



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, July 6, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mr. Conrad Santos (Chairperson): Mr. 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 Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that the report of the Committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Manitoba Highway Map

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): I have a ministerial statement, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier this afternoon, I had the great pleasure of unveiling Manitoba's new highway map. Mr. Speaker, for the first time in 40 years, for the first time actually in the history of this province, all of Manitoba is depicted on the new map.

I might add it also shows the winter road system and other important transportation components such as northern airports. It is with great pride, Mr. Speaker, I indicate that by expanding the map to include the entire province, we are sending a strong message that every inch of our 230 000 square kilometres are part of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I am also very proud to have Manitoba's ethnic and cultural diversity depicted on our new map. Visitors to Manitoba will see, on the map, greetings in 26 of the languages

spoken here in Manitoba. In the same way that the new map shows our province's geographic diversity, we are also recognizing the diversity of the people who have chosen to make Manitoba their home.

As Manitobans prepare to celebrate our diversity at Folklorama, I am proud the visitors in Manitoba will appreciate the many ethnic communities that have contributed to the rich diversity of our province, and I might add, it includes every aboriginal language in the province, a total of 26 languages, and includes all major languages spoken in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this is also an historic day for Manitoba's First Nations. Prior to unveiling the map, O Canada! was sung in Cree by Natasha and Alexandria Moody, who are with us today and will be, I believe, introduced in a few minutes formally, from Nelson House Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, also known as recording artist Moody Times Two.

To my knowledge, this is the first time that O Canada! was performed in the Legislature in Cree, and I am sure all honourable members will appreciate how significant an event it was. Nisichawayasihk, by the way, is the Cree name of the home community of the Moodys, and it means "where three rivers meet." It is certainly a way of capturing the spirit of the historic day today.

Mr. Speaker, this message sends a clear message to Manitobans, not only should we drive safely, we should think diversity, we should be proud of our geographic diversity, our ethnocultural diversity. I was really proud today to introduce this on behalf of all members of the Legislature.

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for his statement and the maps that he has provided. These maps are very important to Manitobans and in fact to the tourism industry in Manitoba, and I am pleased that the Minister is carrying on

that tradition of providing these maps for Manitobans and for tourists in our province.

I think it is significant that this change was made on the maps. As the Minister rightly said, the maps have not been changed for 40 years, going through from the Schreyer government up to the present time. This was a timely change that will be appreciated by Manitobans. I am pleased to see that he used a scene from southwestern Manitoba on the front of the map, a very picturesque area near Ninette.

I also note that he has continued with the tradition of putting his picture on the map. I know that his high school graduation picture probably could have been updated. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask for leave to speak on the Minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member have leave? [*Agreed*]

* (13:35)

Mr. Gerrard: I rise to congratulate the Minister on his initiative in bringing forward a new map with some positive changes. There will be other occasions, I am sure, when I have more negative things to say, but today I think congratulations are in order. Thank you. Meegwetch.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 44—The Labour Relations Amendment Act (2)

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell), that leave be given to introduce Bill 44, The Labour Relations Amendment Act (2) (Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur les relations du travail), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, the proposed bill serves three main purposes: first, it establishes a process to send a collective bargaining dispute to a binding settlement process after a strike or lockout has been in effect for more than 60 days,

and this is based on the existing first contract legislative model; streamlining the process for union certification by allowing for interim certification orders and making certification automatic if 65 percent or more of the employees have signed membership cards; and expanding the mediation and arbitration process and tightening the time lines to allow for a faster resolution of a wider range of disputes.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 47—The Civil Service Amendment Act

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), that leave be given to introduce Bill 47, The Civil Service Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la fonction publique, and that the same now be received and read a first time.

The Lieutenant-Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I would also like to table the Lieutenant-Governor's message.

Motion presented.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, this bill amends The Civil Service Act to allow the Treasury Board to administer certain sections of the Act, including those relating to classification, pay plans, rates of pay and collective bargaining.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the gallery where we have with us Natasha and Alexandria Moody of Moody Times Two, who earlier today performed O Canada! in Cree for the first time in the Manitoba Legislature. The Moodys are from Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, Nelson House, in the constituency of the Honourable Minister of Highways and Government Services (Mr. Ashton).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**Flooding
Agricultural Disaster Assistance**

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Last year when there was such a disastrous flood in southwestern Manitoba and many farm families were impacted, our government, which was in power at the time, put \$70 million on the table to aid the victims of that flood. Since this government has taken office, it has not put one dime more money on the table for the families that faced disaster last year.

* (13:40)

This week, Agriculture ministers met in New Brunswick to discuss the need for a rainy day fund for farmers. I find it pretty ironic, given that this government has not used any of the rainy day fund here in Manitoba to support the victims of the 1999 flood. Mr. Speaker, the Government claims that it is sitting at the discussion table when it comes to assistance, but it is yet to put its own funding in place to help victims. Could the Premier tell us if his government laid an aid package on the table on Tuesday when it met with the Rural Disaster Recovery Coalition?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the statement made by the Member opposite that not a dime has flowed from this government is wrong. The Member should know it is wrong. We announced a \$100-million income support transportation plan, and the coalition quite correctly, unlike the Member opposite, pointed out on Tuesday that that money, between \$9 and \$12 an acre, did flow to all producers in need, and it included the people in southwest Manitoba. So that is \$100 million, \$40 million from our Treasury.

One area we have already, through the former government, put forward over \$20 million in programs that should be part of a federal disaster assistance program. I would say to members of this Chamber and members of the public that the days of taking \$350 million out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund in two operating

years are over, Mr. Speaker, and I made that point very clearly. I will make that point clearly to any Manitoban. We are not going to sell a telephone system and then spend \$350 million out of a Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

The \$185 million that came from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund last year has been reduced down to \$90 million this year, and it is our goal to reduce the dependency of government on supporting operating programs in the province with the Stabilization Fund. But the people of southwest Manitoba, we believe, are entitled to federal disaster assistance. The federal government, at the end of February, agreed with that and signed an Order-in-Council. We now hear potential rumours out of Ontario, with the high amount of rain, there may be another program announced, and we immediately, when we heard that from the coalition on Tuesday, phoned the federal government and said that they still owe the people of southwest Manitoba a disaster assistance program. We are still committed to our share of that disaster assistance program, and I hope this Legislature is united in calling on Ottawa to treat Canada and all provinces and all regions in an equal way, something that has not happened for southwest Manitoba.

Mrs. Mitchelson: With all the rambling and ranting in that long answer, I heard nothing that told Manitobans that there was any targeted relief for those who suffered the disaster and the floods in 1999. I think it is abysmal that this government has not shown a leadership role to provide some sort of assistance.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier tell this House what Manitoba farmers will actually gain in terms of disaster assistance as a result of the new safety net agreement?

Mr. Doer: The programs have been agreed to over the three-year period. The Minister has been in discussions with other Ag ministers and the federal government. The specific amounts are in the Budget and have been debated, in terms of Manitoba's portion, in the Estimates that have been passed, I believe, in this Legislature. So the Member opposite will know the number.

The program did anticipate a reduction of support for Manitoba and Saskatchewan initially. That has been stopped, but I would say, quite frankly, coming back to the fundamental point, that we believe in a national disaster assistance program, and we believe that means partnership between the federal and provincial governments.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, when the former government put \$70 million on the table to "embarrass" the federal government into making a payment, they did not get one red cent. When we developed an income support program to give equal credit for a program of \$60 million from the federal government, \$40 million from the provincial government for an agreement on income support, that cost-sharing agreement did come forward from the federal government, and we did get \$60 million on top of the \$40 million from Manitoba. That is the model we are using to try to resolve southwest Manitoba, where we bring forward a plan and announce together.

* (13:45)

If the members opposite are proposing that Manitoba opt out of the federal disaster assistance program and opt out of the federal responsibilities for southwest Manitoba, I say shame on them.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think all we would like to see and all the farmers and the farm families that experienced the disaster last year would like to see is some consideration and some compassion from this government.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier indicate today—because he has said time and time again that his money would be on the table if there were a 50-50 program to deal with the disaster of the flood in 1999. We are not asking this government to put the federal government's share of dollars on the table. Will they take their 50-cent dollars and put them on the table today so that Manitoba farmers and farm families who experienced the disaster and the devastation last year will have some money in their pockets?

Mr. Doer: The proposal from the southwest Manitoba coalition is for a program of some \$42 million. Of the \$71 million that was forwarded

last year, over \$22 million is the money from the province "on the table."

Mr. Speaker, I would note that members opposite, in terms of the 50-50 program, commissioned the so-called Rose report and received it in government last August and have not released it to the public.

Agricultural Disaster Assistance Cost-Sharing Program

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): The news releases that have come out of Ottawa and this province give me very little comfort in assuring farmers that there will be a better aid program than we have seen in the past. The news release from the federal government clearly says that the federal government will contribute exactly what it did last year, \$1.1 billion a year over the next three years, and the province's matching funds will be 40 percent, the same as it has been.

Now I ask the Premier: Does this mean that the program changes that he has just talked about in this new program will be directed towards farmers and their cash income or the risk side of agriculture?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I believe that the program will include both. I think the Member knows that from the discussions he had in Estimates with the Ag Minister (Ms. Wowchuk).

Mr. Jack Penner: I appreciate that answer; however, the news release said something exactly to the opposite of that. The news release says the framework signed today provides the basis for federal and provincial core safety net programs comprising of fall cash, and it says it will be based on the size of the industry—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I have *Beauchesne's* out because I know the Member was asking a question, and indeed I have to refer to *Beauchesne's* Citation 410: "Supplementary questions require no preambles." Citation 409: "A supplementary question should need no preamble." It is well

known to the Member. Mr. Speaker, would you please instruct the Member to put his question without any other preambles?

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Emerson, on the same point of order.

Mr. Jack Penner: On the same point of order, I think it is important that the Premier realize that the federal press release states the exact opposite to what he just told this House. I would suggest to the Premier that he should at least read the press releases before making those kinds of statements.

* (13:50)

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the Honourable Government House Leader, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Honourable Member for Emerson to please put his question.

Mr. Jack Penner: Will the Premier confirm that the basis of the new agreement is a provincial core safety net agreement which will see net programs be based on the size of the industry in each province, or will we in fact use the net income as the basis for calculations?

