister, who is so quick to read a letter into the record and who has failed to answer questions in this committee now into the second day, can outline for us specifically what the government plans are in the short term and the long term with respect to the redirection of home care first brought to public attention by the release of the Treasury Board document dated September 16, 1995.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, on February 3, 1995, as reported in the Winnipeg Free Press—I know the honourable member reads newspapers. If he reads that, he will get a hint of the direction that we are going to be going and have been going since.

By the way, he has asked for studies that support the kinds of things we are doing. The honourable member

does not need to ask. He was there at Seven Oaks Hospital the day before. That was February 2, 1995. He was there the day before at Seven Oaks Hospital to very, very carefully and grudgingly give support and compliment the Seven Oaks Hospital and We Care Home Health Services, who were the participants in that particular project, and there was a report and I know he has seen that. So you know the honourable member is asking for stuff over and over again that he has already got. I mean I guess he does.

* (1600)

Did he not read it? I think he did. You know, he has got to do his job for his union-boss friends and he has got to keep asking questions, so he will just keep doing that, but that report is available, and as the honourable member has seen it, surely I do not need to make it available to him again. It was made available to him on February 2, 1995, and, if I recall correctly, Mr. Chairman, that was before the last provincial election, and it was front-page news. It was no secret to anybody where I stood, and in those days the honourable member was talking about We Care in some sinister sort of circumstances that give rise to the participation of a private—

Mrs. McIntosh: An award-winning business. I was there when they got their award—

Mr. McCrae: That is right. My honourable colleague and friend, the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh), reminds me that particular company was given a national award. One of the principals of that company, Bev McMaster, was named Businessperson of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce in Brandon. This particular person was also named by the YWCA in Brandon as a Woman of Distinction for her contributions to business and to health, but because this person is from my constituency, of course, that really puts some sinister ideas into the mind of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

I suppose, if a company were to enjoy some success in Kildonan, who would be the first one to be on those coattails in Kildonan? It would be the honourable member. It says a little bit about the honourable member, but I guess it would not be parliamentary to say just exactly what.

Mr. Chairman, I will continue reading the letter that Kelli Paige wrote to the Winnipeg Free Press, the Winnipeg Sun and CJOB Radio, as follows: There are hundreds of us home care direct-service workers who want to work and are not intimidated by the threats and intimidation tactics of a corrupt system, organized by these union bosses and inside staff in professional positions that are working together to further confuse the emergency plans trying to be set up.

I wonder what threats. We know about the threats and intimidation Kelli Paige has already been subjected to, compliments of the NDP and the union, but I wonder what Kelli Paige is going to have to put—

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, I believe it is *unparliamentary* to suggest, or even remotely, that the NDP has threatened and intimidated this particular individual. [interjection]

Mr. Chairperson, I cannot hear myself think because the member for Assiniboia is babbling on. It is totally inappropriate for the minister to not only suggest but to, in fact, indicate that there are some kinds of threats and intimidation. In fact, it is *unparliamentary* for the minister to suggest that the union did it, but, for the minister to suggest that we as a political party, our political members, do it is completely and totally out of order.

Mrs. McIntosh: On the same point of order, Mr. Chairman, I find this rather amusing and absolutely revealing that the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) assumed that the Minister of Health was talking about the NDP. I did not hear the Minister of Health say “the NDP” when he wondered aloud if Kelli—and again I have forgotten the last name, I am sorry—Kelli Paige might be subject to further intimidation because she wrote the letter. He did not say, by the member for Kildonan and the NDP. But the member for Kildonan made that assumption, which I find most interesting. I submit he has no point of order. I do not know why he came to that conclusion; nobody else did.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, on the same point of order raised by the honourable member for Kildonan, and we

must have a record here today for points of order raised by this honourable member. It is not me here. This is Kelli Paige, an MGEU card-carrying, dues-paying member, who is making these allegations, and the allegation is threats, intimidation tactics of a corrupt system, organized by these union bosses and inside staff in professional positions, et cetera, et cetera. It is not me saying that, and, if I said something *unparliamentary*, I would withdraw anything *unparliamentary* that I have said.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Okay, the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) does have a point of order. The wording, as it was put, was impugning motive, and I would ask the honourable minister to remove those words.

I do thank the minister because he has already said that he would withdraw those words.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, just in case it is not clear, I withdraw again any offending words that I have used.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: I will continue reading the letter from Kelli Paige as follows: There are hundreds of us home care direct-service workers who want to work and are not intimidated by the threats and intimidation tactics of a corrupt system, organized by these union bosses and inside staff in professional positions that are working together to further confuse the emergency plans trying to be set up. All this to put pressure on Mr. McCrae in the public's eye and shift the blame on him in the eyes of our clients again.

I will stop there for a moment. Would it be *unparliamentary*, Mr. Chairman, to suggest that the NDP condones this sort of thing? I seek your clarification on that.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I would ask that the minister use his words very cautiously and proceed with his comments, and at the point that a point of order is called, I would indeed rule on it.

Mr. McCrae: Well, I will not come right out and say that the NDP condones this kind of threat and intimidation tactics of a corrupt system. I will not adopt those words of my own. But how do members of the NDP respond to working, card-carrying, dues-paying members of the union who make those kinds of

allegations? Do they just like to sweep it under the carpet because democracy is a meaningless expression in the NDP and the union movement? Is that what they would tell Kelli Paige in response to allegations by Kelli Paige of threats, intimidation and tactics of a corrupt system which the NDP daily is there defending their union boss friends in the House? Refusing to stand up for people with Parkinson's disease? Refusing to stand up for people with multiple sclerosis? Refusing to stand up for people with Alzheimer's disease? Refusing to stand up for people with severe cases of arthritis, and saying to them we object to people providing service to you?

This is what we are up against, Mr. Chairman, and the people of Manitoba do not know all of the things that the New Democratic Party supports. They do not know. If they did, there would not be 20 of them in our Legislature, if that is how many they have got—21 or whatever it is, too many, whatever. None of them would be there if the people really knew what the NDP stood for. Taking people's groceries out of their shopping baskets and throwing them on the ground and hissing and shouting and spitting and slashing tires and breaking windows and bombs, I think, have been mentioned. All these sorts of things. Why does the NDP not stand up and say, enough, stop, we object to this, we want no part of this, we do not want to be associated with any kind of organization that condones or does those sorts of things? Why is it the NDP does not do that? I leave it for them to respond.

The letter written by Kelli Paige continues as follows: I told my employer right from the start that I did not back a walkout in this area of work we do. I never once turned down an assignment from her. I worked 14-hour days for her, any shifts, and was available whenever she called. She told me how much she appreciated me and how I have helped her greatly, and, if I ever needed a reference, there would be no problem whatsoever.

This is Kelli Paige talking about her supervisor who she says is a union sympathizer. The letter continues: That was before I would not back the strike action. I asked her to work. I asked her for a schedule. I asked her for a reference. All I got from her was, I do not know. I called Jim McCrae's office and asked them for help because I wanted to work during the strike. They helped me, informed me, and told me what would be

happening, and that I would continue to work with all my clients still. But I am sitting at home this morning with no work. My supervisor either moved all my clients into the hospital or brought in their backup service, Central Health, to take them at a higher cost to the government than what it would cost for me to continue giving them care. The same time that I was telling the clients that I would continue to work through the strike, my supervisor and case co-ordinators were telling them that I nor anyone would be working during the strike.

I will pause here, Mr. Chairman. This is—

* (1610)

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: I wonder if you might—the distractions from the members—perhaps you might admonish the newly arrived members to committee and advise them about the fact that we are dealing with committee business and perhaps conversations between themselves and the minister ought to take place outside of the Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: When it is appropriate. Thank you to the member for Kildonan. When it is appropriate I will advise all members of that.

The honourable minister, to finish his remarks.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member for Kildonan obviously thinks he can make everyone conform to his view of the world. Well, it is going to take a very long time for that to happen, I can tell you.

The letter from Kelli Paige continues. When I called back my contact through Jim McCrae's office, they knew nothing of this tactic and what my supervisor was doing.

I was told by my supervisor to sit at home and she would get back to me the next day. I am still waiting. There is no need for a lot of our clients to be in the confusion that they are in today, nor to be without their regular caregiver. We are sitting here ready to work. You cannot blame Jim McCrae for this. This is the result of low tactics of supervisors to help the union.

Mr. Deputy Chairman, time obviously will not allow me to complete reading Kelli Paige's letter, but I can guarantee honourable members this committee is going to hear it all.

Mr. Chomiak: I wonder if the minister can comment about a letter that I am going to read into the record. Since the minister seems to be fond of reading letters. I wonder if he might comment on a letter.

Dear Mr. McCrae, dated March 29, 1996, so you said on a questionnaire that you had not received any complaints about Central Health Services when they are backing up home care. Perhaps we are all too polite to complain.

Here is mine. On Thursday, the 14th of March, I came out of hospital following a stroke. I have a husband with MS. I am not supposed to transfer him or lift him for a while. On Sunday, the 17th of March, three days after I came out of hospital, Central Health Services—and I will just pause here for the edification of members who do not know Central Health Services are a private company that the ministers awarded a contract to in the sum of about \$800,000 to do a backup. Central Health to continue—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. To all members on both sides, I would ask that you give each speaker the opportunity to pose their questions, comments and answers in a relatively quiet manner. Thank you.

Mr. Chomiak: On Sunday, March 17, three days after I came out of the hospital, Central Health Services were supposed to send us a home care attendant from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The person they sent did not know how to transfer someone. She did not know how to attend to my husband's personal needs. She was unable to get him out of bed. She said she was a maid, she usually cleaned houses. The lady was very upset because she was unable to help my husband. I was very upset because she could not help my husband. My husband was very upset, and stress causes my husband's condition to deteriorate. I will just pause here and indicate that this is an individual with MS.

She should never have been sent to us. It was a very stressful day for all of us. I am complaining to you personally so that you will know what is happening. I would like to add that I have used Central Health

Services and We Care on a number of previous occasions, not through home care and privately. On a number of occasions, they have been unable to send anyone at all out to us. On other occasions, the people they sent were not satisfactory, so how is this going to improve home care services? Perhaps I will repeat that. I would like to add that I have used Central Health Services and We Care on a number of previous occasions, not through Home Care but privately. On a number of occasions they have been unable to send anyone at all out to us. On other occasions the people they sent were not satisfactory, so how is that going to improve home care services? Furthermore, I am sure that Central Home Services will make a claim to Home Care to be reimbursed for a home care attendant, not for a maid. This is the way you want to save money. I might add that is underlined, that is in exclamation marks.

I am going to do another letter, read another letter to the minister dated January 4. This letter is a follow-up to our telephone conversation. It is to We Care of January 2, 1996. I started with We Care providing my nursing care Friday through Sunday and holidays Monday through the summer. A registered nurse has provided care. However, I would have to phone the We Care office on Thursday to see who is going to be doing my care every week. Sometimes they are able to tell me the whole weekend and at other times they did not know who is to do my care, and I would have to phone back. I asked them to phone me, but they never remembered. Home Care had a shortage of nurses and asked me if I was satisfied with the service that We Care was providing. I said, yes. Home Care decided to ask We Care to do all my calls. This was the beginning of the end for me.

I had to call on Monday to see who was coming, doing my care during the week and on Friday to see who was doing the weekend. I asked for a two-week schedule from Dana. It was delayed and delayed. I was told that Dana would have to ask her boss if that could be done. Finally I called my case co-ordinator from Home Care. They made up a schedule including a nurse that I refused to have because she did not complete my care and was sloppy in the work she did. It also included a nurse five mornings a week. I said that I would take an emergency as when she came I always had the feeling that I was interfering in her social life. As well, the schedule was written so small, it was barely readable. I protested and Dana sent a new schedule which was readable and the two nurses were replaced. That was not the end.

I had a nurse that was hurt in a car accident. I just want to add, Mr. Chairperson, at this point—now, this is again for the private firms that the minister is so fond of and will indicate will provide such excellent service—We Care still sent her to do work even though it was very visible by the way she moved that she was hurting. I would ask for things to be missed in my care, and I was afraid that she would be hurt further or I would be hurt. I have had nurses come here that have been so sick that they were as white as the sheet of my bed. We Care seems to have a policy that if a nurse is sick, she should go to the morning call and be replaced later. They do not seem to care that the client is compromised to begin with.

I have had calls missed because the office told me that a certain nurse was coming at a particular time. When I asked the nurse on an earlier visit if she was doing that call, she replied she had not been asked or had told them she was not able to do the call. When I told the office this, they insist the nurse is coming and no one showed up for the call. I am left waiting for them to find someone. And again I add, Mr. Chairperson, this is We Care Health Services that the minister intends to foist upon all of us in the city of Winnipeg.

I will continue the letter. I am extremely allergic to perfume and highly scented products. Twice I have gone into anaphylactic shock. I was sent a nurse that reeked of perfume. I had an asthma attack and sent her away. When I phoned We Care, I was told by the supervisor on the night that she did not know I was allergic and that they had no one to do my care—that they had no one to do my care.

I did phone Sherry Hoppe and told her that if anyone ever came to my house again wearing scented products, I would sue her. I understand everyone at We Care has now been made aware of my allergy. It is a step forward, Mr. Chairperson. I had the same nurse doing my four calls which began at 8:30 a.m. and ended 11:15 p.m. for 12 days straight. Under the circumstances she did a good job; however, parts of my care get missed, such as them forgetting to remind me to take my pills, forgetting to do my blood pressure and, last but not least, leaving clothing and footwear on the floor where I would fall over it if I get up at night. I told the We Care office that it does not work having one person doing all the calls. The office

turned around and told the nurse that I could not stand having the same nurse more than twice a day.

The Christmas holidays were a nightmare. Realizing that some of the regular nurses would be replaced, I called to see who would be doing the holidays. Again they gave me the names, but someone else showed up. I had a nurse that was visibly tired to do my morning care which worked out okay. However, We Care was on the phone during my care demanding she fill in all the calls for the other worker who was sick. She had worked all four calls the day before, worked all night at a nursing home and did my morning call. It appears that the office does not care about the safety of the nurse or the client.

* (1620)

I called to ask who was coming for the weekend, on New Year's Day. The person who answered the phone was so enraged that I was asking, she turned to another office staff and said, it is Barb and she is being a real—and I will not use the word because it is unparliamentary. I was being very polite and had a witness to that fact. I did tell her that, if she was going to refer to her clients by this name, please make sure the phone is hung up. The names she gave me for the holiday were not correct. I got a call at 10 p.m. on December 31 saying that the nurse I refused to have anymore coming to do my morning and noon calls on the 1st of January. I repeated the incidents to Sherry Hoppe when she returned from vacation. She did not even apologize on behalf of the corporation.

This tells me that We Care is only interested in grabbing the money from Home Care for our service. I just hate to think of how We Care treats people who are not as articulate or have the knowledge to complain. This is my private residence, and I have a right to know in a timely manner who is coming here; as well, I should be treated with the utmost respect by the office staff. I have asked Home Care to remove We Care from my home as soon as possible. Until such time, I do not expect any ramifications from the office staff for writing this letter.

I would just like to repeat that, Mr. Chairperson: Until such time, I do not expect any ramifications from the office staff for writing this letter. I will miss the nurses

who have always done their best to provide the best care they could.

I also like to ask the minister if he would comment on a letter dated April 11, 1996, and this letter is directed to the Honourable Health Minister Jim McCrae, an open letter.

Dear Sir: My wife and I are 83 and 85 years old, respectively, and we both have serious—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Education on a point of—

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, for clarification, I do not believe the member indicated the name of the letter writer, either the one before or the one now, and I do not think he is reading anonymous letters into the record. I mean, we are not reading anonymous letters into the record; I do not think he is either. But he is not giving a name that will give credibility to the letter, I mean, how do we know he just did not make up himself if he does not give a name to go with it. So could he please clarify whom the letters are from and that it was just not made up by somebody else?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I guess I could say that it is up to the member to clarify that if he wishes, or if the members of the committee wish to have him table, they can ask him to table it.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, if the Education minister had not been so engrossed in conversation with the minister, perhaps when I was reading the second letter, she would have heard me refer to the author. I did, and she could check Hansard, even though she is not paying attention. With respect to the first letter, the first letter was from Margaret Gaunt, G-A-U-N-T, and the third letter is now to continue.

My wife and I are 83 and 85 years old, respectively, and we both have serious, incapacitating medical conditions; that is, we are invalids. The nearest hospital in Winnipeg is about 40 kilometres away. Thank heavens we have had access to home care services for the last six months. Those caring, dedicated people have provided an excellent service, and, by the way, we firmly believe they deserve every penny they earn on this job. We simply cannot comprehend why a caring Health minister will try to fix something that does not need

fixing. We have been married 65 years, and, now, in these very difficult and vulnerable circumstances, we face being separated. If Emily's home care is discontinued, she will have to go to a hospital. I cannot drive, so I could not visit her, and I will be left to fend for myself. We are near panic. I am sure there are many others who have the same growing anxiety, and for what? Why this mania for privatization, whether it is good or bad or even inhumane? I sometimes think that it all has to do with the fanatical desire to destroy unions. Why should this be so? Are unions not a fundamental part of living in a democracy?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, I have received certainly one of those letters. I recollect reading, I remember being on a radio program making the comment referred to in the first letter the honourable member read and thinking immediately after I said, well, I will get some letters now having said that, but I had not up until that point.

I can tell the honourable member that the very things complained of in these letters are possible right now because the NDP and their union friends will not agree to an essential services agreement that allows for service to be delivered to these people. The very problems the honourable member complains about today he encourages to continue by supporting his union boss friends in their insistence to pull off the job people who provide vital lifesaving services to vulnerable Manitobans. So I guess the honourable member might want to reflect on that a little bit.