Mr. Doer: The news story, the wire story states that the final details will not be complete. The Minister indicated that she will be releasing those details with the farm groups and also ask for their input into some of these changes. So that is the advice I have received. I certainly await the full briefing of the Minister and the input from the farm organizations.

Mr. Jack Penner: It is obvious that the Premier does not know what his own minister has agreed to in Ottawa because this is a serious flaw in the program—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you could use my earlier point of order. Once again, the Member knows full well the rules of the House. There is no preamble that is available when there is a supplementary question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the Honourable Government House Leader, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Honourable Member to please put his question.

Mr. Jack Penner: I will simply ask the Premier, then: Will the negative margins that were part of last year's programs be continued in this new program or will AIDA exist under this new program? And if the negative margins will continue under the new announcement, will the Premier assure this House that this province will participate in the negative margin program?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the agreements that were signed in Fredericton and the money and financial support from the province were consistent with the Estimates that were passed and debated in this Chamber. The Member asked four questions. I think he spent over forty hours in Agriculture, and those matters were debated and discussed and fully disclosed in the Estimates a couple of weeks ago.

School Divisions Amalgamations

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, last fall, on two occasions, the Minister of Education indicated that he was prepared to force school divisions to amalgamate if they did not do so willingly. Again last week, he was quoted in the paper as making the same comments.

I would like to ask the Minister of Education whether he could confirm that he is prepared to force school divisions to amalgamate if they do not do so willingly.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, of course it is the desire of government, in fact, all trustees and educators in the province of Manitoba to ensure that the greatest resources possible are made available to the classrooms of Manitoba.

In 1994, the Norrie commission report, commissioned by the members opposite, into school division boundaries in the province of Manitoba released a report that called for a reduction in school divisions to 21. It was a cookie-cutter model that did not provide for local nuance.

It is the position of this government, and has been since assuming office, that we are determined that resources, where they are available, will be freed up for the classrooms of the province of Manitoba for the children in the province of Manitoba. That position has not changed. I am encouraging, this year, an active dialogue in the school divisions of the province of Manitoba with their neighbours so that we can have a more efficient system for 2002.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, on November 19, the Minister is quoted as saying that he ordered senior bureaucrats to resurrect the Norrie commission findings on school boundaries and prepare a report as soon as possible.

Could he indicate if that report has been prepared, and could he table it in the House?

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, I smile because I actually provided that press clipping to the Member opposite yesterday afternoon for his information.

* (13:55)

The Department did look at the Norrie commission report. There was no written report provided to me. We had a number of discussions upon it. It was deemed to be too extreme. I think it was a view that the members on this side expressed at the time. It is certainly the view that was expressed in the field. There is some useful information in the Norrie commission report—there is no doubt about it—but we are committed to having an open dialogue with the field. We are strongly encouraging divisions to discuss

with their neighbours the best use of resources, whether it involves amalgamation or shared services of bus services, for example, and so forth, and that is a process that we intend to continue.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Can the Minister then confirm that he will not be imposing the Norrie report boundaries, but he has a plan of his own to put in place? When will he share this with Manitobans?

Mr. Caldwell: I will confirm that we will not be imposing the Norrie commission report on the school divisions of the province of Manitoba. That has been a consistent view of this government in government and when it was in opposition.

As for the plan that the Government has for school division amalgamations currently, I think it is best expressed in what I have been saying to the House and publicly over the last number of months. We want to encourage serious discussions, thoughtful discussions at the local level, bearing in mind local conditions, the uniqueness of the province and the regions of the province in their deliberations. We will encourage and continue to facilitate those sorts of discussions.

School Divisions Amalgamations

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education has given the impression across this province that he will, indeed, force amalgamation within a year's time.

Will the Minister explain why he will force amalgamation of school divisions next June, when Fort Garry chairwoman, Carol Adolphe, has said that they want to partner with other divisions in an effort to save money and find efficiencies instead of amalgamating? Could the Minister please explain why the forcing of amalgamations would be better than allowing the school divisions to do this on a voluntary basis?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, the Member, I suppose, was not paying attention

to the earlier remarks. We are encouraging shared services where it makes sense. We are encouraging resources to be shared between divisions. Certainly we have had a couple of very successful voluntary amalgamations.

My favourite is Prairie Spirit in my region of the province in southwestern, south-central Manitoba. We have had a successful amalgamation that took place in St. Boniface-Norwood. There is some very good work being done in the field, and in fact the trustees of the province of Manitoba are to be commended for their commitment to educational excellence in this province.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, does the Minister agree with Ms. Adolphe's belief that it would not be efficient to amalgamate two large divisions that need large administrations?

Mr. Caldwell: Of course, in the Department itself, we have significantly made changes, reductions in administrative structures to free up dollars, in turn, to remove it from the bureaucracy and put it into the public schools system. We encourage all partners in the public education system to make similar decisions, to free up dollars to use in the classrooms of the province of Manitoba. Of course, we are not interested in having any decisions being made that are going to have a negative impact on the classrooms; rather our determination is to have positive impacts on the classrooms.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, since the Minister has imposed a June 30 deadline for voluntary amalgamation, will the Minister inform this House when he will release his amalgamation plan, including his preferred boundaries, so school divisions do have the direction and information needed to make their decisions?

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, there are no imposed deadlines whatsoever. There have never been any releases or statements or press conferences or policy decisions that impose school division amalgamations. Misinformation on this matter should be put to rest.

Mr. Speaker, again, it is what I have been saying over the last eight months on this issue. As has been reported in the media, as has been

part of our ongoing consultation with the field, we are strongly encouraging thoughtful discussion—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (14:00)

Mr. Caldwell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are strongly encouraging thoughtful discussions, serious discussions at the local level, in partnership with neighbouring divisions, in partnership with the Department of Education, to free up resources where they are better utilized in the classrooms of the province of Manitoba.

Post-Secondary Education Funding

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): My question is to the Minister of Education, and it has to do with Manitoba universities. At the present time, Mr. Speaker, the universities have stated time and time again that they are being forced, due to the directives issued to them by this Minister of Education, to cut staff programs and also equipment purchases as a result of the decree of this minister. In this way, this limits the ability of students to access programs at our universities, and indeed students today are looking at other universities because they will not be able to access the programs they need at our universities.

My question to the Minister: Can he outline for the House and for Manitobans today exactly which programs and courses and faculties will no longer have courses available to students as a result of his directive?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans, students, academics, board members, trustees know that the consistent cutbacks in post-secondary education implemented year after year after year are the cause of the problems that universities and community colleges are currently facing in the province of Manitoba.

I am very proud, Mr. Speaker, as are members on this side of the House, for providing historic levels of increases to the post-secondary system this year, in stark contrast to the record

of the members opposite. We will continue to work with universities and community colleges to repair the tremendous damage that was done to the post-secondary institutions over the past decade as we move through our mandate.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, we have never had administrators, people at the university level speak out in the way that they are speaking out about the funding this year. My question to the Minister of Education is whether or not he can outline which university departments and faculties are now going to be losing staff as a result of his directives, and how many positions will be lost at the universities.

Mr. Caldwell: Of course, Mr. Speaker, as members opposite know, management decisions taken at the post-secondary institutions are within the purview of those institutions.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister makes my point. Universities today cannot retain students. They cannot attract students. My question to the Minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order, the Honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On a point of order again, Mr. Speaker. There is no preamble that is available to the Member when he has a supplementary question. Would you please ask him to put a question plain and simple.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the Honourable Government House Leader, he does have a point of order.

Beauchesne's Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Honourable Member for Russell to please put his question.

Mr. Derkach: I want to ask the Minister of Education how our universities are to retain

students, how are they to attract students as they have done in the past, and how are they to remain competitive in this global education environment, if you like, when this minister has issued directives which pose the universities an inability to create revenue and to stay competitive in our global education environment.

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, universities and community colleges have not had such support in over a decade. In stark contrast to the year after year after year of successive cutbacks that universities and post-secondary institutions in this province were forced to endure during the past decade, this government is proud—

Mr. Speaker: Order, the Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. *Beauchesne's* 417: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

Mr. Speaker, I have been listening very carefully to the answers of this minister. That is all he does, every time he rises, is provokes debate and puts misinformation on the record.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind all honourable members, when the Speaker rises, *Beauchesne's* Citation 168 says: When rising to preserve order or to give a ruling the Speaker must always be heard in silence.

Also, I would like to remind all honourable members that a point of order is a very serious matter, and I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members when we are dealing on a point of order.

The Honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Mackintosh: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. The answer was dealing with the matter raised. If the Opposition feels that it was provoking debate, it was because it did provoke them, and they should be provoked on this issue.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all ministers that, according to *Beauchesne's* Citation 417, answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and to not provoke debate.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Honourable Minister to please conclude his answer.

Mr. Caldwell: The facts are that, over the last decade, year after year of cuts to post-secondary institutions devastated, in many respects, capital resources of institutions, operating budgets of institutions—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Laurendeau: Mr. Speaker, you might want to bring to the Minister's attention that you have made a ruling, and you have asked him to answer the question. If the Honourable Minister does not agree with your ruling, all he has to do is challenge it.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Mackintosh: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, the directive from you to the Minister was to answer the question, and that indeed is what he was doing. The question, as I understood it, was soliciting a response as to why the university was taking certain actions. The Minister got up and explained that the actions of the university are due to the neglect and the abandonment of post-secondary education by the members opposite for 10 or 12 years.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I would just like to, once again, remind all ministers that according to *Beauchesne's* Citation 417, answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and to not provoke debate.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Honourable Minister of Education to please conclude his answer.

Mr. Caldwell: As I was concluding my remarks, the reality of post-secondary institutions right now is a very severe one. It is a consequence of a decade of severe funding cuts. The Member asked what this government is doing to change that situation. This year this government is very pleased to make a commitment to tuition cuts to university students and college students in the province of Manitoba as well as a reintroduction of a bursary program which makes post-secondary institutions in Manitoba more attractive than it has been in a decade for young people to access and participate in college education.

Sustainable Development Procurement Guidelines

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question to the Minister of Conservation: Under The Sustainable Development Act, and I quote: Within two years after the coming into force of the Act, and that is by the date of last Saturday, July 1 of this year, the Cabinet shall establish sustainable development procurement guidelines and goals and cause the guidelines to be integrated into provincial procurement manuals and procedures.

* (14:10)

The guidelines and goals were not submitted as part of the Sustainable Development Strategy the Minister tabled last week. I ask the Minister if he will table in the Legislature today the sustainable development procurement guidelines and goals and the documents containing the provincial procurement manuals and procedures incorporating those guidelines.

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): I thank the Member for the question. As I have said in responses to previous questions from members opposite, when we came into government here last fall, there was a need to review the whole program with a view to improving it and enhancing it and to make sure that there was some sense of balance put into the system where emphasis would be placed on

environmental management. I want to advise the Member that those guidelines that he is referring to are currently being worked on and will be tabled as soon as they become available.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary: In failing to meet the legal requirements for the Sustainable Development Strategy, is the Minister breaching the laws of this province because he believes the Government is above the law?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise the Member for River Heights that, yes, we are very concerned with the environment, just as I am sure he is, otherwise why would he be asking the questions.

As a matter of fact, today, Mr. Speaker, there was a news release put out by the World Wildlife Fund of Canada. I am pleased to report to the Assembly that Manitoba ranks quite high in the rating that is given by the WWF.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Premier: How can the Premier expect ordinary citizens to meet legal deadlines for things like drivers' licences when his government, with all the resources at its disposal, cannot meet the straightforward and simple legal time requirements for conditions like the Sustainable Development Strategy?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, when we came to office, over 60 percent of the time had expired that was put in the Environment and Sustainable Development acts without any implementation strategy that we had discovered in transition and in government.

This minister, in the first eight months, has done more work to implement the law and the Sustainable Development Strategy. He has brought in—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order.

Mr. Doer: We did make our announcement prior to July 1. We are still working on the procurement policies that are important to be completed. It is very important, Mr. Speaker, that we recognize that this minister has brought

in a policy to prevent the sale of bulk water from the Hudson Bay watershed. That is a positive step forward.

It is important to note the work he has done on the east side of Lake Winnipeg to protect the boreal forest, something the members opposite did not do. The Member opposite asked a question about time lines a couple of days ago, Mr. Speaker. The Chief Electoral Officer's report, the '99 report, has not been finished in its printing. The '98 report has been released, and members opposite may want to know that our House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) will call the Committee on Privileges and Elections, and we will have to deal with the reports from the Chief Electoral Officer from '88, from 1990, from '93, '95, '98 and '99, because members opposite never did it.

Persons with Disabilities Vocational Rehabilitation

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question on behalf of my constituents who live with a disability. Many of them have had long waiting lists for vocational rehab, and a number of those people would be able to work. They would be willing to work if they had the support required. I want to ask the appropriate minister to tell the House what progress is being made in this area.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I would think that the hundred thousand or so Manitobans who have disabilities would be most interested in the behaviour of the Opposition in regard to this issue.

When I was in opposition, Mr. Speaker, I had constituents, like the constituents of the Member for Radisson and I daresay constituents of a number of members opposite, who could not get training, could not get voc rehab services because there were no increases, no increases to that budget in 10 years. I am pleased to tell the Honourable Member and all honourable members that an additional \$400,000 has been

made available in this budget to begin to cut down the waiting lists for people who want training because they want to work. They have got disabilities. This opposition does not seem to care about those people, and that is a shame.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very hard to hear the question.

First Nations Casinos Public Consultations

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): It is always encouraging to see such enthusiasm across the way in regard to some of their problems. I should mention, I forgot to either congratulate or give condolence to the new minister of gambling. Pardon me. I am sorry. I apologize. The Minister responsible for Gaming. I apologize for that, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:20)

I find it very passing strange. Here we have the Minister, who was such a great advocate when we were privatizing a Crown corporation, who is now head of the privatization of gambling, gaming, here in Manitoba.

I want to ask this Minister responsible for Gaming—yesterday, in his answers, he talked about "a balanced approach" in regard to looking at gaming here in Manitoba, and a balanced approach seemed to be a part of all his answers.

I want to ask the Minister: Will he be taking a different direction in regard to the casino expansion here in Manitoba, asking for public input and public consultation, before the casinos go into the communities?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I talked about getting an orange book published. I have my orange folder, and I note that when the members opposite yesterday went through my quotations in Hansard, they conveniently left out July 8 of last year in which I criticized the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) for the double standard the previous government showed in terms of

aboriginal gaming versus their own gaming. So, in fact, I have had quite a history, along with all members in this House who are saying that Aboriginal people should have the same opportunities as a level of government in this province, that the provincial government had before.

I want to suggest to members opposite, who saw VLT revenue go from \$4.9 million in 1991-92 to \$129 million in '98-99, that they should have the nerve to stand in this House and talk about anything to do with gaming policy. What we are doing on First Nations is involving communities, dealing with the social concerns, and we will do things that the Conservative members opposite never even considered for the 11 years they were in office.

Mr. Reimer: I want to ask that minister over there. Let me ask you a question, Mr. Minister.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Reimer: The Minister just made a quote about my honourable colleague from Lac du Bonnet. I will ask him whether he stands behind a quote that was said by the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) on June 2, 1998: I think it is deplorable when governments encourage gambling in a massive way to get more people to spend more money, in spite of the harmful consequences in individuals and families. Does he agree with that statement?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you can copyright certain things in this House, but I think that was copyright infringement.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I brought in an orange folder with what I said on the record in the last decade, and you know it was interesting. I wanted to bring in a blue folder with what members opposite had said when they took VLT revenue and they increased it by 26 times and the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. *Beauchesne's* 417: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

If the Honourable Minister wants to quote from his tale from two Steves, he is welcome to do so, but we would like him to answer the question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I would like to remind the Honourable Minister that according to *Beauchesne's* Citation 417: Answers to questions should be brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and to not provoke debate.

I would like to also remind all honourable members that, when referring to other honourable members, they are referred to by constituency or by their official title.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Highways, please conclude your answer.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, my point was I could not bring in a folder with quotes from members opposite because, apart from the ministers, I can barely find any reference to any of the concerns that have been raised by many people throughout the province from members opposite.

Many of the members who stood yesterday never said a word in a decade about gaming in this province. What we said in opposition is we wanted a balanced approach. We want to recognize up front the social costs of gambling. That is included in this proposal. We wanted equal treatment for Aboriginal people who are a part of this province, who are a level of government. We wanted them to have the same opportunities that they had opposite, and we wanted a community say. As part of the package we brought in, every host community will have a say over whether a casino is located in that community, something that the Conservatives never did.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Manitoba Highway Map

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): In the rotunda of the Legislature at high noon today Highways Minister Steve Ashton unveiled the new official highway map for Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would just like to remind the Honourable Member for Flin Flon to refer to other members by constituencies or ministers by their titles.

Mr. Jennissen: In the rotunda of the Legislature at high noon today, the Highways Minister unveiled the new official highway map for Manitoba. It was quite an impressive ceremony, starting with two young women from Nelson House singing O Canada! in Cree. The minister spoke on the cultural diversity of Manitoba which is symbolized on the back of the map by the word "welcome" in 26 different languages, including all aboriginal languages of Manitoba. As well, many representatives from diverse cultures brought readings in their own language.

As a northern MLA, it is particularly gratifying for me to note that the new map includes all of Manitoba. In other words, the North is on the map finally. On behalf of all northerners and I believe all Manitobans I thank the Minister for that. Some may see this new larger map as a symbolic gesture only, but for us northerners it is an important gesture. I am also pleased to note that the map contains winter roads, something omitted from previous maps. Again, that omission in the past made northerners feel that their road links were not deemed important. Just to see those dotted lines on the map representing winter roads gives me a confident feeling that some of those dotted lines will soon become solid lines. In other words, the road network needs to be extended in order to bring remote and isolated communities, mainly in northern and northeastern Manitoba, into the transportation network of the 21st century. This gives hope to Pukatawagan, to York Landing, to Ilford, to South Indian Lake, to Pikwitonei, to Thicket Portage and others.

* (14:30)

Already, in conjunction with the federal government, this minister and this government have significantly improved the winter road links to Brochet, Lac Brochet and Tadoule Lake. Great progress has been made in the last few months, and we expect even more in the future.

The new highway map is a visible sign or symbol of a government that recognizes the importance of transportation for all Manitobans and is part of a larger vision, part of a larger progressive initiative to bring Manitoba's transportation links into the 21st century.

Pioneer Days

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to bring members' attention to an annual event which will take place in my constituency on the August long weekend. Once again residents of the Steinbach constituency are preparing for the annual Pioneer Days event in recognition and celebration of the Mennonite heritage and the many settlers who came to Manitoba to make a home in southern Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, the heritage and history of the Mennonite people, I think, is relatively well known by members of this Chamber, but Pioneer Days offers all residents of Manitoba a chance to see how early settlers lived their lives on a day-to-day basis. The majority of events will take place at the Mennonite Heritage Museum on August 4, 5, 6, and 7, where visitors can see the operation of a windmill, bread baked in earth ovens, threshing demonstrations and a variety of other activities which typified the life of early settlers.

I note as well, Mr. Speaker, that in the gallery today we have with us Mr. Harv Klassen who served as the executive director of the Mennonite Museum in Steinbach for many years and was instrumental in helping the museum grow and achieve financial success. In addition, he received recognition from the Department of Tourism for the work he has done for Manitoba and served on the Manitoba Heritage Council for the past few years, and did so very capably.

Mr. Speaker, the members on this side of the House recognize the significant contributions members of my constituency have made to the preservation of our province's heritage. I would hope that the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. McGifford) would take this into consideration when she composes boards such as the Heritage Grants Advisory Council and the Manitoba Heritage Council.

In conclusion, I would like to invite all members of this Chamber to bring their family and friends to Steinbach this August long weekend to enjoy the heritage of our province. Thank you.

Collège Jeanne-Sauvé

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): Le 29 juin 2000 j'ai eu le plaisir d'assister à la remise des diplômes du Collège Jeanne-Sauvé, école secondaire d'immersion à Saint-Vital. Mon fils, Lee, a été finissant du Collège il y a cinq ans et j'étais très fière de rétablir mes liens avec cette école.