I think it is pretty hard, the organic fusion that I referred to makes it very hard for honourable members in the New Democratic Party to have minds of their own. This is a problem when it comes to the representation of all Manitobans. When your first duty is to union boss friends I guess it is hard to carry out your duty to all the people who actually elected you. But I say to the honourable member that if we are going to produce letters, I guess I will produce all my letters. I will not identify the authors though, because I do not have their permission, but people who have written to me in my two and a half years in the Department of Health complaining about the Home Care program. The honourable member wants to defend something today while there is a strike on and his union boss friends tell him to, but not for the last two and a half years. It is okay to rail daily about the

problems and concerns that he has about the home care system, but all of a sudden they have all evaporated.

The honourable member said a little while ago, he used the word "shallow." Well, the honourable member's approach and double standard here is so transparent that it is unfortunate that all Manitobans do not know about it, because all Manitobans do not. They have managed to, the New Democrats have managed to fool Manitobans for a long time and that is, of course, a problem that I think I need to deal with, and that is why it was asked earlier today about a public information program that we have begun in Manitoba. Of course, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) wants us to put an end to that sort of thing because, oh, we cannot have informed Manitobans because they are going to hear some message other than ours, which is the NDP union boss message. We cannot have that. My goodness, that would be a terrible thing, for someone to know about another point of view.

The honourable member talks about a shallow sort of approach to things. He wrote the book on it, Mr. Chairman, but now that he has brought forward letters from people complaining about a couple of private care deliverers, I guess I will have to review my files and pull out all the letters I have received since September 10, 1993, and maybe the ones received by my predecessor before that as well and I will begin reading them into the record at the next sitting of this committee.

In the meantime I will continue reading the letter that I received from Kelli Paige. I did not receive it directly, but it is a letter written to three of the news media here in the city of Winnipeg, and I have asked the Winnipeg Sun, I have asked the Winnipeg Free Press to ensure that this letter is printed so that members of the public can be aware of the feelings that Kelli Paige, a card-carrying, dues-paying member of the MGEU, has. I think the public is entitled to know what Kelli Paige thinks, because she or he too is a citizen of this province, and I believe it is appropriate that the citizens of this province know what the views of Kelli Paige are.

To continue, and I quote: So you can blame Jim McCrae for finding a solution to a lot that is wrong with our present health care system as it now stands, but blame the union and its followers for what they are doing,

not Jim McCrae. Our own supervisors chose to dupe Mr. McCrae with the hundreds of us that will still be there for you through this strike. Your caregivers chose to walk out on you. It was a free decision. No one made them do it. They chose to make you suffer so that your public outcry will further benefit them in their fight with Jim McCrae.

I hope that at the very least the Minister of Health does now, despite the outcome, is to clean up the staff in a health care system that badly needs it. Maybe they should hire some more suitable qualified applicants for this profession, so that this never has to happen to our clients again. They will not walk out.

It is signed, Mr. Chairman, by Kelli Paige.

I notice we have some New Democratic members who have joined us late this afternoon, and I would like them to know the contents of this letter from Kelli Paige. I will read the covering note for them. It is dated yesterday, April 16, 1996.

* (1630)

To whom this may concern: This is a copy of a letter that I have sent to the Winnipeg Sun and CJOB. I have previously sent one to the Free Press which was not published.

As I said, Mr. Chairman, I am encouraging the Winnipeg Free Press and the Winnipeg Sun to publish this letter so that Manitobans can know the views of this card-carrying, dues-paying—it is not by choice, your dues are confiscated from you by union bosses. Whether you agree with their opinions or not, you are forced to finance the views of the New Democrats and the union.

Kelli Paige goes on: I am presently still an MGEU member who voted no to strike action and am disgusted with the union and members who chose to walk out on thousands of sick and disabled seniors who need them. I called your office last week to continue working through the strike and was helped and told what to do, but thanks to my supervisor, who is pro-union, that was not possible.

I will pause here, Mr. Chairman. This is where the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) draws

some kind of a distinction. He wanted to know which supervisor it was, because he was drawing a distinction and saying, that supervisor is still working for your department, Mr. Minister, so do not blame the union. But what Kelli Paige points out is that this supervisor is a union supporter, pro-union is the way Kelli puts it.

(Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Quote: I called your office last week to continue working through the strike and was helped and told what to do, but thanks to my supervisor, who is pro-union, that was not possible. She will give me some assignments, no doubt, the union-approved ones with palliative care, but not the regular run.

I do in our block project where I can care for several people instead of one. I do not want to work for the union or follow their directions. I want to work with all our clients that they have walked out on. I have been very tactfully threatened by my supervisor with regard to my job and with work after the strike. She suggested I find work in a hospital or somewhere.

That is the covering letter. Here is the letter in full.

An Honourable Member: Will you not table it?

Mr. McCrae: Well, you will probably see it published in the Free Press and in the Sun tomorrow, because I have asked both newspapers to publish it. I hope they do, because it reflects—

An Honourable Member: Is that a yes?

Mr. McCrae: Well, I can table it quite easily, sure.

An Honourable Member: Just like Connie Curran's report?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member wants to talk about Connie Curran again. This is a popular theme for the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). He likes to talk about Connie Curran. Connie Curran did not provide, did not make a report. It was never agreed that there would be a report.

See, the mentality of the NDP is, you put down your money and you get something that you can hold in your hand, you know. Like this one, I do not know what they paid Price Waterhouse for this report, but I will tell honourable members all about what the Price Waterhouse report says. I will tell honourable members all about what the report from Seven Oaks Hospital and the We Care home health services report says, the one that the member for Kildonan supports. I will tell members all about that, but I want the members who have joined us late to hear from Kelli Paige. I only have 30 seconds left, so I will have to do this next opportunity I get, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we have made some progress here during the course of this discussion and this debate. The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) wonders, and I can certainly understand him wondering, but it is very interesting and I think it is very illustrative of what is wrong with health care in this province and what is wrong with the minister's policy as it relates to home care, in particular, insofar as the minister refused to table documents, refused to table the studies on privatization, but when I read into the record after he had read into the record three or four times a letter from his new favourite person, the minister said that he was going to bring forward all of the letters of complaints that he has received in his office on home care for the past few years and read them into the record. He turned to his staffperson and asked his staffperson to bring these letters forward.

What does that say about this minister's commitment to the Home Care program in the province of Manitoba? That this minister does not believe in the Home Care program, that he goes out of his way to criticize the Home Care program as it exists, at every corner. Is there any doubt why the government is moving towards privatizing it when the very minister who is charged with the responsibility of directing the Home Care program will do anything he has, anything in his power to try to undermine the program, to undermine the credibility of the program. Indeed, turning to his staffperson and asking his staffperson to pull all of the letters of complaint about home care is illustrative of where the minister is coming from, where the minister will do anything he can to undermine the Home Care program as it exists in the province of Manitoba.

I think the minister's actions speak volumes about his commitment to home care, and perhaps we are now finally understanding where and how the government is proceeding with regard to home care. In other words, it is fairly clear the government does not believe that home care as presently run in the province of Manitoba ought to remain in public hands. They made it clear from the Treasury Board submission that the Home Care program is going to be privatized completely. It is clear that the government has no intention or no commitment to continue the public Home Care program, and I think that this is a real tragedy, particularly when the very report that the minister constantly refers to, the Price Waterhouse report, a report done well over 10 years ago, indicated that the Home Care program was the best in North America.

Again, I remind the minister, the minister is so unaware of what is going on in his own department that he does not realize there were implementation committees, in fact, at the Department of Health to deal with some of the recommendations of the Price Waterhouse report that he so gleefully quotes from, having resurrected it and having someone bring it to his attention yesterday, I dare say the first time in two and a half years.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Chairperson, there is something fundamentally flawed when the Minister of Health does everything that he can to undermine the Home Care program as it exists in the province and does everything that he can to downgrade the program, and I guess that explains it. Perhaps the minister has therefore answered the question that I asked and have now asked for two days, where is the initiative? Where are the plans? Why are they moving to privatize?

The minister by his actions and by his words clearly illustrates to all Manitobans and anyone reading this debate that the minister does not believe the Home Care program is a valuable service, will do anything he can to undermine the Home Care program. Rather than improving a program that has flaws and unquestionably needs refinement, the minister is holus-bolus privatizing the entire program and has perpetrated by his actions a strike and has thrown the lives of many Manitobans into disarray by his actions and his insistent need to privatize. To privatize on what basis? Clearly, he does not believe

in the program as it exists. Clearly, he has no studies and no documentation from either inside the Department of Health or outside the Department of Health that he is willing to share dealing with privatization.

Today, in the House, he failed, Mr. Chairperson, to provide us with the recommendations from the Connie Curran report that looked at home care implementation, and I draw the attention to the minister. I am sure he has not read the contract, but it called for her to provide an outline and an Action Plan with respect to home care, and we paid \$160,000 to her to do that. So either she did not provide The Action Plan for which we paid \$160,000 and we should have our money back or she did provide The Action Plan and the minister is failing to produce it and further the minister is failing to provide for public review the recommendations of his own advisory committee on home care which has made recommendations with respect to privatization, albeit after the fact. They were in fact given the mandate to review the whole issue of privatization after the submission had already gone to Treasury Board.

So I think we now understand and I think it is fairly clear from the comments of the minister what this government and what this minister's commitment is with respect to home care. It is fairly clear now that nothing or any arguments made by the vast majority of Manitobans will sway this minister from his single-minded approach to privatize home care and to make home care a private model that has been recommended by organizations like We Care publicly documented. I have the documentation. It is passing strange that the very plan proposed by Treasury Board and by this minister under his signature resembles exactly the proposal of We Care Incorporated made in 1993 to privatize home care, but it is fairly clear from the minister's statements and the minister's actions that he will do anything he can to undermine the provincial Home Care program in order to allow it to be privatized and move it over to the government. I suppose I could call them the government advisers in the private sector who have advised and recommended that he privatize home care.

* (1640)

I return to my question that I asked two questions ago. Specifically, I wonder if the minister will outline specifically what the government plans are for the Home

Care program in both the short term and in the long term and how it relates to the Treasury Board submission dated December 16, 1995, and what the implementation procedures and plans are in that regard.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, first off, let me go back. Parts of the Home Care program have been privatized since the beginning. I think the honourable member for Kildonan owes the Victorian Order of Nurses a very big apology for his comments in the House yesterday where he maligned them and just basically said things that were not very nice about the Victorian Order of Nurses. He obviously owes apologies to a lot of others, but I am in no hope of ever getting any from him on those ones. But certainly with regard to the VON, I think that he might want to reflect on what he said in maligning the Victorian Order of Nurses so badly there yesterday, that he might indeed as an honourable member want to reflect and ultimately apologize to the Victorian Order of Nurses for that.

There have been all kinds of reviews and studies and reports, and I have one in my hand that was commissioned by the New Democrats back in 1986.

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: A point of order, Mr. Chairperson. I am looking for clarification from the Chair whether it is appropriate for the minister to suggest that another member has maligned an organization and whether in fact that is parliamentary.

Mr. McCrae: Well, if it is not parliamentary, I would withdraw it anyway.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister has said already that he would withdraw it if in fact it did impugn motive.

I would caution all members indeed in some of the comments made by the member for Kildonan, just in this last question and comments, that we are coming so very close to impugning motives if in fact we did not. So I would caution all members, and I thank the minister for withdrawing your comment.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, sometimes in discussions in Legislatures, people get carried away and they say things that they really should not because they are not

parliamentary. I certainly do not want to offend those rules, and I thank the honourable member for Kildonan for bringing to my attention the fact that I might have gone a little past the line of what is appropriate in the Legislature. Having done so, I gladly would withdraw any words that offend our rules.

Whatever it was he did to the VON, he should apologize for it, though, because it was not very nice. Let us put it that way.

Mr. Chairman, I was referring to a report. I mean, reports are very important to the New Democrats. Because if you have a report that says something, then you can condemn what it says, or if you do not have a report that does not say anything, you can condemn that there is no report that does not say anything—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. I am having trouble hearing the minister making his comments.

Mr. McCrae: You see, if you are a New Democrat, especially if you are in opposition, Mr. Chairman, you have that luxury of total irresponsibility which we see daily in this place—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) and the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) will have their opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

Mr. McCrae: And so, Mr. Chairman, here we are. We are looking at this report commissioned by the New Democrats in 1986, and this report on page xix, small letters, says: The program should require regional program managers to manage their budgets more actively and to stay within approved levels and should give program staff greater discretion over service levels per client, i.e., permitting dilution of services in order to achieve budget targets.

This is the position of the NDP, dilute the services, Mr. Chairman, and cut and hack and slash.

Point of Order

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): A point of order, Mr. Chairman, it is not the position of the New Democratic

Party. It was the recommendation of Price Waterhouse which we did not—I repeat, did not—accept.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. This is definitely not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable minister, to finish his comments.

Mr. McCrae: I do not know, Mr. Chairman, what the member said because I was engaged in something a little more important than what she—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Would the member for Wellington give the minister the opportunity to finish his comments?

Mr. McCrae: Now the member for Wellington wants us to believe that they do not accept cutting and hacking and slashing services like their report says when they were in government. Now they want us to believe something different from what they were saying then.

I suppose the member for Wellington is going to say she does not agree with this one either. This recommendation she and her colleagues made back in—or not maybe she, but the NDP made back in 1986: The program should give consideration to introducing measures that would serve to encourage clients to meet their needs through their own resources, e.g., user fees, waiting periods prior to receiving nonprofessional services, user fees during the initial period of service and limiting hours in which services are provided.

Now, this is NDP policy and this is very alarming, and I wonder if the clients of the home care system know that. But now that the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) is here, he has an opportunity now to set the record straight.

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I believe it is common practice in our Chamber and in our committee not to make reference to members being present or absent and the minister has done that on several occasions and—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for Kildonan does have a point of order, and I would ask members not to refer to the presence or absence of members.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: It is an old rule, and I have clearly breached it. The member for Transcona's (Mr. Reid) presence or absence should not be the subject of comment. Having made a comment like that, I forgot about it because momentarily I thought it applied to the Chamber itself. As honourable members know, not everybody—can I speak in a generic sense?—always attends all committee meetings. Is it okay to say that?

Anyway, for the benefit of the honourable member for Transcona, I am sure he wants an opportunity to set the record straight here because of some of the scandalous things he said during Question Period today. I know he will want to correct the record. Surely he was not—is that wrong too?—scandalous, I withdraw. See, we have the great censor sitting over here. The honourable member for Kildonan thinks he can bully and tell everybody what to do, say, think, feel, all of those kinds of things because he has got friends in the union movement, Mr. Chairman. He can do those things. He can threaten, he can intimidate, he can scare the wits out of the clients of our home care system, all with great impunity because his friends the union bosses will protect him. Well, is that not wonderful. Is that not special. He will not threaten me and he will not intimidate me and neither will his union boss friends.

* (1650)

I have clients to look after. He does not care about them. I do.

The honourable member for Transcona has raised issues today in the Legislature. He wants people to be denied services. He was as clear about that as anything I have ever heard, and maybe he would like to use the opportunity provided to him in this committee to set the record straight.

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, I believe the minister suggested that the member for

Transcona wanted to deny people services. I think that imputes motives, and I would ask the minister to withdraw that.

Mr. McCrae: On the same point of order, Mr. Chairman, in Question Period today the member for Transcona was objecting to people providing services or people counselling other people to provide services or people encouraging other people to provide services to people with multiple sclerosis, people with Parkinson's disease. He led me to believe that he was against that, that he opposed it vociferously. I will not say violently because that is probably too much of a link with the union movement and inappropriate.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Once again, I would ask all honourable members to choose their words carefully. We are doing everything in our power here to get through these Estimates, and I would ask all members to choose their words carefully.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member keeps coming back and asking about reports. What I have been trying to do is refer to a report which I assume represents the NDP's policies because they commissioned it, in the same way that everything Connie Curran thinks represents my policy in the rather narrow mind of the honourable member for Kildonan or in the same way that anything out there, anything some bad person thinks I must think too, so that is the kind of mentality we have got in the New Democratic Party, and I am just adopting a little bit of it myself today so that the honourable member knows what it is like to deal with that sort of approach. So that is all I am doing.

But I guess I assume here that the honourable member agrees with all of these comments that are made in the Price Waterhouse report, the executive summary thereto. It says things like this, Mr. Chairman, with which I assume the honourable member for Kildonan agrees.

The review found that the mandate of the program has drifted as the program is increasingly used to serve a hospital replacement function. If the program is to adequately fulfill this additional role, it will have to place a greater emphasis on guaranteeing the availability and delivery of complex care services.

It goes on later, quote, it also identified a need for a comprehensive quality assurance program that would gather and report information on service quality across all regions. Do not forget, Mr. Chairman, all of these comments are made in that report and then the NDP policy after that is to fix everything by imposing user fees. I mean really, let us get serious. That is not the way to deal with the people who receive services. You identify the problems in a report and then you go with user fees and cuts in service to deal with it. That is what the NDP was about to do when they were thrown out of office.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, some things have become clear during the course of this debate, this discussion, this question and answer. It is fairly clear where the minister and the government stand with respect to their support for the home care system. I want to acknowledge that it must be frustrating for a lot of members. I note the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has been present during the course of this committee and is anxious to ask questions, as well as other members of my party and members of the government. This constant dialogue between myself and the minister may not appear to be making progress, but I am actually of an optimistic nature and think that we are actually moving towards some meaningful discussion, which I think is what we are here for, of the course of health care in the province of Manitoba.