M. Edward Labossière, maître des cérémonies, nous a accueillis avec ses mots de bienvenue. M. Christian Michalik, directeur, a partagé son message à l'occasion de la distribution des diplômes à 112 finissants et finissantes. Mlle. Selena Papetti, finissante, nous a souhaités la bienvenue au nom des finissants et des finissantes. Julia et Lauren Sharma ont prononcé le discours d'adieu.

Plusieurs prix et bourses ont été présentées par les invités et les enseignants, y compris le Prix de la députée de Riel que j'ai donné à Graham MacFarlane, finissant de l'an 2000.

Cette année marque le dixième anniversaire du Collège Jeanne-Sauvé. Cette soirée était le dernier événement public pour M. Norbert Philippe, directeur général de la division scolaire, qui prenait sa retraite après 26 ans à Saint-Vital. Monsieur Labossière, enseignant au Collège depuis son ouverture, disait au revoir à l'enseignement le 30 juin. Bonne chance à ces deux éducateurs à l'avenir.

Félicitations aux finissants et finissantes de l'an 2000 qui ont mérité un diplôme en immersion française. Bravo aux parents qui ont

choisi une éducation française pour leurs jeunes. Merci. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

On June 29, 2000, I had the pleasure of attending the graduation ceremony at Collège Jeanne-Sauvé, a secondary immersion school in St. Vital. My son, Lee, graduated from that school five years ago and I was proud to re-establish my links with his school. Mr. Edward Labossière, who was the master of ceremonies, welcomed us with his opening remarks. Mr. Christian Michalik, the Principal, shared his message on the occasion of the distribution of diplomas to 112 graduates.

Ms. Selena Papetti, a graduating student, welcomed us on behalf of the graduating class. Julia and Lauren Sharma made the farewell speech.

Several prizes and scholarships were presented by the guests and teachers, including the Member for Riel Prize which I gave to Graham MacFarlane, a graduate for the year 2000. This year marks the 10th anniversary of Collège Jeanne-Sauvé, and that evening was the final public event for Mr. Norbert Philippe, the Superintendent of the school division who was retiring after 26 years in St. Vital. Mr. Labossière, a teacher at the Collège since it opened, was bidding farewell to teaching on June 30. Good luck to these two educators in the future.

Congratulations to the graduates for the year 2000 who received a diploma in French immersion. Bravo to the parents who chose French education for their young people. Thank you.

Russell Statue Restoration

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Today I rise to make a very unusual kind of private member's statement, one that is an issue that has some sadness to it but indeed has a happy ending.

Mr. Speaker, the town of Russell received a longed-for Canada Day present last weekend, and I was very happy to learn that the head of the memorial statue of a soldier that was

vandalized last Halloween was returned and recovered by the RCMP.

This statue, a monument that was erected in 1922, is an important symbol for the community. Damage to the head is said to be minor, and the town will be getting professional advice on whether to reattach the head or go ahead with plans that were in place in order to repair the statue to its former condition. With the return of the statue's head, the work will be cheaper than originally estimated at \$15,000.

In March of this year, Second Lieutenant Clarence Lazaruk of the Russell Air Cadet Squadron secured a grant to help pay for the \$11,000 reconstruction of the statue's head from the Department of National Defence. As well, \$1,000 has been donated locally to the town's fund for the statue's repair. Calgary sculptor Gernot Kiefer has agreed to create the new part from the same type of granite used in the statue's original construction in the 1920s.

I would like to commend Second Lieutenant Clarence Lazaruk, the Russell Air Cadet Squadron and all of those involved with the restoration of the statue. I would also like to commend those who returned the statue's head for having the courage to do the right thing. Due to the efforts of the people of Russell, an important part of the town's history and heritage will be restored to its original form. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ernest Abas

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to a constituent of mine named Ernest Abas, who lives in the Hodgson area in the R.M. of Fisher. Mr. Abas has been a municipal councillor there for many years now, but he has also served his people in another capacity in that he has been a volunteer weather watcher for Environment Canada for more than 30 years. For this selfless contribution to society, Mr. Abas was recently given the Environment Canada Long-Term Service Award by the national government.

Ernie began his stint as a weather observer in the late 1960s after the mass closure of rural train stations led Environment Canada to seek

local volunteers to take up the task. As part of his position, he is responsible for checking and logging the readings on official equipment located at his house each day. His input and contribution to the overall picture has been very helpful to the farming community, in particular, as weather plays such an integral role in their daily lives.

On behalf of the people of the Interlake and the Government of Manitoba, I thank Mr. Abas for his contribution. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wish to announce that the Public Utilities and Natural Resources Committee will meet on Tuesday, July 11, at 10 a.m., to consider Bill 15.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Public Utilities and Natural Resources Committee will meet on Tuesday, July 11, at 10 a.m., to consider Bill 15.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I wish to obtain the unanimous consent of the House to vary the sequence for Estimates consideration set out in Sessional Paper 138 to consider in Room 254 the Estimates of the Department of Family Services and Housing to follow after Capital Investments.

Mr. Speaker, these changes are to apply until further notice.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): I would ask if the Government House Leader could give consideration to moving the Healthy Child Initiative over. It also falls under the same minister's area. It is the next one following.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I would add to that then the Healthy Child Initiative if there is consent.

Mr. Speaker: Is there consent for, in Room 254, Family Services to follow Healthy Child and Capital Investments until further notice? Agreed?

Order. In Room 254, Family Services and Housing to follow after Capital Investments and Healthy Child to follow after Capital Investments as well. Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, before considering Supply motion, would you please call debate on second readings, Bill 41.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 41—The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), Bill 41, The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'équilibre budgétaire, le remboursement de la dette et la protection des contribuables et modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Fort Whyte.

* (14:40)

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I am pleased to see debate on this bill proceed, and I would like to concede the floor to the Member for Kirkfield Park.

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): I am pleased to make a few comments today on this bill and on these proposed amendments. First of all, recognizing that this legislation is quite unique in many respects, one of the reasons is, I think as all members know, that this legislation requires, I believe, seven days' notice in terms of moving it forward to committee to ensure that there is adequate and reasonable opportunity for Manitobans to have time enough to make representation if a government is to propose any amendments to the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of looking at this legislation, I want to reflect back to November of 1995 when this legislation was first passed. I think anybody who looks at the comments made at that time will recall and will see that the analysts and the financial community called this legislation the most comprehensive and the

strongest in all of Canada. They were extremely complimentary of this legislation.

Again, I think, it is important to remember that this legislation has three very important elements: It requires that we balance our budgets each and every year in the Province of Manitoba; it also put in place a debt retirement plan to ultimately eliminate our general purpose debt over no more than 30 years; and, of course, it also included an element of taxpayer protection where taxes could not be increased in the Province of Manitoba without a province-wide referendum, and the taxes covered by this legislation were personal income tax, corporation taxes, the payroll tax and the retail sales tax, Mr. Speaker.

What was interesting, of course, during the debate when this bill was first introduced were the comments and the attitude taken by the Official Opposition of the day at that particular point in time. When we get to third reading of this bill, Mr. Speaker, I will make a point of bringing in excerpts from Hansard and the comments made by many members who at that point in time were in opposition. Of course, we know at that particular point in time, the NDP opposition opposed this legislation right down the line, and they ultimately voted against this legislation.

What was even more telling were the kinds of comments made by many members who were in opposition at that time, referring to this legislation as the laughing stock of the country, saying that it was not possible to balance the books each and every year, that that was ridiculous, that it should be balanced on a cycle and so on.

Of course, today, we see the conversion of those members opposite where they are supporting with this legislation all of those fundamental aspects that were put in place and passed back in 1995. In fact, when the government of the day today, when they put out their release around the proposed amendments, the Minister concluded by noting that the proposed changes do not affect the requirements for balancing the Operating Fund, nor do they alter any of the penalties for non-compliance, and that requirements for a referendum before increasing major taxes also remain unchanged. So it is

interesting that when the bill was first introduced and passed back in 1995, members opposite opposed all of those fundamental aspects, and, today, not only are they supporting them, but they are making a point of highlighting their support for those very important aspects of the legislation, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of the explanatory notes under Bill 41, as we get to committee, we will be asking some questions. I think it is important for all of us to get a very clear understanding of how the Committee deals with the Debt Retirement Fund Allocation Committee, I believe it is called in the Act, which I believe will be chaired by the Deputy Minister of Finance and will also consist of I believe four other individuals appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. We will want to get further clarity from the Minister and from the government exactly how that committee will function and details around their responsibilities and so on. There is reference in the legislation to some parameters around the Committee, but we will certainly be looking forward to a more detailed explanation from the Minister at that time.

I also note that the legislation, of course, is being amended to include a debt repayment for the pension liability that exists for the Government of Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, that is a positive step that we support, and we will be looking for further details from the Minister. He has referenced some of them in the Budget document and in this document in terms of the allocations between the general purpose debt of the Province of Manitoba, and, of course, the pension liabilities. So, again, I am sure we will receive further details around those very important issues.

The legislation also deals with some changes as proposed by the Provincial Auditor in terms of the treatment of transfers from our Debt Retirement Fund and our Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Those certainly are appropriate recommendations and changes to the legislation.

So it is very interesting. With these amendments, Mr. Speaker, the overriding direction of the legislation in terms of balancing the books, paying down the debt and taxpayer protection are all being maintained by the Government, and

we applaud that. We are pleased to see that because they are very important for the future of this province.

What is very telling is the conversion of those members opposite from the kinds of comments that they made back in 1995, the kinds of comments they made even subsequent to the legislation and this tremendous conversion we are seeing today where they recognize that Manitobans expect their governments to be fiscally responsible. They expect their governments to balance the books every year. They expect their governments to pay down the debt. They expect their governments not to increase taxes. In fact, they expect their governments to be reducing taxes.

In fact, I noticed in the recent poll released by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that just under 50 percent of Manitobans did not expect this government to reduce taxes. That is a very telling percentage, Mr. Speaker. Again, I think it was reflected in this budget, because, again, most who have analyzed this budget from a tax perspective have come to the conclusion that this 2000 budget fell very short in the whole area of taxes. So it is important to maintain the taxpayer protection aspects of this legislation that were put in place back in 1995. I am pleased to see that none of those fundamental issues are, in fact, being changed with the proposed amendments.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of looking at the other explanatory notes, I notice the one other aspect is the proposal to change the title of the Bill to The Balanced Budget Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Accountability Act. The word "accountability" is replacing "protection." I am assuming, and with the amendments that have been put in place that are not changing some of that protection, "accountability" encompasses the protection for taxpayers. Once again, recognizing that the accountability aspect still includes the protection for taxpayers, that amendment does not seem to be problematic.

But, Mr. Speaker, we will be looking forward to seeing whether or not these proposed amendments draw reaction from the public. As I had indicated, the requirement is for the seven days' notice for the public to be able to attend

and participate at committee. But, on an overall basis, we are certainly pleased that the Government has seen fit to support all of the key substantive elements of the legislation that currently exist in Manitoba. It was described as the most comprehensive, the strongest in all of Canada. I believe it still is today, and we are very pleased that the legislation that we pioneered in this province, that we introduced and we had passed as a government is being maintained by this government today.

* (14:50)

With those very brief comments today we are certainly prepared to move this bill to committee to hear first-hand from Manitobans who may want to appear and participate and bring forward their views of the legislation. We will have some questions at committee that might well lead to proposed amendments during that process, and, certainly, when we get back here for third reading, we will have an opportunity to speak further at length about the importance of this legislation, about some of the things that members opposite said about this legislation back in 1995, about this tremendous conversion of theirs, this basic flip-flop of theirs over this period of time in terms of now supporting this legislation which they spoke so much against and adamantly opposed just a few years ago.

So we are pleased to see that they have converted, that they are now supporting the legislation we introduced in the past, just like we saw them support our 1999 budget. That certainly, I believe, is a compliment to our vision and our foresight in introducing this legislation that the current government of the day has seen fit to endorse and continues to support, that recognizes the very important aspect of keeping that legislation in place.

So I very much look forward to further debate on this legislation and to hearing from Manitobans. With those few words, we are prepared to move these amendments to committee, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, just to speak briefly, I am ready to proceed to committee with this bill and listen to

the wishes of the citizens of Manitoba and look forward to the discussion at the committee stage.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 41, The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I would like to move, seconded by the Minister for Culture (Ms. McGifford), that the 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.

Committee Changes

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) for Inkster (Ms. Barrett); Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway); Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Mr. Selinger: I wish to announce that the Law Amendments Committee will meet on Monday, July 17, at 10 a.m., to consider the following bill: Bill 41.

Mr. Speaker: It is announced that the Law Amendments Committee will meet on Monday, July 17, at 10 a.m., to consider the following bill: Bill 41. *[Agreed]*

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On House business, Mr. Speaker, does that give us the seven clear days required by the

legislation? Is it seven sitting days? *[interjection]* Seven days. Okay.

Mr. Speaker: It does give the seven days.

Mr. Selinger: I move, seconded by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. McGifford), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS

* (15:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

When the Committee last sat, there had been agreement to have a global discussion on an entire department. Is that still the will of the Committee? *[Agreed]*

We are on line 1.(b) Administration and Finance, Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$323,700. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): I would just like to read one short paragraph into the record and then we will close it, this being from the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, Statement of Policy and Resolution: The goal of any legislation governing competition in business should be to maximize public well-being through the most efficient use of resources. This objective can best be achieved by allowing the competitive market process to determine the method by which resources are allocated.

The aim of legislation, in our view, should be to ensure that effective competition is main-

tained and the consumer is protected against abuses of market power. The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce believes that it is important that a proper balance be struck between consumer protection and efficiency in order that industry has sufficient flexibility to seek new ways of achieving efficiency and preparing itself for greater competition on a global base.

Having said that, I would accept the passage of the Consumer and Corporate Affairs Estimates.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I thank the Member for that statement. I just want to state that today I received the answers to the questions I took as notice yesterday. I could provide those either verbally now or certainly I can provide something in writing to the Member as soon as possible, whichever he would prefer. It might take some time to read it into the record now. I guess I am posing the question back to my critic from Steinbach.

Mr. Jim Penner: Mr. Chairman, there are three pages here, part of three pages, questions on the Residential Tenancies Branch. Could I just add these to that, the other questions, and then they can be submitted in writing?

Mr. Lemieux: Yes. I think that is a fair way to proceed. As soon as you can provide me with those questions, if I cannot answer them directly, I will certainly ask my staff to look at the questions and at the earliest possible date get back to the Member for Steinbach, the critic for Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

At this time, I am wondering if I could just conclude also by making a short statement. I would just like to comment, not only on the professionalism of the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner) in the way he addressed his questions, but the sincerity in which they were asked. Whether they be questions with regard to Churchill or otherwise, they were questions that he asked from the heart and from the sincere approach that he has taken.

As the Minister responsible for this department, it certainly is much appreciated because I sat in on a couple of other occasions on other

ministers when they were being grilled. I just wanted to say to the Member for Steinbach that I appreciate his sincerity, and I appreciate his professionalism with which he conducted himself.

* (15:10)

I would like to conclude by saying that I just want to thank my staff for being here. I want to state that, with regard to being a new Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, it certainly has been an experience. I want to pass along an invitation at any time for my critic, the Member for Steinbach, certainly on an informal basis, if he has any questions related to the Department in which he is a critic for, to approach me at any time. I would certainly be willing to try to assist him in any way.

I just want to say that the Department itself is certainly trying to adhere to its goals and objectives in the criteria that have been laid out by the Department. I made mention in my earlier remarks on many positive things that the previous government has **done**. I mentioned about life lease, which is truly, I think, a really important piece of legislation that they pursued. It is very good consumer legislation.

Also, I know that there are going to be some initiatives that we are going to be taking, whether they be the continuation of BSI and other areas and having that going to personal property or other areas, whether they be special operating agencies or other areas within my department. I know some of them are a continuation of the previous administration, but also we have some new initiatives. I would be pleased, prior to introducing anything like that, to certainly inform my critic, the Member for Steinbach, of those initiatives.

So, on that note, Mr. Chair, I just want to thank you for the opportunity as a new minister to present my Estimates.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Chairperson, I have a friendly question for the Minister.

I wonder if he could provide me with a copy of the questions and answers that were submitted

by the critic on the Residential Tenancies legislation. I would be interested in it since I helped write the legislation in the late 1980s and was here when it was passed. It affects a lot of my constituents, and I would be very interested in the answers and the questions.

Mr. Jim Penner: I have no objection.

Mr. Chairperson: Shall we go on with passing the lines? [*Agreed*]

We will start with 5.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$323,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$49,700—pass.

1.(c) Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$553,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$161,500—pass; (3) Less: Recoverable from Legislative Assembly (\$171,900)—pass.

1.(d) Research and Planning (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$163,800. The item is passed accordingly.

An Honourable Member: Accordingly passed.

Mr. Chairperson: 5.1.(d)(2) Other Expenditures \$32,400. The item is accordingly passed.

An Honourable Member: There, you have got it.

Mr. Chairperson: I always think the adverb follows the verb, if you want to speak in correct grammar. We will continue.

5.1.(e) First Nations Casino Selection Committee \$173,900—pass.

1.(f) Vital Statistics Agency.

2. Consumer Affairs (a) Consumers' Bureau (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$897,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$219,600—pass.

2.(b) Residential Tenancies Branch (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,453,000—pass; Other Expenditures \$696,600—pass.

2.(c) Automobile Injury Compensation Appeals Commission (1) Salaries and Employee

Benefits \$483,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$122,400—pass.

2.(d) Residential Tenancies Commission (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$454,600—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$109,600—pass.

2.(e) Grants \$87,700—pass.

Resolution 5.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,523,800 for Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Consumer Affairs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

3. Corporate Affairs (a) Financial Institutions Regulation (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$706,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$303,600—pass.

3.(b) Public Utilities Board (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$597,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$751,200—pass.

3.(c) Manitoba Securities Commission.

3.(d) Property Registry.

3.(e) Companies Office.

Resolution 5.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,358,700 for Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Corporate Affairs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 5.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$229,900 for Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Amortization of Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs is item 1. Administration and Finance (a) Minister's Salary \$27,300—pass.

* (15:20)

Resolution 5.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,314,000 for Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply is the Estimates of the Department of Employee Pensions and Other Costs.

Shall we briefly recess to allow the Minister and the critics the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next set of Estimates? *[Agreed]*

The Committee recessed at 3:21p.m.

The Committee resumed at 3:24 p.m.

EMPLOYEE PENSIONS AND OTHER COSTS

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Employee Pensions and Other Costs. Does the Honourable Minister of Employee Pensions and Other Costs have an opening statement?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): No.

Mr. Chairperson: No opening statement. We thank the Minister for his comments, very brief. Does the Official Opposition critic, the Honourable Member for Kirkfield Park, have any opening comments?

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): I will be just as brief and eloquent.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank you for those statements. We will now proceed to line 6.1(a) Civil Service Superannuation Plan \$50,344,100. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I think I know the answer to the question, but I want to confirm it. Could the Minister just outline the reason for the increase in the year 2000 from 1999?

Mr. Selinger: As I am sure the former minister understands, it is simply the match for the service on a pay-as-you-go basis for civil servants that are retired and eligible for the benefits.

Mr. Stefanson: No further questions, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: 6.1.(a) Civil Service Superannuation Plan \$50,344,100—pass.

1.(b) Other Salary Related Benefits \$3,500,000—pass.

1.(c) Workers' Compensation Board (1) Assessments re: Accidents to Government Employees \$3,816,000—pass; (2) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations \$3,801,000.

1.(d) Canada Pension Plan \$19,466,000. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, again, I am assuming the increased cost here is driven by the increase in the maximum pensionable earnings, and as a result of that the contributions by employees and employers.

Mr. Selinger: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: 6.1.(d) Canada Pension Plan \$19,466,000—pass.

1.(e) Employment Insurance Plan \$17,747,400—pass.

1.(f) Civil Service Group Life Insurance \$1,645,600—pass.

1.(g) Dental Plan \$5,845,500—pass.

1.(h) Long Term Disability Plan \$3,497,000—pass.