I wonder if we might be able to move this along. The minister constantly refers to the Price Waterhouse report. I do not know if the minister knows—I am sure his officials are aware of the fact—that the government has implementation teams with respect to the Price Waterhouse report and has had implementation teams with respect to the Price Waterhouse report. Perhaps, the minister might come back with some of the comments and discussions of those implementation teams with respect to the Price Waterhouse report and we can move off of the report from several years ago and perhaps deal with more contemporary matters, very serious matters, facing the province and the Department of Health at present, particularly as it relates to home care.

So I wonder if the minister might provide that information.

Mr. McCrae: Yes, Mr. Chairman, what the member is inviting us to do is to keep trying to make

recommendations and just keep on trying and they will just keep shooting them down until we find one that he likes, then it will be okay as long as it includes something that is approved by the union boss friends. That is the way his system works. As long as there is something going on that is not approved by his union boss friends, he will ask millions of questions about it and fight tooth and nail because that is where they get their money.

So the honourable member needs to be aware, reminded, that the report that his colleagues in the NDP-supported no doubt by the union boss friends-commissioned a report that recommends user fees and cuts in service. He cannot run away from that anymore than I can run away from Connie Curran. So let us be honest with each other-oh, wrong word again, cannot be honest with each other. We are not supposed to do that in the Legislature. That is unparliamentary, you see. But, it is okay to call people racists and fight for your right to call somebody a racist but then you cannot say let us be honest because that is unparliamentary. So I will withdraw that, Mr. Chairman.

The Price Waterhouse report states that the review identified that the program lacks a comprehensive information system that collects and reports client service, management and financial data on an automated basis. It says there is no strategic data plan. It says the open-ended nature of the program raises questions as to whether there is a need for appropriate mechanisms for capping costs or services. It says the review found that there are inadequate hospital discharge planning practices that lead to inappropriate discharges to home care, lack of proper discharge preparation and potentially unsafe client situations, and the member said yesterday, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), go back to the system we had in the first place. The one that was potentially unsafe for clients, that is what he wants us to go back to. Shame on the member, shame on him.

I continue with this Price Waterhouse report. It also found gaps in services that are outside the scope of the Continuing Care Program. In some regions, the Continuing Care Program is perceived as the deepest pocket program and is being used to fill some of these gaps. This results in serious departures from program guidelines, inconsistencies among regions and a sense of

unfairness amongst staff and clients in those regions that are complying with the program scope.

The honourable member wants, as he said yesterday in the House, Mr. Chairman, he said, go back to the system we had in the first place. He wants to go back where there are serious departures from program guidelines. The member for Kildonan wants to go back to inconsistencies amongst regions, and he wants to go back to a sense of unfairness amongst staff and clients.

Do you know why the New Democrats like a sense of unfairness amongst people? Because they like to whip stuff up and create a sense that there is something terribly wrong here that our union boss friends can fix and make the world right for everybody. That is where the New Democrats are coming from. They want-I want to get the words just right because I have been accused of not getting it right sometimes-to go back to the system we had in the first place. The member wants to go back to all of that. The member wants to go back to, and I quote from his report, significant inefficiencies revealed during the review of the intake process.

* (1700)

He wants to go back to the significant inefficiencies of the program. He wants to go back to indiscriminate and inappropriate use of the joint nurse and social worker assessments in Winnipeg. He wants to go back to deficiency in the panelling process. He wants to go back to inconsistencies in the panel's make-up, inappropriate use of panels, incomplete case preparation for panels and inadequate case presentations. He wants to go back to a system where in some instances clients were being panelled simply because staff wanted to qualify them for enriched home care services and not because they were being seriously considered for institutional placement. That is what the member for Kildonan wants us to go back to. He wants to go back to workloads among case co-ordinators and resource co-ordinators that are excessively high. This is really unsafe for our clients, but that is what the honourable member wants us to go back to. He wants to go back to workloads that have serious implications in terms of service delays, lack of reassessments, overservicing, greater client dependence on services and inappropriate reliance on direct-service workers for case management information. This is the

kind of stuff the member for Kildonan wants us to go back to, Mr. Chairman, he and his union boss friends. Why?

Well, maybe Kelli Paige has it right after all when she says, this is not about care for people. This is about wages and benefits and unions dues and people getting taken out of their pockets union dues to be spent by union leaders and sent to the New Democrats. Maybe that is what this is really all about, and maybe the honourable member should come clean and talk about those sorts of things. But, no, he wants us to go back to heavy workloads that result in direct-service workers receiving inadequate supervision and resulting in inadequate contact between program staff and clients. They do not care about clients, Mr. Chairman. They want to go back to this inadequate contact between program staff and clients.

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, I have listened very carefully to the minister's tirade, and I think he is again imputing motive by indicating that we do not care about clients. I think that in light of the situation we are in today that that is a motive improperly imputed.

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

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Well, he wants to go back a lot. This is the old hidebound CCF approach. He forgets that they are not—they call themselves New Democrats. When are they going to drop the "New" by the way? This is absolutely ridiculous. You do not reflect anything new in this country. You reflect the mentality of 40 years ago before things started changing in this country.

They want to go back to high workloads which contribute to inappropriate servicing. That is what they want, inappropriate servicing, unauthorized servicing and unnecessary costs being incurred by the program.

Here is something that I think makes New Democrats lick their lips and rub their hands together because they

would like this part. The impending unionization of direct-service workers should foster a closer relationship with the program. This should help to address many of the concerns of the direct-service workers, although it will also reduce the flexibility the program has had in contracting them. This is a report the New Democrats asked for. The impending unionization of direct-service workers will also have major short- and long-term cost implications for the program.

Is that what the member wants to go back to? More long- and short-term cost implications? They do not care. They do not have to sit on the side of the House that has to raise the money from the taxpayers. I remember one time in 1987-88, I told Rolly Penner to get his hands out of the taxpayers' pockets, and he was the Attorney General at the time. Roland Penner took great, great offence to that comment. I made it from my seat on the opposition side. He got up and when his turn came to speak in that particular budget debate he gave a long, long speech about the right of the state to have its hands in the pockets of the populace. It reflected very well for me what New Democrats really stand for. [interjection] It was the one before the one with which the New Democrats self-destructed. I think it was the one before that. That would have been—

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: I think you have admonished us on many occasions to try to stay relevant. I do not see how the relevance of a previous debate the minister had with a former Attorney General or a previous budget in 1987 bears any resemblance whatsoever—even by stretching the ministry despite the fact the minister is reading from a report from 1986, even by virtue of that I do not see how you can stretch that to be possibly relevant to the question posed.

Mr. McCrae: I can see how the honourable member for Kildonan might see my comments somehow wandering away a little bit from the main point of his question, but I think if the honourable member really thinks about it, the only reason he is upset by it is, it is starting to get to him, that the whole approach of him and his cronies in the union movement is to enrich the union movement.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. Once again, I ask all honourable members, not just the minister at this

point who is speaking, but all honourable members to try to be as relevant as possible. I am ruling though that in fact this is still a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Indeed, I think what I was saying was extremely relevant even though in the ever fertile mind of the honourable member for Kildonan it could somehow be construed as veering from the path of relevancy, but I think I should read that last bit from the Price Waterhouse report again, because it says two things. It says a good thing and it says something that is not quite so good. It does not say anything about clients, but here it goes.

The impending unionization of direct-service workers should foster a closer relationship with the program. This should help to address—although I do not see that relationship with the program today, because these people are not providing any services to seniors and others in Manitoba who need them with the full gleeful support of the members of the New Democratic Party.

In any event, it goes on. This should help to address many of the concerns of the direct-service workers, and this is the important part, although it will also reduce the flexibility the program has enjoyed in contracting them. I think that is a pretty clear statement about where we are at right about now.

The honourable member asks, which reports? Well, I am reading from one right now. How long is he going to harp away about reports? I am telling you, the honourable member, as I told you, reminds me of that lawyer who, I know, when he does not have any evidence, he pounds the facts. When he does not have any facts, he pounds the evidence, and, when he does not have either, he pounds the desk. That is this fellow right over here, the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), who just—[interjection]

Mr. Chairman, the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) is beginning to bristle a little bit, and I assure him and all the members of his honourable, honourable profession, including the member for Kildonan, I know with whom the Minister of Labour stands shoulder to shoulder on this particular point, that I meant no offence to the members of the legal profession. I say that through the Attorney General so that she can pass that on to

anyone who might have felt that way, because I certainly did not mean any offence.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister's time has elapsed.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I do not understand the minister's response, because my question to the minister was whether or not he realized that with respect to the Price Waterhouse report there were implementation committees by his own department that he is probably unaware of—perhaps he is aware—that deal with that report, and I asked him if he would table some of that information instead of reading from a report that is 10 years old in an attempt to somehow draw some kind of conclusion, the very report that said, in our view Manitoba illustrates one of the best long-term systems in North America. It makes the point that I made in my previous question that it seems to me that ideologically or philosophically or for whatever reason the minister is not committed and has no confidence in the present home care system as exists in Manitoba, and it again seems to answer quite—it seems to provide for me answers to the question as to why the government is privatizing.

Clearly the government has no commitment or any confidence in the home care system as it exists, and it is clear from the minister's responses and the minister's remarks that that is the case. From the minister's inability to provide us with studies and documentation as to why they are privatizing it is fairly clear that the government's policy initiative is based on a philosophy of privatization at all costs and with very little strong information, very little facts or any kind of studies that would justify the move towards privatization. Therein lies the problem.

* (1710)

We are now in a situation of a strike in home care, and we are in a situation where the public has said over and over again, put the information on the table. Tell us why you are privatizing. Tell us the reasons why you are proceeding in this course of action. Now, had the minister or had the government put this information—and I still challenge the minister and the government to put this information forward. Allow for public debate. Allow for public discussion. Perhaps you will be able to persuade the public, the clients, the caregivers and the public in general about the wisdom of your move and,

therefore, you will be able to proceed with the public supporting you.

As it exists now, not only have you refused to provide information to the public but here in the committee constantly over and over again the minister is refusing to provide information. He is refusing to release the recommendations of the Connie Curran report. He refused today in the House to provide the recommendations of the advisory committee to the minister to study home care.

Let us discuss that for a second, Mr. Chairperson. The minister two years ago set up an advisory committee on home care. He was given a broad mandate to examine home care and to make recommendations. I might add, the recommendations for advisory committee and the appeal panel came from us in the New Democratic Party, but, when I queried the minister several years ago about the committee, he said, these advisory committees will make available advice to the government, and then, rather than try to tell them what their advice ought to be, as the honourable member seems to suggest, I think we should show a little respect for the process and hear from the advisory council.

I am asking the minister, let us have a little respect for the process. The chairperson at that committee, or one of the members of that committee, has been widely quoted as saying, and I will quote: that they were not given the opportunity to comment on the contracting out, on the privatization until after the decision had been made by government.

Then they were asked to provide comments. I want to quote from that same person who said: we have felt that we have received documents late. Obviously, the whole plan to go private went to Treasury Board before we ever saw it. We did not think that that would be the process, so we spent a year and a half trying to convince the minister often that we need to be in the loop of consultation, so we are not quite sure what we will be doing in the future.

So, Mr. Chairperson, the advisory committee is kept out of the decision process, the advisory committee that was set up with a mandate. I will quote from the minister. The mandate from the minister identifies service delivery issues or concerns: monitor emerging trends in new models of service, identify options for

improving current delivery systems, consult as requested with relevant organizations and potential program development initiatives; participate in subcommittees and working groups; assess the nature and trends of client initiative service reviews.

The minister's own committee that was set up to examine was not provided with the information to review home care. What is worse, when in fact they were given the information about privatization, late and after a decision had been made, they made a report. The minister has the report, and the minister is refusing to make it public, together with the recommendations from Connie Curran, together with all of the other studies. What does the minister rely on? The minister relies on a report 10 years ago from Price Waterhouse that said: Manitoba illustrates one of the best long-term care systems in the North America, so is it any wonder that we are in the situation we are in today of a strike when the minister has—and the minister said to me, have respect for the process.

Where is the process? Where is the opportunity for even the minister's own advisory committee to provide input into this decision making, let alone members of the Legislative Chamber, let alone members of the public, let alone caregivers, let alone the clients of the home care system? Where has that input been? It has not. It begs the question, why the government is continuing on its path of privatization with no regard whatsoever to the public and their concerns. It asks the question, what is the government afraid of? Why are they afraid to come forward with information, with documentation to justify their decision? I again suggest to the minister, if you can put forward arguments that can convince the public, should you not be doing that? I mean, enough. We do not have to trade insults back and forth. The minister can simply forward documents and forward information that justifies his decision, and we will let the public decide. Let that information be debated in the Chamber or in this committee. Let that information be debated in the newspapers and on the open line show. Let that information go out to the public. But that information is not forthcoming.

What is forthcoming and what we are now seeing is a public relations campaign that is commencing tomorrow to tell the public all of the good things about health care. I have a great deal of difficulty with that, in the midst of what we are going through, that the government would

have the audacity to spend that much money on a public relations campaign, and we will get to that during the course of these Estimates debate, but I guess my question to the minister is one that says, what is the minister afraid of? Why is the minister reluctant to provide us with the information concerning the government's plan to privatize home care? Why is the minister afraid to put that documentation forward and allow the public to make a judgment?

After all, it is still a democracy. The public still has a right to know and has a right to decide on this particular issue. If the minister's position is as strong as he suggests, then let him put the information forward. Let him come forward. Let him table the Connie Curran recommendations. Let him table his health advisory report. Let him table the list of individuals, groups, organizations and others that he consulted with before he decided to privatize.

What are the minister and the government afraid of in this regard on the home care privatization front?

Mr. McCrae: Absolutely nothing, Mr. Chairman. The advisory committee made the report or comment or whatever you want to call it to me, and I have learned that that report may or may not represent a consensus of the committee.

That is an important thing for me to say, so that I can tell the honourable member that if he wants to see that report, he can ask the committee, and the committee is going to have to look at this, because if the committee has not—[interjection] Well, since I got the report, I have learned that that may or may not reflect the consensus of the committee.

So I would like to know about that before I decide to give it to the members, because the members of the committee might not appreciate my putting out a report that does not reflect the consensus of the committee. That is something I am working on right now to find out.

* (1720)

But in any event, I have made no secret and the chair of the committee has made no secret either that she does not believe that there ought to be a privatized home care

system. Well, I do not either. I never have and it never has been privatized in the sense that honourable members opposite are talking about. It has always been privatized in the sense of some service delivery so, you see, we are playing little word games, and the member, because he has nothing whatever to criticize our government for, plays word games. He did it during the election campaign. The health policy of his party and ours looked an awful lot alike by the time you look at the total policy and, in terms of implementation, there is not much difference there either.

So what do we do? We sort of around the edges have a debate, which really does not take us anywhere, not when New Democrats are engaged in it, because if it does not work to the benefit of their union boss friends, there is no point in having it in any event. That is where they are coming from. It is lock step, organic fusion every day, joined at the head or whatever you call it, and the bully intimidation mentality is certainly apparent amongst New Democrats and their union boss friends, and so they use this place as a place to reflect the will of their—I guess they are their bosses too because, as I said earlier, if there is ever any question about who is more important, the people of Manitoba or their union boss friends, their union boss friends win every time. If you need any evidence for that, go out into the homes of some of our home care clients today and you will see what I am talking about, Mr. Chairman, and it is a very disturbing thing to see.

I am talking about intimidating workers and threatening that they are going to have their income taken away from them by the union. It has already got their hands in their pockets, and now they are going to say, we are going to take more of your hard-earned money because you are not doing what we tell you to do.

This is the way New Democrats and union bosses work. That is the way it is done, intimidate people and force your way. Never mind that democracy is supposed to be a part of our way of life here in Canada, just force people to do things against their will.

Well, Mr. Chairman, the Price Waterhouse report—the member is always asking about reports. See, he does not want to hear about the Price Waterhouse report because it was commissioned by his colleagues. No doubt the union bosses were part of that too, because there is a

reference on page viii to unionization. I guess they could not force Price Waterhouse to write everything they wanted to hear, because it said that the impending unionization of direct-service workers will also have major short- and long-term cost implications for the program. Now, I wonder what that means. Maybe the member can explain what that means, because I thought unions were, they claim, to be competitive and all of that sort of thing. So maybe the honourable member can elucidate on the parameters of his extensive knowledge on this particular matter.

Anyway, the report goes on. In the area of client services the review identified that program policies concerning the provision of supplies discouraged clients from assuming responsibility for their own self-care. In addition, potential overservicing, and hence overspending, was identified in relation to clients receiving only housekeeping services. There was also evidence of higher levels of servicing where VON was responsible for care planning and case management. The review noted that in some regions there was limited or no access to certain services because such services had not been developed or because of shortages of particular categories of professionals.

This is what—as the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) said yesterday, when he said, go back to the system we had in the first place. That is what he wants us to go back to, Mr. Chairman, those sorts of problems that are in the program.

Now, this report also says, and it quotes others as saying, this is a very good program. Well, nobody is taking issue with that. I am certainly not. But the honourable member would have you believe, Mr. Chairman—and I do not think you are going to be fooled quite so easily by the New Democrats—but they would like you to believe that what is happening in Manitoba is somehow not an improvement to our Home Care program. So, being New Democrats, the only thing their minds can figure out is, well, go back to what we had in the first place because there is nothing like the good old days. Well, the good old days—the member gave the VON a very large insult yesterday by speaking so disparagingly about the contribution that the VON has made to the Home Care program in our province, which I am not going to do. But there are issues with the VON as well.

I will continue with the Price Waterhouse report. The review also established that when home care service costs are calculated to determine whether they are less than those of alternative forms of care, significant costs such as case management, daycare, respite care, equipment and supplies are not taken into account. In many cases, instances, home care costs actually exceed the costs of alternative forms of care. This is what the honourable member wants us to go back to, these instances.

One of the fundamental service conditions of the program is not being followed due to the lack of consideration of all cost. Now, the member says yesterday, it is the cheapest and the best, ignoring all the other what Price Waterhouse had to say about that, and others have ignored that, too. I know that Dr. Shapiro has said that this is a cheap program, but I dare say she probably did not take into account what Price Waterhouse has had to say about case management, daycare, respite care, equipment and supplies not taken into account. [interjection] Yes, I know that Dr. Shapiro is on the Implementation Committee. The honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) would have you believe I do not know that Dr. Shapiro is now part of the Implementation Committee. Dr. Shapiro has played an important role in the development of home care, but this is not 20 years ago. This is 1996, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chomiak: Why do you restrict yourself to a 10-year-old report? Is that not a little logically inconsistent?

Mr. McCrae: Not really. The member asks if it is logically inconsistent. He said yesterday, go back to the system we had in the first place. I mean, he has got to be accountable and responsible for the things he says, and his colleagues, like a bunch of trained seals, were just all over themselves trying to applaud this particular statement that we should go back to yesteryear, go back to those hidebound days when New Democrats reigned supreme along with their union bosses in the caucus room on a regular basis, being told what to do by their union boss friends.

Why are they so frightened of these union bosses? Why do they not have a mind of their own? Why do they let the people of Manitoba be ruled by paid union bosses? Because they are bought and paid for? Could that be the reason? Well, check the records. I think you will find not only a fusion that is just biological, but you

might find a monetary fusion somewhere along the line, too, if we are looking for sinister little signs of things.

It boggles the mind how much money unions—I am going to have to see if I can find some information about this for our next meeting, Mr. Chairman, so we can talk about how much the members of the New Democratic Party are in the pockets of the union bosses of this province, just to what extent and to what length they will go to serve the ends of their masters in the union movement.

Mr. Chomiak: It is ironic that the minister would make comments about the VON when, in fact, the privatization plan would virtually destroy VON as we know it in the city of Winnipeg. It is ironic and I hope the people reading this in Hansard from VON will recognize that.

My question to the minister is, can the minister outline for us, please, how many staff from the Department of Health are now providing services in an advocacy role, as termed by government, to home care clients, how many staff from other departments are involved with providing “advocacy services” to home care clients, what levels those staff are, what the conditions are concerning the work that they are doing in the community with respect to home care? What kind of training is being offered or will be offered to those staff people from both the Department of Health and other government departments that have or will be seconded to do this kind of work, and what kind of provisions with respect to the conditions of work have been applied? What kind of standards and regulations and follow-up will be provided?

I notice my time is up, and I will continue—

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member for Kildonan’s time is not up at this point. I believe we have approximately eight minutes left.

However, the time being 5:30 p.m., committee rise.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): The item before the committee is item 1.(b) Administration and Finance Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 11 of your Estimates book. Did the

honourable Premier have anybody else to introduce today? Is there any other staff to introduce today that had not been introduced yesterday? No. Okay. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Jim is still wearing the same blazer. No, I am just kidding. Blue blazers are very important.

My question—I was raising questions with the Premier yesterday on home care. I would like to know whether the Premier was apprised by his Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) on the recommendations from the Home Care Advisory committee that was established in May of 1994 by the provincial government and the committee obviously chosen by the government to provide the government advice. When he mentioned yesterday he was dealing with advice on home care, was the Premier briefed by the minister’s Home Care Advisory committee pursuant to the decision of the government to proceed with privatization of home care?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I do not recall, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: Well, this is the same answer we got from the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) this week on Connie Curran. You know, I do not recall after—two years ago he said I received recommendations. What kind of advice, who did the government receive its advice from if it did not receive it from the Home Care Advisory committee that was handpicked by the Conservative government?

Mr. Filmon: The Home Care Advisory committee has been charged with the responsibility to listen to complaints about the system, to seek better ways of providing the services and to talk in general terms about home care policy. I have put on the record, and I ask the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) to read the record from yesterday, the process that led us to the determination that we made in respect to the policy decision that was made, and nothing has changed since yesterday.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, the government established the home care committee on May 26, 1994, with terms of reference to look at the total service delivery system from the home care perspective of the government. The committee was also allowed to read documents that were

prepared by the APM consultant. I want to go back. Yesterday I raised a number of questions about APM and I have been raising them for the last couple of weeks without any satisfaction. Can the Premier please tell me when the Minister of Health was telling the truth?

Two years ago in this Chamber on May 27, 1994, he said, and I quote, we have recommendations from APM on home care. It is right in Hansard. Last week and this week he has said that he has no report from APM. I would like to ask the Premier why he had recommendations on home care from APM in 1994, and why he cannot remember, cannot recall, might have something, might not have something in 1996? Is this kind of the acceptable system of accountability that this Premier is talking about in terms of getting straight answers to straight questions in this House and giving the people of Manitoba material that they have paid for, Mr. Chairman?

* (1450)

Mr. Filmon: I assume that the member opposite has never had recommendations that came to him other than by way of report, so he would not understand the difference, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: Given the way the Minister of Health has handled the emergency ward situation in the city of Winnipeg, given the fact that on March 1 he said that there was no savings of money, that they were going to proceed with all four quadrants, and he said that he would establish a Crown corporation, in light of the fact that he will not provide documentation on the cost and quality of service, does the Premier still have full confidence in his Minister of Health, who we believe is bumbling and fumbling his way around some very important issues concerning Manitobans and, indeed he is not up to the task and up to the job regrettably of that very important ministry?

Mr. Filmon: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I have full confidence in the Minister of Health.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, could the Premier please indicate—the assistant deputy minister, I believe her name in Health is Ms. Hicks, apparently said at the time of privatization the wages for home care workers would go down with the privatization of home care—what wage reduction is necessary as part of that statement of Ms.

Hicks and what was the analysis to the government on wage reductions through the privatization and profit initiative of the government?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, this is the Estimates of the Executive Council. I cannot be asked to verify or confirm the source or the accuracy of information that is alleged to have been given by an assistant deputy minister in the Department of Health or any other department. I invite the member opposite to go into the next committee room to address that question to the Minister of Health. I am sure that that staff person is probably there, so he can get that information very readily instead of playing games here.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It may be a game to the Premier, but it is not to those 3,000 people that feel that they may be facing either a loss of job or 30 to 40 percent wage decrease. They feel that the kind of money that presently goes in a home care system when it moves to the privatization model of the provincial government will mean that certain individuals become, you know, perhaps the head of We Care or other organizations would become very wealthy while they have a reduction in their wages by 30 to 40 percent, and that is not just an argument of detail.

That is a whole issue of policy, that is a whole issue of vision that this government has, both economically and health-wise, because all the studies on home care that we have read, and I invite the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to show us any other studies, have indicated that the pay of staff and the ability, the pay that staff receive in home care will have a strong correlation with continuity of care, which in turn will deal with the turnover rate, which will produce better quality of care for patients because turnover is counterproductive to care, and a more constant staffing provides better quality of care. So it is not an issue of detail, it is an issue of philosophy. It is an issue of ideology. It is an issue of dealing with the decision that this Premier admitted he made yesterday.

I would like to ask the Premier, are we talking about reduced wages in the initiative of the government for these people?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, it is a game when the Leader of the Opposition deliberately chooses not to go into the next committee room where the individual he is referring to and the department that he is referring to are

present to answer his questions but instead chooses to come here where he believes the information is probably not available so that he can play political games with it.

I repeat for him, and he can read Hansard, that I told him what the process of decision making in government is and he ought not to misrepresent it as he continues to do.

Mr. Doer: I would expect that the Premier, who makes a decision of this magnitude that affects 17,000 Manitobans, the Premier that makes the ultimate decision that affects 3,000 people, would know broad parameters of the impact of the policy decisions that he is implementing.

I would expect that the decision that the government made with this whole policy, of its impact on both the profit for companies and the salaries for people would be a consideration for the Premier, it would be a factor that he would look at. I do not expect him to know whether it is 25 percent or 30 percent, but is the ADM of Health correct when she says salaries will be reduced in home care through this privatization initiative, and if so, what is the impact on the quality of service, because all of the studies have indicated, and the Premier surely has read the studies on this before he has proceeded with his decision, all of the policies have indicated that there is a correlation between the paid level for home care staff, continuity of home care staff and therefore the quality of service to clients.

I am not asking him to give us the pay level of a clerk 5 in the Department of Government Services. I am asking the broad policy questions dealing with quality of service that relates to pay of staff. That is all I am asking the Premier. I would like the Premier to tell us, did he not know anything about the impact on salaries, or if he knows something about the impact of salaries, can he please tell us what it is?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, with all due respect, I invite the leader of the opposition to ask that question of the Minister of Health and his staff.

Mr. Doer: Is the Premier telling us that he does not know what the impact of his policy will be on salary levels? He does not know?

* (1500)

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, I am telling the Leader of the Opposition that the appropriate place to ask that question is in the Estimates of the Department of Health.

Mr. Doer: I disagree. You have made the decision. You said yesterday you had made a decision on a major policy area of government. You are a head of the government. You chair the cabinet. You choose the cabinet ministers. You maintain confidence in your ministers. They come forward with recommendations. They come forward with recommendations to cabinet that you ultimately chair. You decide whether it is yes or no or altered.

I believe, I think the public should know, in terms of the government, was there any study on salary impact of privatization? Was there any research done? This is what we keep coming back to. We would not even ask these questions if we did not have to go day after day after day to the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and ask for studies and reports that led to the decision in 1996.

We can get the APM's report or we can get the recommendations that were submitted last month by the government's own hand-picked committee or any other report. Then these questions would not have to be asked, but we are dealing in a vacuum here. We have a minister saying there is no formal report. What does it have to do? Wear a tuxedo? I do not want to be silly about it. You have recommendations, you have documents. The public has paid for it; they have a right to know. We shouldn't have to come to this house every day and ask for stuff that led to the government's decision. The people should not have to keep going back and forth over documents. That is not the way we should be debating this issue.

We should be debating the merit of the government's decision based on all the research we have, so in the absence of those documents and the absence of those answers from the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), I am going to the person where the buck stops. He might not like it, but the buck stops right with him, and I am just simply asking him what was the salary impact material in broad terms. Is it going to stay the same, is it going to go down, or is it going to go up from the privatization

initiative? What will that mean for turnover rates? Not a big issue, but what are the broad turnover rates, and what does that mean for continuity of care? Those are all I want to know. I do not want to know a minute detail in some other department. I want to know the work that this government did leading to a huge decision that is having an amazing impact, unfortunate impact on a lot of clients and a lot of workers. That is all I am asking the Premier, so I will ask it again.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, I would suggest that information could not be stated with certainty until the bids were in from the companies that were proposing.

Mr. Doer: If the government is going to privatize out to companies, and it is already privatized out to companies, one of them being We Care, and the Premier yesterday said that we have used We Care as one of the evaluative—the so-called evaluative, maybe formal, maybe informal, I do not like to use that word formal or informal—but as one of the techniques to make this decision. As I understand it, We Care pays considerably less than what the public service pays. I also understand that a certain percentage goes to profit, so how much are we going to see in a policy way for reduced pay and profit in the home care area?

The Premier has dealt with private companies before. They usually have a minimum of 10 percent or 12 percent return on investments in the form of investment return. They may have money over that for profit. We do not know—again, the government has those documents—but I would just like to know. The only evidence we have seen is We Care, and it was a major reduction in pay, and the turnover rate, as we understand it, from health care experts both inside the government's department and out, indicate that the turnover rate will be much greater. They cite examples of other jurisdictions where the turnover rate is well over 60 percent, as opposed to Manitoba's turnover rate of 20 percent—and I do not know these things. Again, we do not have anything to go by, but I would just like to know from the Premier what—We Care has much lower wages than the public-administered, publicly run home care system in Manitoba, and I would just like to know from the Premier, what is the range on those reduced wages?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, I am aware, for instance, that in the contracted-out services to VON that the rates are very similar to those that are paid to those who work

in the public sector, and I know that my experience is that where private contractors provide services that might formerly have been done in a very bureaucratic manner, that they generally make your savings not on paying their employees a great deal less, but on better organization of the workflow, better organization of the tasks at hand, and, ultimately, they eliminate inefficiencies and waste. They may have a better co-ordination of the services.

We know of stories, for instance, where people going out to serve the needs of a variety of clients in one particular senior's home, there are 11 different people going in and out of there everyday to provide the services. Now, if that could be co-ordinated better so that there were only two people going in there, one providing, for instance, the nursing service and the other providing support and attendant service, we could get tremendously much more productivity out of it. We could reduce the costs of the mileage or the transportation charges. We could far better get results out of that kind of co-ordination without necessarily having to reduce the rates of pay.

So it seems to me that this is one of those arguments in which the final answers will not be known until proposals come in from the various organizations that choose to contract. You know, the bottom line on that, if the member wants nothing to go to profit, then, of course, the invitation has been made open to the MGEU to organize themselves to bid on the contract, and the government has offered to help them in that process. There could be absolutely zero put into profit under those circumstances, or if more of the work is received by nonprofit organizations, not only VON, but we have been contacted by other organizations that are affiliated with the nurse-managed resource centres that say that they would like to put in proposals on a nonprofit basis. Profit needs to be zero in these contracts, in some cases, or is intended to be zero.

* (1510)

So it would seem to me that what will happen is that there will be far better organization, far more efficiencies in the delivery of the services, and, in the end, the wages may not be dramatically altered in many cases.

Mr. Doer: The comparison between VON and the government is between two nonprofit organizations, one publicly [interjection] Well, okay, is the Premier saying

today then that they will use the principles of the Canada Health Act and prohibit profit in the provision of home care here in Manitoba? That is what he is saying? Let him say that.

Mr. Filmon: The Leader of the Opposition does not strengthen his case by putting words in my mouth. I did not say that. I said that the alternatives are that some will derive greater savings by better organization of the work effort involved, and they may therefore be able to justify taking some profit margin out at the end. Others will operate on a nonprofit basis, and they may well be the lowest bid. The union may organize its own bid with no profit involved and be successful in getting the contract. There will be a variety of ways, and everybody who puts in a proposal or a bid will have to face the consequences of the way in which they organize themselves for that bid.

Mr. Doer: So the Premier is opposed to putting in, and we were going to propose in a private member's bill that the principles of the Canada Health Act apply now to home care, and of course we have private health care programs in Manitoba that are nonprofit. They may be administered for example by the quote, Grey Nuns, and others, et cetera. St. Boniface Hospital does not bid with McDonald's and does not bid against Ford Motor Company and We Care to provide services in southeast Winnipeg. It is a nonprofit operation for the good of all people that they have to serve. Obviously it has a role for patients across the province as well as a geographic region. I mean, all the evaluations on health care have indicated, you know, you look at the American studies, you look at any, have indicated that, you know, in a mixed economy, Ford competes against GM, that is fine. In health care, where they have a competitive model, over time there are tremendous inefficiencies that people eventually, with the changes, get health care on the basis of their financial resources rather than on the basis of their health care needs.

You also have the situation where salaries are reduced and, obviously, companies in a private system have to make profits, so is the Premier willing to put the principles of the Canada Health Act on nonprofit for home care, which I think could move this debate along quite a bit? We tried to move it along yesterday by suggesting you have a plebescite of clients; the Premier rejected the vote from clients. We are trying to suggest

today that you look at the principles of the Canada Health Act.

Why could we not have nonprofit legislation in this province on home care to keep all our dollars for patients rather than for profit?

Mr. Filmon: With all due respect, this debate on the part of the Leader of the Opposition is purely philosophical, and he has an ideological hang-up on this. If he wants to use the American example, I can tell him that there are thousands of Canadians who go down to the U.S. for medical treatment because the treatment that they are receiving is superior to anything they could get in Canada. Has he ever heard of the Mayo Clinic? I can tell him that if he believes that the only reason that the American system consumes a greater proportion of the GDP in that country than the Canadian health care system does in our country, he is wrong. The fact is that the people who work in that system also command a much higher income level. The doctors, the nurses—why does he think that nurses throughout the ages have gone down to the States for jobs? Because they can earn twice as much there in some cases as they can here. Doctors, our family practitioners are being paid twice as much to go down to the States as they are here. So the people who work in the system, despite the fact that it is so-called privatized under the definition of the Leader of the Opposition, those people are being paid a great deal more than they are under a publicly administered system under the principles of the Canada Health Act.

Mr. Doer: Of course, 35 million Americans do not have any medical coverage at all. Another 35 million Americans are undercovered by insurance companies and have to mortgage their houses and lose their livelihood in order to pay for a family member that may lose their health care, so if this is the shining example the Premier is following, I am quite worried about it.

Mr. Filmon: You used it as a shining example. I am telling you that it is not all that you say it is.

Mr. Doer: I am sorry the Premier did not get a good night's sleep, but just relax. I can understand he has a lot of pressure now to deal with a very serious situation. I just encourage the Premier to relax, take a deep breath, just get a hold of himself.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Could we carry on with the debate?

Mr. Doer: Yes, I am, I am just giving the Premier health advice, preventative health.

I would like to ask the Premier, why then can we not pass laws here on home care which has evolved over the years? The Premier has mentioned VON in the '60s. Obviously, it was a nonprofit, but sometimes a private nonprofit is different than a private profit. We Care is different than VON. The Premier knows that. We know that. Why can we not look at, looking at the 21st Century, designing a system for home care which is going to be so crucial?