1.(j) Ambulance and Hospital Semi-Private Plan \$308,700—pass.

1.(k) Vision Care \$1,052,400—pass.

1.(m) Levy for Health and Post-Secondary Education \$13,803,400—pass.

1.(n) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations \$63,366,000—pass.

Resolution 6.1.: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$53,859,100 for Employee Pensions and Other Costs for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes Employee Pensions and Other Costs.

The next department is Enabling Appropriations.

* (15:30)

ENABLING APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): Does the Minister responsible have an opening statement?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): No.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the opposition critic have an opening statement?

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): No.

Mr. Chairperson: The Minister's staff may join our minister here at the table.

We will look at 26.1. Canada-Manitoba Enabling Vote (a) Winnipeg Development Agreement (1) Operating Grants \$765,700—pass; (2) Capital Grants \$501,000—pass.

1.(b) Flood Proofing Programs (1) Capital Grants \$6,895,900. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Stefanson: I am just wondering whether or not the Minister has a breakdown of the potential allocation in this area, and, if so, if he could provide it or if he could undertake to provide what he is expecting this amount to be allocated towards for the year 2000-2001.

Mr. Selinger: Are you talking about Flood Proofing Programs?

This allocation continues the work that was started under the flood-proofing programs arising out of the '97 flood, and we would be happy to give you a breakdown. We have the information here, and, as the Member knows, this really represents 20 percent of the total amount allocated to that. We will give you a full breakdown. We have it available. If you want it now, we can do it.

Mr. Stefanson: The Minister can just forward it.

Mr. Chairperson: 1.(b) Flood Proofing Programs (1) Capital Grants \$6,895,900—pass; (2) Infrastructure \$545,000—pass.

1.(c) Framework Agreement on Treaty Land Entitlements \$450,000—pass.

1.(d) General Agreement on the Promotion of Official Languages \$775,000—pass.

1.(e) Manitoba Innovations Fund \$7,000,000. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, similarly, I am wondering if the Minister could provide me with a copy of what has been committed to date against that \$7 million? I do not know if he is in a position to outline how the remainder would potentially be utilized. But, certainly, I know there have been some announcements, I believe, to date. Again, if he can undertake to provide that information.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, we will provide that information. Take that as notice.

Mr. Chairperson: 1.(e) Manitoba Innovations Fund \$7,000,000—pass; Less: Recoverable from Capital Initiatives.

1.(f) National Infrastructure Program \$4,000,000.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am just wondering if the Minister could outline fairly briefly what the status of this program currently is.

Mr. Selinger: I should first of all say that the infrastructure program is under the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), no longer the Minister of Finance. There are con-

sultations going on with the federal government. The amount of money that we had hoped to get is not as much as we had originally estimated. I think it is in the order, if this would be helpful, of \$61 million. We had expected maybe \$10 million to \$14 million more than that. Of course, it is spread out over several years, as you will know. So we had booked \$4 million here to trigger our portion of that responsibility.

Negotiations carry on. No final announcements are made. As you know, this will be driven by the electoral cycle at the federal level, but we are continuing to work to get as much of a federal contribution there as possible to infrastructure in Manitoba.

Mr. Chairperson: 1.(f) National Infrastructure Program \$4,000,000—pass.

Resolution 26.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$20,932,600 for Enabling Appropriations, Canada-Manitoba Enabling Vote, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,400,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,500,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Justice Initiatives, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution 26.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$25,000,000 for Enabling Appropriations, Internal Reform, Workforce Adjustment and General Salary Increases, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001. Shall the resolution pass?

Mr. Stefanson: A couple of questions. I am wondering first of all if the Minister could pro-

vide a reconciliation of the actuals for 1999-2000 from this account.

Mr. Selinger: I will take that as notice and try to provide that for you.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am assuming, because there are some outstanding collective agreements, I of course reference the commentary for this section, but that there is some allocation out of the \$25 million for potential settlements with employees. I am not looking for the position of the Government but that there is some allocation.

As well, could the Minister just outline what some of the other categories would be for the upcoming year in terms of utilizing this account?

Mr. Selinger: Yes, without being specific as to the proportions, there are Service First Initiatives, Service First Fund, reviews of agrolgy and veterinarian services, Management Internship Program, Aboriginal Management Development program, Executive Training Fund, Better Systems Initiative, operating and maintenance and amortization. Those are some of the categories that are included within that envelope.

* (15:40)

Mr. Stefanson: I am assuming, Mr. Chairman, that there is some allocation for potential settlements with the collective agreement.

Mr. Selinger: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution 26.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$25 million for Enabling Appropriations, Internal Reform, Workforce Adjustment and General Salary Increases, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Estimates for Enabling Appropriations.

OTHER APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): We will now move on to Other Appropriations. Does

the Minister responsible have an opening statement?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): No, I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Does the official critic have an opening statement?

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): No.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank you. We will then move on to resolution 27.1. Emergency Expenditures, Existing Programs, \$20 million. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am just wondering if the Minister could indicate how much of this \$20 million has been utilized to date.

Mr. Selinger: As the Member might recall, this appropriation includes money for disaster relief. To date that has been the main draw on it, a draw we guesstimated in the order of \$6 million to deal with fires in Manitoba up until now.

Mr. Stefanson: I realize this area can be quite volatile. Is the Minister comfortable that this is still a reasonable allocation for the year 2000-2001?

Mr. Selinger: Given the weather that we have had, it is looking good at the moment.

Mr. Chairperson: 1. Emergency Expenditures, Existing Programs, \$20 million—pass; 1997 Flood Related Expenditures.

Resolution 27.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$20 million for Other Appropriations, Emergency Expenditures, \$20 million, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

27.2. Allowance for Losses and Expenditures Incurred by Crown Corporations and Other Provincial Entities, Manitoba Potash Corporation \$250,000—pass; Venture Manitoba Tours Ltd. \$525,000. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I am just going by memory, and I know it is not the direct

responsibility for the Minister of Finance and there will be opportunities at committee at some point to deal with this corporation, but the last couple of years the financial performance of this corporation has improved fairly significantly, driven by participation at the two golf courses, with both Falcon Lake and Hecla and I think some gradual increase in occupancy rates at Gull Harbour. I am just wondering, in terms of the financial information that the Minister currently has, whether or not that continues to be the case.

Mr. Selinger: The golf courses do well. However, the Member might recall at Hecla this year there was a problem in the food services area of the Hecla resort. That had some negative publicity and that publicity reduced the amount of demand for those facilities for a while. So there has been some operating problems there. I think a short shutdown was required to clean that facility up, and some of those operational requirements still have to be attended to. Then, of course, the proper marketing has to occur to rebuild confidence in the use of that facility. So I think it has affected revenues on the motel side or hotel side of it.

Mr. Chairperson: 27.2. Venture Manitoba Tours Ltd. \$525,000—pass.

Resolution 27.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$775,000 for Other Appropriations, Allowance for Losses and Expenditures incurred by Crown Corporations and Other Provincial Entities, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

I will read Capital Initiatives which has no amounts, 27.3.; 27.4. Millennium Fund has no amounts.

This completes the Estimates for Other Appropriations.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): We will now move on to Capital Investments on page 144 of the main Estimates book. Does the Minister responsible for Capital Investment have an opening statement?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): No.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Does the official critic have an opening statement?

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): No.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. We will move on to Capital Investment.

Resolution B.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$176,200 for Capital Investment, Agriculture and Food, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$600,000 for Capital Investment, Conservation, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$89,200 for Capital Investment, Education and Training, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

I will read into the record No. 4 Family Services and Housing, which has no amount.

B.4.5. Finance (a) Better Methods Initiative \$8,000,000—pass; (b) Document Management Pilot \$186,000—pass; (c) Equipment Acquisition \$100,000—pass.

Resolution B.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,286,000 for Capital Investment, Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

* (15:50)

Resolution B.5.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding

\$4,000,000 for Capital Investment, Health, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001. Shall the resolution pass?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I know when I met with the Minister some time ago, he pointed out that the Provincial Auditor was doing a review of some aspects of the SmartHealth initiative. I am just wondering if that review has been completed and/or whether or not the Minister has received that report yet.

Mr. Selinger: I have not received the report. I am assuming that it has not been completed because of that.

Mr. Chairperson: Resolution B.5.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,000,000 for Capital Investment, Health, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

B.6.7. Highways and Government Services
(a) Highways Capital Projects \$6,122,300—pass.

(b) Government Services Capital Projects \$12,600,000—pass.

(c) Air Services Capital Projects \$1,936,300—pass.

(d) Desktop Management Initiative \$3,000,000.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.6.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$23,658,600 for Capital Investment, Highways and Government Services, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.7.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$90,000 for Capital Investment, Justice, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

Resolution B.8.9: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding

\$17,100,000 for Capital Investment, Internal Reform, Workforce Adjustment and General Salary Increases, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2001.

Resolution agreed to.

This concludes the Estimates in Capital Investment. Thank you.

FAMILY SERVICES AND HOUSING

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): We will now move on to Family Services. Do you wish to take a brief recess of about five minutes? Will the Minister's staff please come forward? This section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Family Services and Housing.

When the Committee last sat, there had been agreement to have a global discussion on the entire department. Is that still the will of the Committee? *[Agreed]*

We are on line 9.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$566,900. Shall the item pass?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Chairperson, certainly subject to my critic's clarification, but I think what we had agreed was that we were working through in order, but that we were holding the motions to pass to the very end. We are actually, I believe, at 9.2.(b), Income Assistance Programs. I am not sure whether we are at 2.(b) or 2.(c), but we are somewhere in between those two.

But we have not passed any motions. We did agree that we would just move on through the whole department and do the motions at the end, and my critic was indicating each time he was moving from one section to the next.

Mr. Chairperson: The floor is then open for questions.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): I believe I left a question open at the end of the Estimates procedure yesterday. I wonder if the Minister's memory is better than mine.

Mr. Sale: I believe that the critic's question had to do with whether we had relaxed or changed any of the standards of programs in regard to the receipt of income support. Is that the question?

Mr. Cummings: That is correct.

Mr. Sale: I think that the answer to that question is no. The Department has a very complex set of regulations that have both prescriptive and flexible components. There has been no change in the regulations or in the direct policy of the department.

Mr. Cummings: Well, I would be interested in the Minister's comments. He was fairly definitive with his derision of some of the incentive concepts that were in place in the Department and has indicated that he has made some changes in that direction. That is fine. That is certainly his prerogative. What I am interested in understanding, however, is while we have a declining caseload right now—the employment levels are good. In many cases, I think, it could be argued that we have reached a level where those who continue to be unemployed are either located in an area where it is difficult to find employment or they are individuals who have not got sufficient skills, in many cases, to maintain or accept opportunities in the workforce.

Yesterday we discussed that what we see in savings on the employment assistance side is probably being offset by the fact that there is an increasing demand for disability assistance, and I think the numbers confirm that. I have no problem with that understanding of the caseloads that are out there, but down the road, of course, this can be cyclical, and one of the things that offsets cyclical problems that, I think, continually would plague this side of government, and that is that where jobs are tied to cyclical functions in the economy, where we have some significant resource-based jobs which by their very nature can be cyclical. What is the Minister's strategy in terms of retraining, in terms of getting both those able-bodied and disabled in a position for job readiness and opportunity?

* (16:00)

I am talking about the bigger picture in the sense that, well, I am sure he is proud of the

numbers that are being shared regarding the reduced unemployment caseload or those who need assistance because of unemployment, a temporary inability to cover their costs of living and other essentials. He must be equally well aware that this can change. The only way he can win this battle, in my view, is to have a strategy to train, to provide opportunities for those who want to be in the workforce, which he says is the vast majority, and I think it probably is.

I wonder if he could share his strategies and where he sees, if he has made any changes in terms of how he would implement programs or programs that should be enhanced. Or is it simply a matter of taking the savings today and putting them into the areas that demand is calling for them? Can he indicate whether he intends to expand or enhance programs to make people more job ready as part of a long-term strategy to deal with what I believe will eventually come around?

Mr. Sale: Just before I answer that, I want to give the Member a bit of information that he asked for yesterday in terms of the sort of major staffing components of the Income Security area of our department. We were discussing what was the typical staff. That will perhaps give him a sense of how many direct line staff are intake coordinators or whatever term you want to use who are doing the direct service to clients versus administrative and other support.

I think this is an absolutely vital area that the Member is raising, Mr. Chairperson. Let me say first that when Canada decided to end the Canada Assistance Plan in 1994-95, many provinces, and I am sure his government when they were in power had this realization, but many governments perhaps did not immediately recognize the tremendous exposure which that policy change led to for provinces and territories.

Essentially what it means is that an extra session will cost the provinces 100-cent dollars. For all intents and purposes, Canada has walked away from countercyclical spending, whether it is in the employment assistance program, which covers only about 34 percent of Canadians now, or whether it is in the area of health and social transfers or post-secondary education, where essentially the costs we know always rise during

a recession for all kinds of reasons. In the past, federal expenditures used to follow provincial costs in these areas, and of course they no longer do.

It is even more important now that provinces do everything they possibly can to essentially plan for the fact that the laws of economics probably have not been repealed yet and there will at some point in the future be a recession. Nobody knows for sure when, but it would be a strange situation where we suddenly became a recession-proof world. I do not think any of us think we are in that kind of situation. So his questions are very important ones.

First of all, he asked yesterday whether we had undertaken any particular initiatives in the research area. We did undertake a very major or are in the process of working through a very major initiative with the Department of Education and Training to work with them to clarify where appropriate training takes place, whether it is under the aegis of the Department of Education and Training or whether it is under our department. That of course is in part driven by the labour market training programs that were also devolved from Canada to provinces with a relatively short—I believe the initial agreement of three years has been extended—period of time that that agreement covered in its initial stage.

We are working with the Department of Education and Training to strengthen those programs in terms of their delivery, their evaluation, and the word might be their seamlessness, so that people can get the appropriate support they need to become more independent without going through several programs to find it, and that they will not be put through cookie-cutter kinds of programs which turn out people who may be good buggy-whip makers but there may be a shortage of buggy-whip manufacturers.

Unfortunately, provinces and the federal government do not have a wonderful record of being ahead of the market in terms of being able to train for emerging jobs and for impending shortages in areas. I do not know why that is, but there are studies going back at least 30 years, going over essentially the policy failures of all levels of government to anticipate and respond to training needs and opportunities.

It is a very difficult field to be effective in based on our past records as governments. We have not been very good at this.

Our response to that has been to become more community-driven. In other words, to listen to the community groups that seem to have a handle on where the jobs are and what is needed to actually get those jobs and to keep them. I am sure the Member is aware of the Mennonite Central Committee project, Opportunities for Employment. That program is extremely effective in a particular niche of training, training for people who move into production jobs in a production environment, where you can move in at a pretty basic level and there is a career path, and the skills that are needed to get and keep those jobs are relatively teachable particularly if you work in small enough group settings.

Those kinds of programs have worked very effectively for us, but they also are programs that are limited because they are really good at getting jobs, as I said, in a production environment, a manufacturing environment, but that is not the bulk of our jobs. The bulk of our jobs today are in the service industries, particularly all the job entry level jobs are in retail and consumer service and telemarketing, those kinds of jobs. Most of them require some level of computer literacy, computer familiarization.

They certainly require punctual literacy on the job, to be able to read an instruction set, a technical manual and to be able then to over a period of time follow that set of instructions. So there is a series of job skill sets that are quite different today.

* (16:10)

I will give the Member an example of what we are trying to do in this whole area. It is based, in part, on a very successful program out of Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, where the community as a whole undertook the responsibility of trying to indicate where from the employers point of view the jobs were and the advocacy and training and employment referral organizations worked into a coalition where people were not competing with each other to get grants to provide training. They were working together

with each other's skills and particular capacities in various kinds of job training to make sure that they got the right people for their kind of training to get into the jobs that the people they worked with were ready to hire for.

Mr. Stan Struthers, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

We are working to develop that kind of a seamless approach, where someone comes into our assistance system or is already in it and we attempt to be as accurate as we can to work with them to plan their own program, what is your shortage and what are you short of, what skill, what lifestyle issues are blocking you, is it addiction, is it need for child care, is it a transportation issue, what are the things that are barriers for you, what are the skill shortages that are blocking you and what particular things do you need to be successful.

We are taking that kind of a success barrier lowering approach on a person-by-person basis with the community groups that are out there. We have a whole lot of community training groups, but in the past they did not by and large work together with each other. They competed with each other for grants, everyone coming to government separately and saying: We think we can train people really well. Fund us to do that.

Indeed, some of them are very good at what they do, but they did not work together. Unfortunately, nobody can provide all of the things that a particular person might need, and people come in unique packages, so it was very hard to say: Well, we will refer this person to this program, and we hope that there is enough of a fit that it will work for them. But very often there was not enough of a fit. So we wasted a lot of training dollars because, when you go to a particular program, you can only get what they have to offer. If there is not a job at the end of that pipeline, we have wasted your time, and we have wasted our dollars.

So we are trying to move away from that approach into a much less competitive approach among the community agencies, but with a goal of competitive employment for those who are working through that kind of network as opposed to a cookie cutter kind of program.

I think I also want to just add that the previous government started the idea of a job centre right in our employment office on Rorie Street, and we thought that was a good idea, but we thought it had to be strengthened and that it had to be linked, because simply pushing people out to temporary jobs might get them another week or two weeks' or three weeks' income, but it probably does not get them a secure path so that we do not see them again. So, while the idea of having people oriented to work before they get on assistance is a really sound idea, you have got to be sure that they are, in fact, being oriented to real work so that you are not going to see them again in six weeks or two months or three weeks.

We have added some staff resources from the Department of Education and Training. It is another piece of evidence of the collaboration between the two departments, and they, in turn, will be working with the community groups' coalitions around training. The community groups have made linkages with employers. So I think that you can see that, if you have got the people who are doing the training actually knowing where the jobs are, and they are doing training that the employers have said that is what we really need, and we are linked in our work with that group, you can see that we think there are more chances for success.

It is not that we did not have successes. We did. But we want to have more, and we want to provide people with more, with higher odds that they will get what they need the first time through and that we will not see them again.

Mr. Cummings: Yes, I appreciate the answer. I think the end goal is one that most people in relation to this responsibility would undoubtedly share. The path that we take there might vary, and I notice that the Minister put a fair bit of emphasis on community organizations working co-operatively. I appreciate that and the fact that they need to have some linkage.

I would suggest it needs to be more than a theoretical linkage. There needs to be a strong linkage to assisting people to achieve a known job opportunity. When the Minister refers to the Mennonite Opportunities for Employment program, and there are several others out there that

are very well respected, I wonder if he is also open to private agencies working in this field. Has he been or will he be open to contractual arrangements with privately run training and employment-finding organizations?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, the Member probably knows that through places like Taking Charge!, and I will think of another one, another operation that contracts some of its training. This is over in the Department of Education as opposed to in this department. There is quite significant reliance on private sector trainers. We purchase courses of a variety of kinds, computer courses, life skills. In fact, Taking Charge!, I would say that the largest single expenditure item in their budget is the purchasing of service from third parties.

I think there is a role for those kinds of accredited training programs. I think the same concern that we have about the non-profit sector is true in the private sector. That is: Is the training credentialed? Is it quality training? Do people at the end of it actually have something? I think the Member would know that the answer is mixed. There are some training opportunities out there that are pretty lousy in terms of actual results. We try to identify those through our evaluation programs and not go down the road again. There are other private training organizations, I think of Anokiiwin, for example, that have developed a very, very strong capacity particularly with First Nations and Aboriginal people who have a very good track record of training in some specific areas, particularly in that case around technical issues of computer literacy and then much more advanced network support and so forth.

So I think the answer to his question, the short answer is, yes, we use the private sector and have no hesitation in doing so, but we also have concerns for accountability and quality which go across private and non-profit.

Mr. Cummings: Well, I would relate this to item 9.2.(c) Building Independence, as I read the Employment and Income Assistance participants to enter and remain in the workforce provides links to training and employment opportunities and all of the things that are associated with that, child care and so on. In the overall thrust of the

Department, this is one aspect, one rather—it is not insignificant, but it is smaller in terms of total dollars.