We have talked about improving the co-ordination between Community Services and the Department of Health. We need greater co-ordination between the Health ministry in Manitoba versus the city health administration in the city. We need greater co-ordination from the hospitals to outpatients and others who are affected. We need more appropriate and flexible self-managed care. We have talked about that in our platform. The government has talked about that before, as well. Nobody is denying that, but I would like to ask the Premier, would he consider a law that would make home care nonprofit?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, I just want to assure the Leader of the Opposition that I can withstand all of the pressures that he wishes to bring to bear on me or anybody else does. My frustration is in my inability to make myself understood to the Leader of the Opposition because of his blind ideology.

He is absolutely blinded to any of the aspects of the issue that are important to the people who are receiving the service. The only thing in the end that they care about is that they get the service at the greatest possible quality of standards that we can justify by virtue of the money that we have available to us, that they get the service when they need it, how they need it, seven days a week, 24 hours a day, in the most efficient and effective manner to meet their needs.

The fact is I would never hold up the American system as the beacon, as the best example. I go to the States and I tell my colleagues, the other governors of the western

states in the United States, that they ought to look at the Canadian system because it has many, many advantages, and I cite the fact that there are 35 million Americans who are not covered at all and another 30 million who have inadequate coverage and all of these kinds of things, but for him to suggest that what happens in a system that is privatized is that people make less money is simply wrong. Nurses make more money in that system. Doctors make more money in that system, and that is precisely the way in which his argument falls apart.

His argument falls apart on every count. All we are discussing here is his blind ideology and that of his colleagues. It is the same issue that they raised about the Manitoba Telephone System. What people care about is that they get their service and they get it in the most efficient and effective form possible at reasonable cost.

In the end, it is not a matter of who delivers it or how it is delivered or whether this person is a union member or not a union member, it is whether or not the service is delivered to the standards that people expect at a cost that the government can justify.

Mr. Doer: Again, I would like to ask the Premier, based on his statement right now, the head of We Care home care today said, yes, their staff on a profit system make less money than the nonprofit system, either run by the government or other agencies such as VON. I would like to ask the Premier: How much less will they make? Did they consider that? What was the impact of that on turnover rates?

We know that all the studies indicate that staffing salaries affect turnover rates which affects quality of care. It is tied together. It is not two separate issues. That is what worries me, that the government never did take a look at this in terms of the whole system, that they are ideologically bound to three or four people that want to have profit in home care, one who seems to be the only one whose report we have been able to find, the We Care system. That is the only recommendation in the '90s we found to privatize. So the government goes ahead lock, stock and barrel without any other report and has no other evidence, but there is a connection. How can the Premier say today that there will not be a reduced salary level when the owner of the We Care program, the main proponent of this system, is saying there will be a reduction in salaries?

I would like to ask the Premier, what will that impact be on turnover?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, I can say that because we do not know ultimately who is going to get the contract. It may well be VON. It may well be the MGEU who collectively organize and bid for the work. It may not be We Care at all. Those are the kinds of things that we will be dealing with when we have the proposal call and the bids put in place.

Mr. Doer: I think that all of us have watched something called loss leader, where people come in to bid to take the business, they buy the business and then eventually raise the costs over time. Even in hockey arenas there is a controversy on loss leaders. What is to stop a private company, for example, Great-West Life, from coming in with all their wealth, who are in favour of providing health care services in North America as part of their corporate objectives? What is to stop a company like Great-West Life from loss leading of tender to eventually get rid of the nonprofit sector and then over time raise the rates dramatically? I did not see anything to deal with that, and why should we go along with anything like that?

In fact, we believe and I want to make it clear again that we should pass a law in here with the principles of the Canada Health Act on profit on health care and home care. I do not have any problems, as I say, in a marketplace economy that has competitive features to it, but I believe also, in a marketplace in our mixed economy, health care should be nonprofit.

* (1520)

Mr. Filmon: As I understand it, I mean, these are things that get into the detail. I will give my understanding. The Leader of the Opposition can probably go and pick a difference between me and the Health minister, but among other things we will assure that there will remain competition in the system. That is the whole principle of what we are involved with, so it is being tendered on a four-quadrant basis. Circumstances are being put in place so that one bidder would not get all four quadrants. That being the case, then there will always be comparisons and opportunities so that if one decides that, having bid too low, they want to up their prices, the next time they may not get the work. As long as there is

competition in the system, we are better protected than we are today. Today we are the captive of one group who have a monopoly on the provision of that service, and we are assured that we will never be able to provide the service anymore efficiently or at any less cost.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, it is a strange statement from the Premier who says he is captured by himself, because he in essence administers and manages, ultimately, government and the system. It is a strange concern of his that he is worried about himself in terms of home care delivery.

I would like to again ask the Premier—and you know, I keep going back and back and back at this issue—will he order his Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to release the APM recommendations articulated by the minister that he had on May 27, '94, documents that the advisory committee says that they read just recently? Will he order his minister to release those documents, those recommendations, and any other materials that deal with such a major decision, so that we could all look at them? I mean, we get sometimes 20 pages of explanation on amendments to bills, but something that is amending a program in such a radical, ideological way makes the Minister of Health sound like he is doing this thing on the back of an envelope. He is running this, making these changes on the back of an envelope as he did on the emergency wards, flying by the seat of his proverbial pants, trying to find somebody to blame for the mess we are in today, instead of himself.

So will the Premier agree at least to order his Minister of Health—and he would expect the same thing from us, as he should. I mean, we have got a huge controversy going on in Ottawa because everybody is looking for documents about Somalia. This is a program that impacts on 17,000 Manitobans. Could the Premier please order today that these documents be released? So then we can get on to the merit of the decision rather than some of the information the government is withholding on why they made a decision.

Mr. Filmon: I am told that there is no report, Mr. Chairman, and I invite the Leader of the Opposition to pursue this line of questioning in the Estimates of the Department of Health.

Mr. Doer: I will have to look at the Black's Law dictionary tonight for the definition of "report." Does the government have anything in writing from APM on home care?

Mr. Filmon: I have not seen it, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: The health advisory committee, appointed by the Conservative government, said that they had read the documents on home care produced by Connie Curran, APM consultants for the minister. Can the Premier please confirm whether Ms. Keirstead is telling the truth that there were, in fact, documents, i.e., in writing?

Mr. Filmon: I can neither confirm nor deny that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, last week I asked the Premier for the APM consulting contract. I asked again on Monday, I asked again on Tuesday, I asked again today. Does he go to the Minister of Health or does the staff go to the Ministry of Health and ask whether those documents exist after we ask in the House? Does he care about parliamentary democracy? I know he does not like criticism. He does not like any questions, even though I remember some pretty feisty questions a few years ago from him when he had the same job.

So does he not go out of Question Period and ask whether those documents exist? Is the Premier then saying he did not even inquire about those questions after we asked the question four times in the House? He did not get up and answer the question most of the times, but did he not even have the courtesy of inquiring whether there were documents?

To give us an answer, he cannot confirm or deny, I mean, what kind of follow-up takes place when questions are raised in this House? This is presumably a parliamentary democracy and presumably keeps us all accountable. The Premier is always talking about making everybody accountable, enhancing accountability. There are documents all over about accountability. Where does the buck stop with the Premier? When he gets asked a question about documents, does he pursue it with the Department of Health? Do those documents exist? Did he ask that question? Did he get an answer of whether they do or do not exist?

When his Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) stood up in this House two years ago and said, he has recommendations, what is this a nudge-nudge, wink-wink

kind of government? So I would ask the Premier, did he follow it up? Where are the recommendations? Can he produce the recommendations for us? I think the public has a right to have those things. I do not think we should play Fifth Amendment cutesy games in this House when the questions are being asked. The essence of our democracy is that the Premier is accountable for his total government policy.

To say "I can neither confirm nor deny" is not leadership in my opinion; it is ducking. We should stop the ducking and start answering. Now, if he does not want to answer in regular Question Period, I just want to know whether he goes back to all his Premier's staff, and does all his Premier's staff go back and ask the Department of Health whether these documents exist and do they advise the Premier whether in fact they do exist or not? That is my question to the Premier.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, I choose not to participate in abuse of the rules and procedures of this House with the Leader of the Opposition. He has the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) sitting in the next committee room; that is the person who can and should answer his question.

Mr. Doer: I would like to ask, in light of the fact that I asked the Premier the lead question three or four times, twice at least this week on Connie Curran's recommendations to the government, does his clerk of cabinet follow that up with the ministry of departments that are affected, and does the Premier get an answer back? Or are questions just floating around this Chamber with no follow-up?

Mr. Filmon: Those questions were answered by the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae).

Mr. Doer: Did the Premier's Office follow up the questions that we raised in the House about a recommendation in a report? I want to know whether the clerk of cabinet or the senior cabinet, the Premier's staff, follows up on questions that are raised. I recall that if the Premier asked the former premier a question affecting the ministry of a department—and the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) knows this—the Premier's senior staff would follow it up.

Mr. Ford would go to the deputy minister of a department or a minister of the department because that

is the job of the senior staff, to follow it up. We are paying them a lot of money, and I respect that. I want to know whether the Premier's staff, yes or no, followed up the questions on Connie Curran's report—or Connie Curran's documents, quoting the advisory council, and recommendations, quoting his own minister.

* (1530)

Mr. Filmon: Absolutely, Mr. Chairman. If the questions were not answered or taken as notice, they would be followed up but, in this case, the questions were answered.

Mr. Doer: The questions were not answered. The Premier said, I can neither confirm or deny. That is what his answer was when I asked him: I can neither confirm or deny there were documents. That is not an answer. Is that, yes, there are documents, or, no, there are not documents? I asked whether there were documents and I asked whether there were recommendations, so I want to know. I do not want to have, I cannot confirm or deny. You cannot plead the Fifth Amendment in this Chamber. I do not want confirm or deny. I want to know whether your staff saw documents or found out whether there were documents and I want to know whether it is yes or no. Are there documents or are there no documents that exist from APM on home care? It is not a difficult question.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, I said that that is a question that should appropriately be asked to the Minister of Health. He would have that information.

Mr. Doer: Does the Premier, when he is asked a question in the House, which could be over all ministers—the Premier is the First Minister. He gets questions in the House, like the Prime Minister does, like nine other premiers do in other provinces, like former premiers do. When he gets asked a question in the House and he chooses not to answer, does his staff go back and get the answers for him or is he satisfied with saying, I can neither confirm or deny?

Mr. Filmon: I did not say that in the House.

Mr. Doer: Yes, you did.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, in Question Period I did not say, I can neither confirm nor deny. In Question Period, there was no question taken as notice. There was no question unanswered. It was answered at that time by the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), and I invite him to go and to debate and discuss that issue with the Minister of Health.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, in this Chamber a few moments ago when I asked the question about the documents—[interjection] Well, there is Question Period and there are questions in this period and I asked the question whether the Premier had gone back from Question Period or the Premier's staff, the clerk of cabinet, which would normally go back to a ministry and a deputy ministry to find out the answer to the question. I did not ask him to give me this namby-pamby confirm or deny. I asked him to stand up and give us an answer whether documents exist. It sounds like the Iran-Contra scandal, you know: I cannot remember. I was sleeping in the afternoon. I cannot confirm or deny. Deniability, it is an American concept, is it not? Yes. Do we have one of those? No, not in a parliamentary democracy.

So all I know is, you have a lot of staff here. You are asking us to approve all kinds of staff. Now, if they do not do anything because when we ask questions they do not care about it, tell me about it, but if we take it serious enough to ask a question in this House and we pay people good money to be clerk of cabinet, with no disrespect, and I am talking about the position, not the person, is there follow-up? You have senior political staff. I want to know whether they follow up. I mean, I see little messages coming in in Question Period all the time, little newspaper stories coming in all the time and little briefing notes and quotes back to 1912, what somebody said. I just want to know whether today when you get a question or yesterday when you got the question or the day before, does your senior staff find out whether there are documents or not, and can you tell us yes or no? That is all I want. I just want him to stand up and tell us what is going on here.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, the member has great difficulty understanding.

Mr. Doer: I understand completely.

Mr. Filmon: I have told him that there was no question that was taken as notice in Question Period and there was no question that was not answered in Question Period. If there had been, my staff would have followed up on it.

Mr. Doer: So I would like to ask the Chairman, is the Premier telling us that not one member of his staff went to the Department of Health to find out whether there were recommendations or documents from APM to the provincial government that were pursuant to the contract that we tabled in the House? Is he telling me that not one of his staff followed up that question from last week, from this Monday, from this Tuesday and from today? I am asking the Premier whether any of his staff followed up the question dealing with a contract paid for by the taxpayers, a question asked to the Premier.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, because nothing was taken as notice, and no question was unanswered, there was no follow-up.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, if the Premier gave a false answer or an incorrect answer—not intentionally false—in the House, and his senior staff or a staff of another department were aware that the information was wrong, would they not then follow up the answer the Premier gave and give him advice on whether his answer was correct or incorrect? Would they not advise him that information was insufficient? They do not need instructions on notice or not notice.

Mr. Filmon: Or course, Mr. Chairman. He is aware that from time to time I have come back into the House and corrected a previous answer, so that does happen.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, so the issue of notice is not the only factor for staff to follow up a question of the Premier, the Premier has just acknowledged that. My question is why, in this occasion, when the Premier did not answer three times the question about documents and it was an issue of public importance, is the Premier telling me that not one of his staff had the initiative or the instruction to go back to the Department of Health and find out the status of documents and recommendations?

Mr. Filmon: Yes, I am, Mr. Chairman, because those questions were answered by the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae).

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, is the Premier telling me that the director of communications, who answers directly to the Premier, who is handing out stuff in the hallway all the time, did not follow up the question dealing with the Connie Curran APM report and did not make any inquiries into the Department of Health into the committee that she is working with, which consists of Mr. Matas, which consists of Ms. Biggar, which consists of Ms. Staples, which consists of Ms. Hachey, which consists of others in the Department of Health? Is the Premier telling me that director of communications did not follow up to the Department of Health and report to the Premier?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, I do not know how I am expected to be aware of these things. The staff that he is referring to appear to be most of the ones involved with health, one being an external person to government. I do not know what meeting he is talking about. I do not know what discussion he is talking about. I do not know what committee he is talking about. If he has information, let him put it on the table.

Mr. Doer: Is Roger Matas a member of the Premier's staff?

Mr. Filmon: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: Is Bonnie Staples a member of the Premier's staff?

Mr. Filmon: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: Do they have responsibilities to liaise with the Department of Health about matters of public importance?

Mr. Filmon: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we continue, is there leave for the honourable members to remain seated while asking questions?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Chairperson: Leave is granted.

Mr. Doer: The members, Mr. Matas and Ms. Staples, did they not, as members of the Premier's staff, inquire

about the recommendations and documents and materials in writing dealing with the questions of the APM contract on home care that we tabled in the Legislature? I am asking the Premier whether they followed up on those questions that we raised in this House, as members of the Premier's staff.

Mr. Filmon: I do not have any information on that, Mr. Chairman. Neither of those people is here to consult with, so I do not have any response that I can give him there.

Mr. Doer: I believe the staff would be in the building. Could the Premier inquire whether they have or have not followed up on the questions we have raised? We have some time. We have got tomorrow, we have got the next day. The staff that are at the table cannot answer the question. I believe the staff I mentioned, do they answer directly to the Premier, or do they answer through the clerk of cabinet?

Mr. Filmon: One is part of my senior staff and the other is not, so it would be a direct relationship with one, but not the other.

* (1540)

Mr. Doer: I would like to ask the Premier to find out from those staff whether in fact they, his communication people, again working for his ministry in this set of lines in the department that the Premier is responsible for, whether in fact they inquired in the Department of Health on the recommendations, the documentation, the materials pursuant to the APM contract on home care that was referred to by the Minister of Health on May 27 wherein they said that there were recommendations. I would like to have the Premier—and I am willing to not ask a question in other areas that may affect other staff, if the Premier's staff can follow that up. But I want to know whether they, in fact, made inquiries about those documents pursuant to our questions and pursuant to the APM consultant's contract which we tabled in this House on home care.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, I will inquire and bring that information back tomorrow.

Mr. Doer: Yesterday the Premier mentioned that this matter was before the government of the day, that the

issue of home care privatization was before the government of the day for six months to one year. Today, in a media report, the chair of the government's hand-picked committee on home care said, and I quote: We are not feeling we have had much to do with this issue on home care to date. We have felt that we have received documents—which, of course, are the Connie Curran documents—and obviously the whole plan to go private went to Treasury Board—"private" being her word, not mine—before we saw it, and we did not think that that would be the process. So we spent a year and a half trying to convince the minister often that we need to be in the loop of consultation, so we are not quite sure what we will be doing in the future.

Can the Premier then indicate whether in fact the advisory committee chair that was chosen by this government is correct that this matter has been before the Treasury Board in government for the last year and a half?

(Mr. Frank Pitura, Acting person, in the Chair)

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, this is why I keep advising the Leader of the Opposition to ask that of the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae). I would have limited knowledge of it. My only indication is that the earliest it came into the process of Treasury Board consideration was during this last estimate cycle that began sometime late last summer or early fall.

Mr. Doer: Who hires and who fires the secretary of Treasury Board?

Mr. Filmon: The government.

Mr. Doer: Yes, and is the government not headed by the Premier and therefore he makes the—the last time I looked, when the person was appointed, it had the Premier's signature on the press releases. That is a person whose Order-in-Council was signed by the Premier, and I am not going to go on any further. We know that the Premier hires and fires the secretary of Treasury Board.

In fact I cannot remember, the last time I was in the Premier's Office, from time to time we meet on some issues dealing with Manitoba, and it seems every time I go there, the secretary of Treasury Board is coming out of

his office. Does the Premier not meet with the secretary of Treasury Board on a regular basis, and does the secretary of the Treasury Board not apprise the Premier of matters of major importance, such as matters like privatizing home care?

Mr. Filmon: Yes to both questions and I repeat that the earliest that I am aware that the matter was being considered by Treasury Board or was under the process of Treasury Board Estimates preparation was within this last budget cycle, beginning somewhere in the late summer or early fall.

Mr. Doer: We will leave the record on the year and a half with the public comments of the head of the government's advisory board and her information about Treasury Board dealing with it for the last year and a half.

I want to ask the Premier another question. I want to move on from home care, and I thank the Premier for taking as notice the issue of Ms. Staples and Mr. Matas.

Barb Biggar has been hired by the provincial government we believe on two contracts to date. One has been taken as notice twice by the Minister responsible for the Telephone System (Mr. Findlay), both in December and last week. Can the Premier advise us as to the size of the contract at the Telephone System?

Mr. Filmon: That is a question that would more properly have to be obtained from the Crown corporation. I do not have it.

Mr. Doer: Can the Premier advise us, what is the general scope of the contract that Ms. Biggar has with the Manitoba Telephone System?

Mr. Filmon: No, Mr. Chairman, I do not have that information.

Mr. Doer: I do not even want to acknowledge that the staff of his Executive Council do not follow up on these questions that are asked. I am not naive enough to believe that people in his office—he has numbers of staff in his office—do not follow up these issues of public importance that are raised with him in the House on a regular basis, and so, again, to confirm or deny a position I do not think is very—I mean, eventually we are going to find out how big the contract is and what she is going to do. So it is a lot easier to find out ahead of time from the person rather than him ducking and hiding and playing about with this information.

I would like to ask the Premier another question. Can he confirm again that the contract size for Barb Biggar was \$75,000 for advertising to deal with the Department of Health?

Mr. Filmon: I am told, Mr. Chairman, that it is up to a maximum of \$75,000, depending on the amount of work that is done under the contract.

Mr. Doer: I would like to ask the Premier whether this contract was tendered.

Mr. Filmon: It was the subject of a proposal call, and it was a proposal call that was based on requirements that were put together by the senior administration of the Department of Health. It was reviewed and the recommendation was made by the Department of Health senior officials.

Mr. Doer: I was asking the Premier, was this publicly tendered pursuant to the tendering process, or was this a select group of people that were contacted to put in a proposal? I just want to know whether it was an open public tender or not.

Mr. Filmon: My information is that it was an open public tender or proposal call, and there were five bids.

Mr. Doer: Can the Premier indicate when this was tendered and where it was tendered?

Mr. Filmon: With respect, Mr. Chairman, this is the kind of thing that is detail that ought to be derived by asking the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), who is sitting in the next committee room answering questions.

* (1550)

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Doer: Again, I ask the Premier, when the questions were raised publicly last week, did nobody in the Premier's Office follow up on the questions raised about tendering, about cost, about the process that was used to hire obviously somebody that is closely associated to the Premier himself? Is this not an issue that would normally have some alarm bells ringing in the Premier's Office to give him information, or is this office off in some other separate orbit in terms of what is going on here in the province?

I just want to know whether there was any follow-up on when it was tendered, how it was tendered, because obviously these are issues that are important to Manitobans because of the close previous and present association with the Premier and his former senior communication officer.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, of course, I followed up. That is why I was able to give all the information I did. I did not know that there was another question which was what date was it tendered, and that is getting to great detail. I can find that out if he has until tomorrow or the next day to find that information, but it would be very simple to go next door where the Department of Health is ready to answer those questions.

Mr. Doer: Well, if the Premier has not noticed, for the last week we have been asking the Minister of Health for just a copy of documents or recommendations on a matter dealing with one of the most important issues of public importance to the House, so there is no easy way to pry out public information from this government. So thank you, I would like the Premier to take that as notice, when it was tendered and how it was tendered in terms of that contract, and I thank the Premier for taking that as notice.

I would like to ask the Premier, what is the size of the budget that has been approved for the total communication efforts for this total fiscal year, including the mailing of brochures, including the hiring of staff or consultants, and including the whole issue of the TV and radio ads?

Mr. Filmon: Is this for the Department of Health, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, the Premier chairs cabinet. The cabinet receives minutes from Treasury Board. Treasury Board must authorize all contracts over \$20,000. The decision that is recommended by Treasury Board cannot proceed without cabinet approval; otherwise, the Auditor would cite it because it clearly exceeds the authority of a department or the Treasury Board. So I would like to ask the Premier just to take that issue as notice as well.

Mr. Filmon: Is this for the Department of Health? I repeat the question.

Mr. Doer: This is for the Premier, the head of government.

Mr. Filmon: Well, now the Leader of the Opposition is operating like a Philadelphia lawyer. Is the question with respect to a budget of the Department of Health?

Mr. Doer: I asked the Premier the size of the contract of Ms. Biggar with the Telephone System and then with the Ministry of Health. Then I asked the Premier on whether it was tendered. I further asked the Premier, and he answered, yes, by the senior officials of the Department of Health. I then asked the Premier when and how was it tendered. He said he would take that as notice. I then further asked, pursuant to the decision, what is the size of the contract? If the Premier does not know and wants to get that information along with the timing of the tender, I respect that. I am just asking the Premier as the head of government: What is the scope in cost of this public campaign, a public campaign that presumably would be before all Manitobans?

Mr. Filmon: I will take that as notice, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: A year ago we asked the Premier about Ms. Biggar's involvement in working for the beverage companies. Has the government forgiven the beverage companies on the environmental provisions that they had passed in law?

Mr. Filmon: Have to ask the Department of Environment, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: Did the Premier not sign an Order-in-Council forgiving—let me go by memory here—but did the government, the Premier, not sign an Order-in-Council of some over \$800,000, and this is a question I asked the Premier last year. He said to me in Hansard, do not bet that we will forgive this environmental provision. Did the Premier not forgive through Order-in-Council in March of 1996 the sum over \$800,000 for beverage companies?

Mr. Filmon: I have a wonderful memory, but from time to time I need to verify facts and figures such as this. I do sign hundreds of Orders-in-Council, in fact, in the thousands range. So I will have to verify that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: Last year the Premier indicated that to the best of his knowledge, Ms. Biggar, who was formerly working for the Premier, was not involved in this decision by government. Can the Premier advise us of the status a year later?

Mr. Filmon: I confirm absolutely that she was not involved with that decision, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: I want to move on to some other items. I want to ask the Premier some questions on other staffing issues. The Premier is responsible for hiring and firing deputy ministers, and I want to ask the Premier, can the Premier indicate the rationale or the reasons of why the deputy minister responsible for post-secondary education and training no longer works for the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Filmon: I know that the Leader of the Opposition will be sensitive to the need not to discuss personnel matters in a personal sense. I can just say to the Leader of the Opposition that by mutual agreement the employment of the individual involved ended with the government. The government employs people at a deputy minister level by Order-in-Council and their employment, from time to time, can be altered or in fact terminated by Order-in-Council. It was the desire of government to have a change of personnel at the senior level in that area and the change was made.

Mr. Doer: The individual we have asked about, and there have been decisions made by the government before which we have not, I have not personally raised. I respect the realities of individuals with governments but I also know that Manitobans have, there is a certain credibility level with some deputy ministers beyond this building. In listening to business and labour and others in post-secondary education, this individual had a tremendous credibility that I had personally picked up of confidence, of integrity, of vision in post-secondary education that people felt were very important for this province in terms of developing a long-term strategy for economic development and post-secondary education.

Now, we did not agree with all decisions made by the government on post-secondary education and we would address those to the appropriate minister as appropriate because the deputy minister does not establish policy. But I am concerned that we have lost, in a vital area, an individual that had a lot of respect, from what I could

hear, and a person, as I say, that was implementing some decisions that we did not agree with but we respected the fact that the government is responsible for policy and we would hold them accountable on matters such as access and other programs. I fear that we have lost a vital commodity, and I want to know whether the Premier shares this belief that we have lost an important commodity in our senior administration, and why have we lost that important human skill, a person with credibility in a very vital department?

* (1600)

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, I want to emphasize that I have never once questioned the competence or the experience of the individual being named. I said that for a variety of reasons I felt that change was important at this time, and I want to point out that I was the Premier and our government raised that individual to a deputy minister level. He had not been at that level when we took government and that the person who has replaced him in this position is an extremely competent person and a career civil servant who had been under the employ of the former administration, so I do not think that we are doing it for political reasons. I think we are doing it for reasons of balance and reasons of putting in people who, we feel, will pursue the challenges that we face in the best possible way.

Mr. Doer: I was not suggesting for a moment, and I would not suggest today, that the reasons were political. I want to make that clear. I could not even begin to guess the politics of the person in the job whom I have known for a long time, nor could I guess the politics of the person who was in the job. I am just talking about somebody that had—there are sometimes people in the administration of the Province of Manitoba that gain credibility outside of this building, and credibility is not easily won and, I think, is important for the delivery of services in the public sector, and particularly post-secondary education, which is dealing with a whole range of people with a whole range of educational needs, with educational resources, with educational challenges, with people in the private sector, people in the training sector, people in the education sector, people in the labour sector.

It is not, I would imagine, an easy job, so when I read your press release, I have to say that I was quite surprised about that one decision. I am not talking political; I want to make this absolutely clear. I come from the school that

I could not even begin to tell you some of the people I worked with in deputy ministers' jobs what their politics were. It was never as important to me as their energy and advice, and their ability to deliver. So I am not raising it from that perspective. I was raising it—I think I am just raising the question of the Premier: Did he feel that we could not meet the educational challenges with the incumbent? I thought that we could and we had a lot of chances to go forward, to go ahead under his stewardship in that department.

Mr. Filmon: I think in two areas the most difficult decisions, and probably the most lonely decisions, that I as head of government make are in selection of those who become more equal than others as members of cabinet and, secondarily, as the deputy ministers that I choose. I am very mindful of the responsibility I have to make good decisions and appropriate decisions in each case. I weigh those decisions carefully, and I do not take any of them lightly. I would not want—and I think ultimately our government will succeed or fail based on the quality of people and the capability of the people that we put in those roles either as ministers or as deputy ministers, and so it is an enormously important task, I think.

I would not want anything that I said to diminish in any way the skills and the talents of the individual that the member opposite is putting forward, because I know that he has other good employment prospects. I certainly would want to support him in that, and I do not want this to enter into a discussion that could in any way diminish that because I have nothing on the record that I would want to put that would be negative about the individual.

I do not know where this is heading. I know that governments other than ours oftentimes make many more shifts and changes in deputies. I am very proud of the fact that a number of our people who are serving in senior administrative roles are people who serve many administrations. The member opposite was with me at the retirement of one Charlie Curtis just a few weeks ago and he served many administrations in this province.

The same can be said of some people sitting at this table advising me; others who we have either promoted or retained as deputy minister rank people or assistant deputy minister rank people, and I am very proud of the work that they all do. I always attempt to put in place people who bring the combination of skills and energy

and enthusiasm for the job that I believe is necessary for the challenges that they face.

I will accept the Leader of the Opposition's disagreement with that decision just as I will his agreement with the decision I made on the new Deputy Minister of Finance and say that from time to time he and I are going to differ. That is why he is there and I am here. He has had different roles, I have had different roles, and I know that he and I in other scenarios often saw eye to eye. I would say that if he were in the same boat as I was, he would not always make the same decisions I do. But I guess I will take the responsibility and I will live with it, but I do not want to in any way diminish the skills or the talents or the contributions of the individual that we are now referring to.

Mr. Doer: I respect that. I just want to pursue a couple of other questions on it, and then I will move on. If I recall correctly in Levesque's book—it is a fascinating book on all kinds of issues of public life as his former role of premier. He said that you had to get a balance between your minister and your deputy minister as a team. If there was any problem between the two as the elected premier, the deputy minister had to go. I note that Mr. Goyan worked with—I do not want to mention his name, the former deputy minister—I already have—but if I could ever take a word back here. The former deputy minister worked with the former Education minister and now there has been a change in ministers. Was the reason based on conflict just in terms of the existing minister and the former deputy minister?

Mr. Filmon: Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Doer: The other issue that can result in a person leaving that role is a major policy difference with the government. I do not know whether there was or was not, because I have not talked to the individual, but I noted in your budget a major decrease in investment overall in the apprenticeship program and other programs and post-secondary—some programs, not all post-secondary programs.

Was there any fundamental disagreement between the government and the former deputy minister on policy and resource allocations in the department dealing with post-secondary education?

Mr. Filmon: Not that I am aware of, Mr. Chairman. In fact, the individual who is being referenced was part of the process that actually took those Estimates through Treasury Board.

Mr. Doer: I want to move into some other items, the whole issue of federal-provincial affairs, and, again, I am inviting the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), do you want to ask any questions? [interjection] I beg your pardon? Well, this may be an item that you are interested in. I will start with something that you might be concerned about.

Can the Premier advise us as the minister responsible for federal-provincial affairs on the status of St. Boniface College, Collège de Saint-Boniface, merci beaucoup? As I understand it, the federal government has reduced its investment. As I understand it, the province has responded in kind by passing on a reduction to the college. As I understand it now, the province and the feds are back negotiating some other financial arrangements.

* (1610)

So I would just like to get it from, I will not say the horse's mouth because that would be inappropriate. I would just like to get it from the person where the buck stops. What is the status? What was cut? Why was it cut? Is it back on the table, and can we see a program that many people in St. Boniface feel is very important for both the education programs and opportunities available in Manitoba and the cultural reality that we have in our community across the river?

Mr. Filmon: Let me say to the Leader of the Opposition that nobody is more concerned about this than I am, and I will just say that the reality that I perceive in this issue is as follows.

The federal government has been reducing the per-pupil transfers for Collège Saint-Boniface over three years, I believe, and for the last two years we have been choosing, as I understand it, to supplement the college's revenues to make up for that reduction that has been taking place from a source which is the French language, FLOLE funding, and then this year, in addition to the cuts to St. Boniface College, they also cut the OLE funding, and they passed along the \$116 million of transfer payment reduction on health and education. So

every single potential source that we had to try and keep whole the programming at St. Boniface College was simultaneously cut. The department, in evaluating what could be done, found no other means of being able to support this programming despite the fact that we consider it to be extremely valuable.

I appreciate the grave concern that is being expressed by people throughout our Francophone community in Manitoba and had personal approaches from a number of people including Paul Ruest, the rector or president at the college. I know him well and have been appreciative of the work that he has done in a variety of different applications within this whole field of bilingual education, so I have asked the group of senior officials, including Clerk of the Executive Council and the deputy minister of post-secondary education and others to meet with them and to try and come up with a plan that might assist them to keep the programming, or at least to keep that section of the college whole. I do not know how it will turn out other than that we have been willing to look at a variety of options and alternatives, and we are seeking a plan that might help us in the process. I do not have any final answer that I can give as to what we might do or what we found.

Mr. Doer: When did the government find out from the federal government about the OLE cut that made the dramatic impact on the college? Was it contained in the federal budget or was there notice before then—the most recent federal budget, that is?

Mr. Filmon: As I understand it, this year's reduction was in the federal budget.

Mr. Doer: I am sure that there are concerns from all political parties about this. I mean, the whole issue of its place in our education system and also perhaps the sensitivity going on in this country right now with the programs in western Canada and how quickly important programs, if they are reduced, also have two possible meanings, three possible meanings: one, the educational impact that it would have as a possible consequence of the decision, two, the cultural consequences to our community, and three, the national implications at a time where everything that happens one way or the other—I look at what happened in Montreal about a jar of pickles, I think it was, from New York with kosher wording and becoming a huge symbol of language in Quebec and therefore, by definition, whether I like it or not—and I do

not like it—but an issue of debate across the country again.

Obviously, I think we can always—I think the Premier and I were proud when we were at The Forks that we were able to point to the kind of—I think we have moved past the 1980s, if I might say so, where we were I think unfortunately embroiled in unnecessary disputes, but that is my personal opinion. I think we have moved beyond the 1980s. You know, we all know the Populism in issues and how you can potentially inappropriately—how should I say it?—inflare issues in our own community. We have tried to stay away from that in our caucus, as the Premier knows, and I am very worried about it, so is there any way of having a short-term transition to develop a plan that could work with the federal government, that we could put before the federal government, which made the cut, and have them have to deal with this one way or the other? I think that sometimes when the government does that with other entities—I can think of Abitibi-Price and the takeover, other economic projects—when we come forward with a plan and then put it back to somebody else, it may help us force the other side, the other side being the cutter as opposed to the cuttee. I am sure that is something that we could all agree with, so I am just raising the prospect of getting a transition plan that makes cultural and educational sense, that we put back to the federal government and have all parties put pressure on the federal government.

I again prefer us to work as one community on these issues, to work together on these issues. The member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) has raised this, and the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerrilli) has raised this, en français. Just after you left last week—I know I am not supposed to say that, so I take that back, but we were disappointed because we wanted to get attention to it. The member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) has raised this, and I just like us to get a plan to propose to the federal government.

* (1620)

Mr. Filmon: I appreciate the considerate manner in which the Leader of the Opposition is putting this forward, because I share his concern about how this might play out in Quebec and in the context of a national debate. Despite the fact that the folklore in Quebec still talks about Manitoba in the early '80s and the lack of services, there is a growing awareness there of tremendous progress that has been made over the last

decade in the provision of French language services in many of our public institutions, hospitals, personal care homes, highway signs—all sorts of ways in which government services are now provided in French as well as English.

I am aware because of efforts that were made several years ago by not only our government, but my wife chaired a fundraiser that led to money being raised to move the national volleyball team here. If you have watched the national women's volleyball team, you know the contribution that is made by some of the players from Quebec. At the time one of their difficulties with being located in our neighbouring province was that their only French-speaking coach had quit and several of their players were in the process of leaving the team, because they could not pursue a post-secondary education in that province in French.

One of the great assets that we had going for us in convincing the team to come here was that we did have those options at Collège de Saint-Boniface. In fact, it has resulted in a complete reversal of that attitude. We have, I believe, not only a French-speaking coach but a number of players who are stars of that team. So that added to the expansion that we are making right now of economic development using the Francophone chambers of commerce throughout the province and utilizing that skill availability for promotion of the call centres and other important economic opportunities here in the province.

There is not any way in which I cannot speak of the attractiveness and the advantages that it brings to our province to have these post-secondary options for training in French. After my meeting last week or the week before with the federal minister there was a staff follow-up with his staff on specifically on that sensitivity and the way in which this might be portrayed in the upcoming national debates. I know they are aware of it.

I know as well we have had the Minister of Education and Training write directly to the deputy prime minister who is also responsible for this particular OLE programming again laying out a lot of these arguments for her. We will certainly take this as an all-party effort and try and see what can be done. I would invite perhaps my staff to develop a strategy whereby we can speak as one and try and ensure that they assist in the recognition of the problem. If it means that we have to find a short-

term transition solution, hopefully we will work very hard to do that if we can be assured that there is a better long-term response from the federal government.

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Mr. Chairman, I would just like to comment on the fact that I would like to thank the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson). I did meet with them in the Collège de Saint-Boniface. It was I think a good meeting and that is probably one of the reasons why I did not raise a question in the House, because the work was being done and the Minister Stephane Dion was made aware of the situation through a member of St. Boniface also.

I spoke to the M.P. from St. Boniface, Mr. Duhamel, on Monday, and he was going to bring it to caucus this coming week, so I am sure he had made aware several of his colleagues in Ottawa in regard to having a solution. I think looking at the long-term solution like the Premier has mentioned here is not just a short-term solution whereby I think all Manitobans recognize the fact that it is important to have that technical schooling, if you want to call it, in St. Boniface and the development that has happened over the last couple of years with the help of the province.

I am certainly prepared to work with the other two parties and support them in their all-party negotiation in speaking with the community. Rather than taking it to the media or whatever, I think a solution can be found for the College without that kind of an attitude. I will continue working with the member for St. Boniface, the M.P., to make sure that we come to a solution for the Collège de Saint-Boniface. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: I am moving along. This moves us to the constitutional dossier. I understand the Premier met the minister responsible, Mr. Dion, Honourable Dion, last week. I had met the individual prior to his quick ascendency from academic life to one of the lead ministers.

An Honourable Member: Was he a New Democrat then?

Mr. Doer: There are lots of New Democrats in Quebec, about as many federal New Democrats as there are federal Conservatives I think now in the province of

Quebec, so I do not think either of us are peaking too early in the belle province, monsieur. We are going to have our next bet again about who is going to win more federal seats. I told the Premier, of course, that we were going to win more seats in the last federal election than his star Kim Campbell who is now apparently making the rounds. Little did I know it would be one-nothing, and that was not much to talk about. He will, of course, come back that he is happy with the provincial results, so I will not pursue that any further.

I want to ask the Premier, in December his public comments and his electronic comments that I listened to and his TV clips that I watched supported the federal government's package on the so-called national unity file, with the government's proposal to parliamentary legislation to bequeath, I guess you could use, the veto to various regions in the country, the provision of the distinct society clause as a single clause for Quebec and the other provisions of power.

I would like to ask the Premier, does he still support what the federal government has passed in Parliament, in a very rushed way, I might say, before the December 16 adjournment of Parliament?

* (1630)

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, I think that the member opposite will find, no matter what clips he chooses, that I always—well, no, of course, clips end up clipping some of what you say, but I always said that my support for the distinct society clause was contingent on it being part of the Canada clause, and the Prime Minister, I know, confirms that. In fact, Mr. Dion said that he had had those discussions with the Prime Minister and knew of the qualifications that I put on my support for the distinct society clause. It was a qualification, I might say, that arose out of the two reports of this Legislature, all-party reports, in which the so-called Canada clause was developed by the former member for Crescentwood, Mr. Carr, along with the members of that committee and became our unified position.

I must admit that my position on the veto was that I am not a fan of vetoes, but that if the federal government was going to take its own action, lending its veto, then that was something that we had no control or influence on, that it was something that in my view could be changed, particularly with the review of the amending formula.

When they went to the five-province veto—I guess it is the five-region veto—my comments which I shared with Mr. Dion were that that was an abomination, that, in fact, what they have done by that process is create, as in the Animal Farm analogy that the Leader of the Opposition likes to use, some animals being more equal than others, and in this case, it is quite a mixed bag when you consider the way, in effect, it works. You have three that actually do have a veto, Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia, and then you have some that have a veto only partially, only if they can convince somebody else to go with them and then the only thing they really have confirmed is that in this whole process of constitutional change, PEI is irrelevant because it cannot exercise a veto on its own or even with another province, so it is a very, very, I think, disharmonious approach.

My preference would be as it was when we discussed Meech Lake, not to have vetoes, because that will forever block an opportunity to get Senate reform that I believe we ought to have as part of any future constitutional change.

Mr. Doer: That is why in my speech in December, and now I thought we had a bit of a parting of the ways. First of all, I thought the federal government's motivation was two parts, one part national, the second part Lucien Bouchard, that they were so interested in trying to trap him. Their preoccupation was with Mr. Bouchard. They were so interested in trying to trap him that they were trying to rush something through the House of Commons that bequeaths certain powers through delegated parliamentary authority to certain regions and provinces by definition so that they could try to tactically trap him in voting against it and then try to use it tactically back in the province of Quebec.

So the Premier is right. In terms of the veto, it is almost as if a number of provinces have the veto and a number of provinces do not. Now in Atlantic Canada, you have this compact where PEI has joined with New Brunswick and Nova Scotia to have, you know, we are all okay, Jack, or we will not agree to the constitutional proposal, so the federal government has given PEI a veto through their compact arrangement in Atlantic Canada.

Newfoundland does not have a veto. The three other provinces have one. Manitoba and Saskatchewan

certainly do not have one. Quebec and Ontario have them.

An Honourable Member: Alberta does not have one.

Mr. Doer: They do have one.

An Honourable Member: No. If they convince the others who have one.

Mr. Doer: Yes, that is right. We have three provinces that do not have vetoes right now. I do not know how this happened, and I am not even going to blame the Premier for this, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Newfoundland. I do not agree with the Premier that the federal government—the problem is, the federal government has given this away. If you have an amending formula of 7/50 for most constitutional changes, why is the federal government giving away its veto and does not that now become the benchmark? How are you going to get a premier from B.C. or a premier from Quebec if they come to the table or a premier from Ontario or a premier from other regions to ever agree to something that is less than what the federal parliament passed last year in December.

I do not think this government—again we talk about planning. I do not if they have a plan to get us through the April of '97 challenges that we have with the automatic opening of the Constitution. I do not believe that anything that was passed in Parliament—I do not believe it was just a token exercise, because it will become the starting point for various regional people and premiers to come forward to that April exercise. Why should the federal government not have a veto? Why do you not amend the Constitution then to make it 50-50 funding formula for health and education and the federal government does not have a veto to stop it? Put it in the Constitution. Initiate it from the provinces, put it in the Constitution, and they cannot stop it. Then we can deal with our deficiency of funding. I think the federal government should have a veto of a constitutional change. What kind of system of government do we have where the federal government says we are not interested in having a say on the Constitution of the country, especially a Constitution, the British North America Act, and other constitutional amendments that were passed since then that affect the balance between federal and provincial powers?

So I do not agree with the proposal of the federal government. We did not ask questions about it. We did not, as the Premier would say, play games with it, but I do not agree with it. I think what you are doing in December of 1995 should be very much moving it towards where you want to be in April '97, and I think it was just moving us towards a vote in the House of Commons with two weeks notice where, you know, we are adding vetoes like people add courses to meals in terms of constitutional change. The big story was what each region got.

So I want to move to a question to the Premier. The Premier mentioned the Canada clause, which certainly I support. There are a lot of people taking credit for this clause now, I see, and that is fair enough. Both former Liberals are taking credit for it. I know that. There were a lot of people involved in that task force, and it was a good document, and obviously we failed in Meech in the sense that we did not get something positive moving ahead, but we probably succeeded in terms of what the public wanted.

Charlottetown, now, we have a document prepared for Charlottetown, but Charlottetown was rejected in this province, and I think we were the second highest no vote. Now, I know it is one of those other issues that the Premier was not exactly leading the charge on and, of course, neither was I. I did not like parts of it, I have to tell the Premier. I was critical of the Senate proposal. I thought it was absurd. I thought you should have proceeded if you could not have got an agreement, and I did not think you could get an agreement. I thought you could have got an agreement to abolish it, which would have been better than the formula for fixed seats in the province of Quebec. But there was the Canada clause, there was the sense of a strong national government as proposed by the Meech Lake Task Force, and there was a strong recognition that aboriginal people, pursuant to what happened in this province in 1990, would have to be recognized in the Canada clause and we would have to move forward in partnership with the first peoples in this province.

(Mr. Mike Radcliffe, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Now, the Premier was stronger on Senate reform than I was. My reform was abolish, which I thought was attainable. I had this argument with former Premier Rae and Premier Romanow, and I think Premier Harcourt was

amenable either way. That is my sense of him. [interjection] He is a good poker player.

So I guess what my question to the Premier is, given that Charlottetown was rejected in Manitoba, and it was rejected, I told our caucus before I even signed on with the Premier that it was going to go down, there was a firestorm out there and it was going to go down big time. I said, I do not think we should join the yes committee because that is the Mulroney committee, but I think we should support the equalization provisions in there and some of the other parts that I thought were positive.

* (1640)

I thought there were some positive parts there, but I was not surprised when seats were guaranteed for one region and not the other that the thing was defeated. I think the only constituency that passed it was the constituency of River Heights, which of course was the home of the only person, the Leader of the party that was opposing it, who now is voting for the same proposal in the House of Commons under the proposal put forward by the Prime Minister, not to make too fine a point on it.

What does the Premier now use, given Charlottetown was rejected? What does the Premier now use? That report, that document that he signed, that I tagged along with partially and then supported and got on the open-line shows with him and got my head kicked in along with him and then the day after I noticed he was trying to say, it did not hurt me, it hurt him more than it did me. I noticed that but I will not take any exception to that.

How do we have a position here in Manitoba given the fact that all the parts of Charlottetown were overwhelmingly defeated and only British Columbia had a higher no vote than Manitoba, if I recall correctly?

Mr. Filmon: If we get into constitutional discussion there will have to be a good deal more consensus building done here in the province. I made the comment in a scrum last week that if aboriginal rights or aboriginal issues are to be discussed under the Constitution that I certainly felt they ought to be at the table.

I also believe that an all-party consensus would be a wise thing to do with respect to constitutional change. My impression is that we are going on the other half of the agenda at the moment, which is the disentanglement

of federal and provincial responsibilities and, as Charlottetown identified, there are more than a dozen areas in which the federal and provincial governments overlap. I think that it has a number of obvious impacts, one of them being that we have confusion and duplication of efforts and services between levels of government and, secondly, it costs all of our taxpayers more money to do it in the way in which it currently is done.

I think that this, of course, is the evolution of 130 years of government under a constitutional distribution of responsibilities that could never have anticipated the way the country has grown and developed. It is time to rebalance the federation and it is time to do it on as much as possible a pragmatic basis.

I will say, because I know the Leader of the Opposition would be interested in my position on it, that I am not one that wants to emasculate the federal government. I am not one that wants to simply strip it of powers and turn it, as the saying went during Meech Lake, into a post office sending cheques out to the provinces. I am not one that believes that there is not a role for the federal government to play in setting national standards in areas of social policy or ensuring that there is some continuing ability to assure that our social safety net is able to be accessed on a relatively equal basis across the country.

I also believe that there are a number of areas in which a good, strong case can be made for us to transfer powers both ways, and I know that our administration has been in the forefront of trying to work with the federal government to create a harmonized environmental assessment review process. The trade-off for that has been that we acknowledge and in fact urge the federal government to take the responsibility for setting the environmental standards across the country, because I believe that pollution control standards have to be identical province to province. Otherwise, when we have proposals for any kind of major development that impacts the environment, whether that is a pulp and paper mill or hydroelectric plant or anything else, you cannot have different standards of pollution control for our water, our air, our land, moving across an artificial border on a map.

At the same time, I think it is in everybody's interest to have a harmonized assessment review process so that you do not have a confusing tangle of different processes that

take forever, and by the time you are through it people who have wanted to make the investments and create the development are so frustrated that they pack their bags and leave. That, I might say, is shared. There is no ideology there. Whether it is Liberals, New Democrats or Conservatives in office across Canada, that is a shared view, and certainly even the separatist government in Quebec, I know, shares the desire to arrive at a harmonized environmental assessment review process.

I also believe that we have to continue to move towards greater standards in education—I should say, harmonized standards in education across the country—and that there is a federal role to play in that, even though education is not one of the national powers in our Constitution. I also believe that it is worth looking at the proposal that the federal government is currently discussing to have a national securities commission. Our bottom line includes a number of issues on that, one of which is that there has to be an office of the national securities commission everywhere that there is a commodities or stock exchange. The reason is, of course, that we have a number of organizations, including the largest mutual fund company in Canada, headquartered here, that issues more prospectuses on mutual funds than any other mutual fund company in Canada, and they cannot be forced to go to Toronto or Vancouver or Calgary or Halifax to get their issues approved. So that is one of the issues that we would have as bottom line in any such proposal.

Having said that, there are, I think, not only synergies but probably many practical regulatory advantages to that kind of concept. If it is helpful in the rebalancing of the federation to allow people to recognize that this is one that is being done on a pragmatic, nonpartisan basis, and not just a means of stripping power from the federal government, I think we ought to consider these kinds of alternatives.

But then in the other direction, of course, I think there is a clear indication that all sorts of areas could far more easily be administered more efficiently and at much less cost in the hands of the provinces in many of our resource areas, whether it be forestry or fishing or mining. What else have we looked at in that respect—recreation, labour market development? All of those areas are ones in which a strong case can be made for the primacy of the provincial delivery of those services.

We will continue to work with that, and I think the federal government has laid out some modest proposals in their most recent throne speech, and we will probably have more discussions as they go along with that.

Mr. Doer: I guess we have 12 months. That is not a lot of time, and we had Charlottetown rejected overwhelmingly here. Some of the things that we are talking about were rejected in Charlottetown. Some of the same people who voted against Charlottetown would be opposed perhaps to some elements of the federal government's initiative and our responses.

* (1650)

I happen to believe that we should look at modernizing some of the jurisdictions in Canada. As the Premier knows, though, and I think it is very similar to what I heard in the Meech Lake Task Force reports, I do believe in a strong national government. I believe that one of the weaknesses we have had in the debate with the separatists, which was exploited effectively by Bouchard—thank goodness, it did not go too far—was the whole issue of the strengths of Canada: health and post-secondary education and income support programs, which make us in a lot of Canadians' minds a more equitable society, a more tolerant society, a fairer society than our American neighbours to the south.

We are being reduced dramatically at the same time as people were asked to fight for Canada, and I think that all of us should be looking at the constitutional changes in a positive—affirming strong programs that people identify with in their daily lives from coast to coast to coast—health care, post-secondary education. Let us look at the bureaucracies in the income support area, whether it is social assistance, UI, compensation programs. Let us look at having a floor of income support on a national basis that I was hoping Minister Axworthy would have looked at before, that would deal with many of the income support programs, instead of just cutting and running in terms of the investments across the country.

I think some powers should be moved to the federal government. I believe the Environment department should be a federal jurisdiction. How that works, I think we could look at the how-to, but I have always believed if you look at the Shoal Lake water for Winnipeg or whether you looked at the ecosystem on the

Saskatchewan River in the North, the Hydro projects in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, or Louisiana-Pacific and other proposals—I agree that we do not want some system that takes forever, but I believe the environment should be federal jurisdiction.

I would like to have it international jurisdiction. I liked the co-operation we got from the International Joint Commission when we were dealing with items like the Garrison Diversion project. If people perceive it just to be one way on these issues of power, I think that in this province it will be judged harshly as before.

I would also want the Premier to get off sometimes—my own suggestion is, do not make the Senate the only issue. Just leave that one. We will have this debate again, but I am in favour of abolishing the Senate. You would have had a better chance, we would have had a better chance of getting that last proposal through with equalization if we had abolished the Senate instead of this—I call it the animal farm Senate, some senators are equal and some are more equal than others.

My friend in the West did not like the term, so I did not use it after that. I just leave that with the Premier. How are we going to get a process to get moving here in Manitoba? We got the second highest no vote. How are we going to get the next 12 months ready for the next automatic round? I just raise that with the Premier.

Mr. Filmon: I have indicated publicly that should we be embarking on another round that we will have to get an all-party committee together and a process for trying to engage Manitobans in discussion. I would just point out that there is quite a body of thought that has, I think, support in many areas of the country that suggests that we are not facing any automatic requirement for another constitutional discussion. As I understand it the constitutional requirement is that this discussion had to take place before 1997 on the amending formula as one element. The body of thought is that that discussion did take place both during Meech Lake and Charlottetown and, in fact, the legal requirement has been taken care of. The question is whether or not it is in anybody's interest to pursue the matter with another constitutional round. Clearly the federal government is evaluating its option right now.

Mr. Doer: I believe the member for The Maples has some questions. Okay.

The issue of health and post-secondary education and social services, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) indicated that he was going to do everything possible to get that funding reinstated. Yet last year in the parliamentary bill that dealt with the massive funding reductions contained within the federal budget that we all disagreed with, not one minister of this government appeared before the parliamentary committee. Three ministers of the government appeared in the other committee room almost simultaneously on the gun registration proposal of Minister Rock.

I raised this question before. I think that I personally believe that that reduction from the federal government was a major reduction. It was a massive change in terms of the priority of the federal government for health and post-secondary education and social services. It has had profound implications on the people that are most vulnerable in our communities today. Our children under the age of one year of age are getting a 33 percent reduction in the social assistance provisions. We have sit-ins in ministers' offices, but the next day a child is still going to have a 33 percent reduction. I do not agree with the Premier in passing all of that reduction on from the federal government on to children under the age of one year.

Why did the government, which presents so many presentations to federal committees on so many occasions, not present to that parliamentary committee and treat it with equal importance and profile and energy and effort and initiative to the gun registration proposal of the federal government?

I believe the committees were sitting simultaneously that same week in Parliament. The Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) even could have walked across the hall and presented a brief on behalf of Manitoba. It would not have even required any more money.

Mr. Filmon: I guess it is the difference between perception and real opportunity to try and persuade and convince the federal government. I know that each of the individual ministers and their senior officials had countless meetings, briefs were sent, letters were sent by ministers to their federal counterparts, to the federal government. In addition to that, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) had a very strong opportunity to dialogue directly with the federal Minister of Finance.

I guess ultimately it was concluded that, with all of those efforts, the appearance before the committee was not an exercise that could produce any results that the direct approach had failed to produce.

* (1700)

I would just say that the Leader of the Opposition, I think, is being a little misleading when he talks about the reduction of the support payments for children and people on social assistance. It was the City of Winnipeg that passed through its loss of federal support directly. It was not the decision of this government.

Mr. Doer: The money for the municipalities comes from the federal government through the provincial government to municipal payments on social assistance. Is that not correct?

Mr. Filmon: My understanding is that the city government negotiated directly with the federal government for the cost-sharing, and it was that federal cost-sharing that was removed.

Mr. Doer: Who sets the rates in Manitoba for welfare payments to families?

Mr. Filmon: We, of course, set the rates, which the city had previously chosen to top up.

Mr. Doer: So we have in essence—I think there are three decisions that have taken place on social assistance in the last four or five months: (1) a decision from the City of Winnipeg, which did top up the provincial assistance grants, to go to the provincial rates; (2) a provincial rate that was changed and reduced by the provincial government, effective April 1; and (3) a further change in social assistance, effective May 1, 1996. Is that not correct?

Mr. Filmon: Partially correct. Our decisions with respect to rates did not impact families with children under six. They were not reduced.

Mr. Doer: The bottom line is, you know, I can look at the federal government, provincial government, the civic government, we can talk about it all day long, Manitoba children, under the age of one year old, this April 1,

Manitoba children residing in Winnipeg and in northern communities, which had the other rates before, received a 33 percent reduction in their food allowance. I am very worried about the impact on those children. I am very concerned that all the studies—and the Premier has read the Postl study on the first year and how important it is for child development, nutritional development, educational development. These rates, of course, for children under a year, according to David Northcott and others that deal with these kids on the front lines will have a devastating impact, they feel, on kids. They have had a 17 percent increase in the amount of kids that have had to use a food bank in the last one year. I know the federal government has reduced support and all that other stuff, and I know that they camped in David Walker's office. The cameras come in David Walker's office; the cameras go.

I am very worried about the nutritional impact and the educational impact and the economic impact of that reduction. Does the government have, dare I ask, any studies on the impact on the nutritional value of children, and does it have any concerns about what is going on, notwithstanding who is to blame in jurisdictional terms?

Mr. Filmon: Well, of course, I indicated that we were concerned, and that is why we did not, in our rights under our jurisdiction, make reductions to families with children under six years old.

Mr. Doer: Did the province consider, for babies under one year of age—and you are already making major reductions in your social assistance budget, looking at the reduction that was taking place for the municipal government—did it consider the impact of what municipal governments are going to do? I would bet that 70 percent to 80 percent of the kids—well, I would not bet that. I think close to 70 percent of the children affected by social assistance would be in the city of Winnipeg. It would be a lot higher in the provincial jurisdiction because other communities are under federal jurisdiction. How much would it cost for a level of government to maintain the food allowance for babies under the age of one year old? How much would it cost us, and is there not any way that the people that are in government today, federal, provincial or civic, starting with the Premier, could find a way to backfill that amount to the most vulnerable kids that did not decide to not to have a job or did not decide not to get an education or did not decide anything except

they were born in circumstances, you know, that resulted in them being on social allowance. Was there any way that we could—how much would it have cost society to make sure those kids did not get a 33 percent cut? So I ask that question of the Premier.

Mr. Filmon: That would be a question that the member would have to ask the minister responsible. I can tell him in terms of the global policy that, given that in so many different areas we were getting direct reductions, and this is one example, from the federal government to the various recipients of federal program dollars, we were getting all those specific program cuts. In addition to that, we as a province were getting \$116 million less in transfers. There was absolutely no way that we could backfill for these federal reductions. That is why the situation came up with College St. Boniface, that is why the situation came up with the OLE funding, that is why the situation comes up here where the federal government gives us a double whammy. One, it gives direct program cuts, and two, it reduces our ability to backfill by another \$116 million. So as a global policy we just simply cannot find the money to do that.

Mr. Doer: Could the Premier find out—and I would ask the Premier to find out because it is a government policy paper across a number of departments dealing with Healthy Child. The Healthy Child paper—I am sure the Premier has read it—deals with a number of concerns. It tells all of us that we and the individual will pay for the rest of our lives if we do not provide proper nutrition at the front end, at the first year. In fact, the period of time where a mother is pregnant, the first year of that child will have tremendous, tremendous health consequences, will have tremendous educational consequences, will have tremendous therefore economical consequences.

* (1710)

I guess what I am asking the Premier, are we better off, you know, we have got money and corporate grants, not all of which I have criticized in the past, in other areas of government, but how much would it cost all of us, without apportioning blame, to find a way to backfill those children under a year's age? I am really, really concerned about that, and can we not look at a way of finding in a \$6 billion budget, even if it is coming out of surplus, even if it was \$9 million, say we would have a \$15-million surplus instead of a \$24 million or \$22 million or whatever it is going to be? We are making

hundreds of millions of dollars out of lotteries. I just want to know how much it would be and why we cannot backfill.

You know, St. Boniface College, we have got to deal with that issue and we have got to deal with health care, and we have got to deal with education in terms of cuts, and I do not dispute that. We were the ones I think that came up with a figure that was equivalent to all the hospitals outside of the city of Winnipeg. I think we have developed that comment to try to put cuts, which are huge amounts of money, in real terms so people understood it. Because huge amounts of money are huge amounts of money, they are very hard to come to grips with. But I think we have made the wrong decision as a society for those children. I really do believe we should find a way to honour some of the comments made by the child report, not only for the short-term reality that those families face but for the long-term opportunity that all research indicates it would provide. I think the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) cited the recent study from *Scientific American* and I am sure as an engineer that the Premier reads *Scientific American*. I do not. David Orlikow read it. He passed it on to both of us. I was surprised, he reads everything. But I just again ask the Premier, how much and what can we do to solve this?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, I just want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that we have taken countless actions to try and address precisely those issues of early childhood development and recognizing families with children as having special needs. We made the changes to the tax system in 1989. The Manitoba tax reduction for personal income tax was substantially increased from \$50 per child to \$250 per child, one of the most generous child tax benefits in Canada, \$23 million I believe annual additional contribution to the families with children.

We initiated the development of a Healthy Start program dedicated to prenatal and postnatal nutrition, initiated the co-ordination of services and polices for medically fragile children, a new Child and Adolescent Treatment Clinic that provides additional treatment for children with acute psychiatric needs, a province-wide approach to fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect children, a commitment to develop a sudden infant death syndrome diagnostic laboratory. We established the pediatric centre of excellence at the Children's

Hospital at the Health Sciences Centre in 1993, as well as the Children and Youth Secretariat that now provides I think a stronger cross-government focal point to co-ordinate the policies and services for children than we have ever had. The Taking Charge! program, of course, is designed to provide community-based support for welfare dependent single parents, and a number have become self-reliant through this process, and we continue to work for ways to try and enhance that.

Mr. Doer: I would ask the Premier—and I do not need it in his Estimates—to have his senior staff, who I know are not too busy getting inquiries to questions answered—no, I know that they are, but I will find out about it later. Just kidding. I know they are working furiously at those answers, inquiries in health. I know we will find out eventually.

I would ask the Premier, could he find out for me, for my personal attention, what are the cost implications of this 33 percent reduction? I am not interested in the jurisdictions. I am interested in the jurisdictions, but I really want to know what is—if we were to return the rate to what it was effective March 31, '96, for children, babies—I have a young child, and the Premier has had many more children than I have had, and we all know how fast they learn and how fast they grow and how fast they adapt. We do not need the *Scientific American* to know this. I would like to know from the Premier if he could find out, if the Clerk of Cabinet could find out from the appropriate department the cost impact of rates to return to the March 31, 1996, rates for social assistance for children in all our communities in Manitoba. So if the Premier would do that I would appreciate it.

Mr. Filmon: I think we could do that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Doer: Can the Premier tell us how successful his Minister of Finance was, who was unshakeable in his belief on health and post secondary education—I noticed his comments on this year's budget is, oh, they sure got away with that one, make the announcement last year and appear not to make the cuts this year. What is the strategy to deal with the federal government who seems to get little accountability for major shifts in costs in last year's budget, and what is to stop the federal government who promised to enhance spending in health and post-

secondary education in the red book who has gone back on that promise subsequent to the election?

What is the strategy to deal with the federal government in the future on these arithmetic formulas that reduce tremendously investment in health and in postsecondary education and social assistance, that reduce dramatically by definition the equity each Canadian citizen has in terms of their services? How can we believe that the formula is frozen in '99 when we were told in '93 that it would be enhanced by the same—the person who was finance minister was the co-chair, co-author of the so-called red book? When everybody was giving us peace in our time a couple of weeks ago I think most of us should have been pretty worried, because the best predictor of future behaviour is past, and the past behaviour for the government was to go away from a condemnation of the Mulroney government—I should not use that name because I hear he is in court today—

An Honourable Member: He will not sue you much.

Mr. Doer: I have no money. He only goes after \$50 million. Not many of us in the House do have that. That is what I like about him. He really enhanced his reputation going after \$50 million law suits.

So what is the longer-term strategy of the premiers and this provincial government?

* (1720)

Mr. Filmon: Well, I would say that the Finance ministers and the First Ministers and in fact most provincial politicians in government have been very consistent in their condemnation of the federal government for its transfer payment cuts, and what has been inconsistent has been the treatment by media and editorialists who have gone from acknowledging firstly that there have been these big federal reductions and that they are going to have their impacts to writing editorials or making comments saying provincial government is just whining and complaining over the cuts, and they should get on with the job of governing and take responsibility. The fact is that these are huge reductions. In fact, the \$220 million two year—by the time we get to the second year and it is \$220 less than it was in 1995, we are going to be short just about 4 percent of our total revenues. That is a huge impact and not something you can make up overnight. These are the kinds of major, major

consequences of government action that ought to be roundly condemned, but it appears as though people who for their own partisan purposes do not want to let their ability to criticize us disappear continue to just say that, well, the provincial government makes its ultimate choices. I dare say that members of the Leader of the Opposition's party do that from time to time, saying it is your choice. It is true, but we are making our choices in the context of having \$116 million less this year and \$220 million less next year. Those choices are not easy.

The federal government continues to be on a relative honeymoon right across the country, where people do not seem to be too concerned about having them take responsibility for some pretty severe actions by way of transfer payment reductions. We will continue to speak out. I can send the Leader of the Opposition my press clippings or, indeed, the communiques from Western Premiers' Conferences, annual Premiers' Conferences. It does not seem to have its impact on the federal government right about now. They clearly do not feel the heat for the decisions they are making, and strategically I think they bet that we, the provinces, would bear most of the flak for the ultimate decisions that filter down. They are probably sitting back smiling, thinking that they were right, that we are taking the flak and they are getting off with pretty little condemnation from the public.

Mr. Doer: Judging from that tape that was shown at the Charlie Curtis dinner with the federal Deputy Minister of Finance I do not know what to think.

An Honourable Member: Was that at the Beaujolais?

Mr. Doer: I do not know whether it was the Beaujolais, but it looked like the food was served after cocktail hour, let me put it that way. It looked like a Foster Brooks movie. No, I take that back.

We tabled documents and we had documents indicating the equalization would be higher in the fall of '95. In fact in July of '95 the government indicated that there was a large amount of money that had been adjusted in the '94-95 fiscal year. I know the press release said all the extra money comes from old source revenues. I will not get at the validity of the press release, not the validity, the accuracy or the spin, and I guess not a lot of people pay attention to those statements in July. I thought it was over \$100 million in equalization money and a large amount of money. We were aware in the fall that (a)

Saskatchewan's equalization was going to go down, and we were not getting it from Saskatchewan we are getting it from the federal government; and (b) that the provincial government here was going to get increased equalization. Do you think the Premier would have a greater case dealing with the public of Manitoba if he in the Speech from the Throne was using more up-to-date information about the overall impact of the federal cutback, because we thought he was overstating the federal cutback relative to the equalization? Of course the budget to many people appeared that it was overstated last year. I do not know why the government does this as a communications strategy except to justify cuts.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, I would hope that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) would agree with me that they are two distinctly different sources of revenue and there is a purpose to having divided the sources of revenue. I think it is fair to say that there was a reason why the federal government did not lump the CAP in EPF along with the equalization because you have to treat them as different sources for different purposes. One is a transference for social programming and EPF and CAP were developed on that basis.

The second is to try and smooth out the differences in the wealth-generating capacity of the provinces. That, as you know, is a very complex formula. In fact, when I try and describe it to people I end up having to bring in experts who can describe the various elements of that formula. I think there are three elements of equalization formula, and I believe the Opposition has probably heard them described. But I know that even the Free Press editorial board does not understand it. They try and simplify it and say that if the economy is going poorly, then you get more. But it is all on a relative basis amongst the pool of the seven provinces that are equalization recipients.

So there are the impacts of the pool and the relative performance of your province within the pool. There is the element of how much is going into the pool vis-à-vis the wealth-generating capacity of the three contributing provinces. Then there is the fact that it is on a per capita basis, so that if your population is growing more rapidly than the other seven within the pool, then you can get a greater share of that pie.

That is a very complex formula that is designed to do a particular thing of smoothing out the economic wealth-

generating capacities of the various provinces within the equalization system.

The other though, and I think it is fair to say that we as a province—and every province, entered into all sorts of social programming on the basis of federal cost sharing, in fact 50/50 under CAP. I think it started out probably under EPF as 50/50 but eventually because of a whole series of measures it eroded from that position.

So if you do assume that the federal government has a responsibility to provide transfers for health and education and then the federal government massively cuts its transfers to you for health and education, I think that getting the equalization muddies the waters completely because equalization is smoothing out your ability to provide equivalent levels of services on all areas of your provincial expenditures. The transfers on the CHST are for a specific part to which, presumably, Ottawa has a greater or lesser commitment than what they are showing us now is that they have a much lesser commitment.

I give you just the example that over the last while I know he has heard us proudly trumpet the fact that of every new dollar that we have spent in this province in the last eight years, 90 cents has gone to the three departments of Health, Education and social services—Family Services, and that is priority setting, in my judgment.

What the feds are doing is also priority setting, and they are saying that their lowest priority is their transfers for health, education and social services to the provinces. I think they have to be held accountable for that, and I do not think you do that when you lump in the equalization payments. If the Leader of the Opposition wants the comparisons year over year, year ending March 31, 1996, versus the budget year that we are in now, March 31, 1997, I can tell him that our equalization under the current projection, and that is the other aspect of his question that I want to emphasize as strongly as I possibly can.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 5:30, committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour being 5:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 17, 1996

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Health Care System Ashton; McCrae	844
Presenting Petitions		Public Sector Workers Kowalski; Pallister; Toews	846
Seasonal Camping Fees Ashton	837	Post-Secondary Education Friesen; McIntosh	847
Home Care Services Lamoureux Martindale Sale	837 837 837	Disaster Assistance Struthers; Pallister	848
Reading and Receiving Petitions		Members' Statements	
Seasonal Camping Fees Ashton	837	Law Day Radcliffe	849
Home Care Services Maloway Mihychuk Cerilli Martindale Lamoureux Sale	837 838 838 839 839 839	Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba Annual Symposium Barrett	849
Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees		Home Care Services Dyck Mihychuk	850 850
Committee of Supply Sveinson	840	Health Care Hickes	851
Introduction of Bills			
Bill 201, Aboriginal Solidarity Day Act Robinson	840		
Oral Questions		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Home Care Program Doer; McCrae Chomiak; McCrae Reid; Toews Barrett; Filmon; McCrae	841 842 843 846	Committee of Supply Health Executive Council	 851 876