I would like to know if this department, as a whole, with the various sectors that we are going to be going through, if the Minister has looked at this and asked the Department or asked himself, are we putting enough emphasis on that quality training? If we have dollars that we can save in one area, do we move them into that area in order to make that workforce more qualified and more willing to move? In some cases, if you are below par with your skills then moving is not a real good option either, because you might even find yourself in a more expensive location just to provide the basic necessities of life.

So this retraining and retraining into areas where there are known opportunities is a key to survival as far as I am concerned no matter if you are on income assistance temporarily or long term or disabled. It is key in all those areas. I do not know if I have to have a precise number, but I am interested to know if since assuming his role the Minister has evaluated the services the Department is supplying from that angle.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, let me use the example of the Taking Charge! program, which required an evaluation under the federal-provincial agreement that it was begun under. The evaluation was done by Prairie Research, and it was released I think about six, seven months ago or so. The result of that evaluation was a pretty substantial refocussing of Taking Charge!, certainly a downsizing because the federal government pulled a lot of its support, unfortunately, but also a refocussing because the evaluation found that Taking Charge! did some things well and it did some things less well. It found, for example, that Taking Charge! did not have nearly a strong enough relationship with the income support side of its client base, and we have moved to remedy that by putting a liaison person, a clearly identified liaison person in place for that. They have been challenged to look at the quality of some of the program offerings that they have contracted for in the past.

* (16:20)

So I think it is a very important question that the Member asks, and it is one that we certainly

are paying a lot of attention to. I have also asked our research staff—the Member was asking yesterday about what was being done in research. I have asked—a relatively small project—but asked that they identify more quantitative hard-outcome measures with appropriate follow-up over a reasonable length of time, so that we know that people not only got work but we know that either they did or did not stay in it for six months, nine months a year. They moved on to something else.

So those are the kinds of things that we are doing, and in my view those are kind of routine expectations that we ought to have of ourselves and of any program that we are funding, because at the end of the day most of us who get into this business want to do effective work. The only way to find out is to do some evaluation and then to say, okay, how can we do it better? So that is what we try to do.

Mr. Cummings: I hope the Minister does not think I am working backwards here, but I am staying on the same page. I see the three—maybe I am dyslexic, but the question follows that if you are putting emphasis on training and improving people's opportunity to return to the workforce, and at the same time there has been a drop in the demand on the employable side. I wonder what, if any, changes have been made in the Program Services section for any investigations of fraud or other things that occur?

I am referring to subsection 9.2.(a), I guess it is under Program Services, where one of the activities is program analysis, investigative support and overpayment recovery. I do not intend to spend a lot of time on this, but it does require I think some analysis if there has been any impact on this side or any planned changes on this side as well.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Acting Chairperson, if I could just preface my answer with what we have been saying to our community as well as to our staff. We expect a system of support to be run with respect on the one side and accountability on the other side. We have used those two kinds of concepts. We expect mutual respect. We expect clients to behave reasonably, and we expect our workers to behave with respect. We also expect accountability that people will be forthright, that people will put their best foot forward in terms

of their own efforts, and that we will do the same.

Essentially, no one that I know of wants to be on social assistance, so both the worker and the client agree that they want to have the most independence that they can have. If we are a fully disabled person, that is an independence in terms of their ability to manage their own care, maybe that is the right goal. For someone who is less disabled, it may be partial employment or sheltered employment. Perhaps somebody who is very disabled can still find a way, with our help and their efforts, to find the kind of training that will make them competitively employed. All we will need to worry about is the direct cost of their disability that they cannot manage with their employment earning, all the way up the scale to people who touch our system briefly and, through effective work, find their way into a longer-term success for themselves and their families.

Specifically, we have increased our verification staff by three in this year's Estimates. One focussing on Housing, more from the perspective of slum landlords abusing our system by continuing to claim rent for people whose rent is paid directly and they are either no longer there, or maybe the house is not even any longer there in some cases, so we want to tighten that up.

I also want to say that in the kind of system that we think is most effective, your strongest staff are doing your intake work, because they are the staff with the most experience. They know the program and they have had experience with people. They have some pretty good senses about whether there is someone who is being less than forthright in what they are asking for. On the other hand, they also have the sense to know when somebody is working out of a disability and really is not able to put their own case forward very effectively. I have had some marvellous examples of both of those kinds of skills. So we are trying to focus a lot of effort on training and supporting our intake staff to be very, very competent people.

One of the things we have done to help that is rather than have our verification staff sitting in a backroom somewhere, we have people

working at the front end with our intake people so that we do the job right the first time with an awful lot of what was found in the 1988-89 evaluation that was done by Ron Hikel that I have referred to in response to questions in the House a couple of times, that was probably seen as abuse in the broad sense was actually departmental error, because our people made mistakes. I mean, it is a huge system and mistakes get made.

So in a case review of I think it was 300-and-something cases, he found about 30-35 where there was some problem of overpayment, but when they did the analysis of those 35 in detail, did an audit and they did interviews, very exhaustive—anybody who knows Ron Hikel knows that he teases a bone pretty effectively. What they found was only two cases where there was client dishonesty. The remaining cases were errors and absolutely unintentional on the part of both the worker and the client. They were not errors of malice, they were just errors of oversight.

So we think that by strengthening the intake side and by putting some of our verification support staff at that end everybody will be better off because we will not make mistakes, we will not be claiming overpayments back from people that were needlessly put in a situation where they were overpaid, not through their own fault but through honest mistakes, and we will have a tighter system.

Saskatchewan, for example, does ratio checks. They simply do random checks. We are looking at whether that is a good way to go or not. We do know that there are high-risk profiles; people with certain profiles have a higher risk of being not in compliance than other kinds of profiles. So we are alert to that as well, but our view is that this at its worst is a tiny minority, in our case, we think, around 1 percent. So we are not interested in building a system to assume that everybody is part of that 1 percent. We want to build a system to make sure that we lessen the chance that that 1 percent can discredit the needs of the other 99 percent.

Mr. Cummings: I thank the Minister for that. Just on a matter of how we organize ourselves for the afternoon, if you have the appropriate staff here for Housing, and I think you do, we

probably would move into Housing. We may not finish everything else in between, but I would like to deal with Housing shortly after five o'clock, the wrong end of the day, I know, but if it will work out.

Mr. Sale: Why do we not just finish it all?

Mr. Cummings: Because I may not have all my questions done by then.

Mr. Sale: We are quite prepared to move quickly. I can make shorter answers if you like.

* (16:30)

Mr. Cummings: I can make longer questions too.

I appreciate the fact that the Minister is saying that he believes in accountability, because nobody knows better than he or I, I suppose, that how we identify accountability becomes a key matter of perception on how the public and how those who are on assistance from time to time are viewed and how they view themselves when they get in that situation. I would only make the observation. The Minister can respond if he wants to.

We talked about the difference between the rural and the urban situation a little bit yesterday. He made the observation that it is very demeaning the way some of the municipalities require appearances in order to justify receipt of assistance. The difference, however, can also be that there is a matter of smaller communities, and people have more of an obvious day-to-day relationship with the person who might be there. On the one hand, that can be somewhat of an embarrassment and leads to people perhaps not asking for assistance when they should.

On the other hand, it answers that matter of accountability sometimes right up front because of the—and I know that there can be an observation made, and it has been made before, so I put it on the record. There are some with the view that there are some rural councillors out there are just a little to the left of Attila the Hun in terms of how they might deal with people if they come forward and how they deal with them under these circumstances.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

But that aside, it does still leave the unanswered question about the one-tier system across the province and where he may ultimately want to take this discussion because he alluded to the fact yesterday that there has now been a motion made provincially, I believe, that he referenced. I do not think he and I need to have the discussion here and now, but I do believe that there is an onus on him and the AMM to continue with that discussion, whatever form it takes. Knowing some of the rural councils the way I do, there are some of them that do a very good job of how they manage it, but that still does not answer some of the questions on access that I alluded to a minute ago.

I am prepared to move into the Community Living area unless the Minister wants to respond to that comment. My interest here and, first of all, I know Community Living is not the only area, but I would find it interesting reading. I think it helps provide some understanding of this department if after the Estimates are over and I sit down and do some more in-depth reading, I would be interested if you could provide a list of those organizations that are funded out of the Department.

From reading historical reviews of the Department, I know you have been asked for this before, so it is probably somewhere in the bowels of your archives. But it would be useful if you could share that list because, well, frankly, the Estimates book does not do it in terms of what some of the funded agencies and partially funded and fully funded and the various areas. So, if the Minister can agree to, at some point, provide that, I would be appreciative of it.

Mr. Sale: I certainly will provide that, Mr. Chairperson. What I always used in opposition, though, is Volume II of the Public Accounts. You just photocopy the pages for Family Services and Housing; you have got the whole list and you have got the dollars. But we will provide you with a list.

Mr. Cummings: The list can change, too. That is an—

Mr. Chairperson: The Member for Ste. Rose.

Mr. Cummings: That is an historical review. I would like the prospective review.

Mr. Chairperson: Excuse me. You have to speak through the Chair. I am sorry, I will try and recognize you as quickly as possible.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Chairman, in this area I would like to discuss the caseload and backlog, if there is one, in Community Living. I am well aware that over the years demand has exceeded the ability to deliver in terms of, first of all, the dollars that are available. Very often it is a matter of stretching them into \$1.25, as opposed to the already shrunken Canadian dollar. That can be quite a task from time to time, so I will give the Minister and the government of the day that much slack off the top. But, in terms of identification and support to adults with mental disabilities, first of all for training and for support within their families, is there currently a backlog of known applicants?

Mr. Sale: I think the short answer is that, yes, there is. What it is arising out of in the main is people who have lived with their families for many years who are now adults or even older adults and their parents are aging or they are with a spouse and they have a level of disability that either has increased or simply the caregiver is no longer able to provide the level of care. So we are getting a lot of that kind of waiting list.

We have about 400—well, I should not say about since the number is exact—426 individuals living with a mental disability on a wait list. We prioritize the list because we cannot respond to all of those needs at once; 149 of those have been defined as having critical needs primarily related to the ability of the parent or extended family to continue to provide the kind of care that is needed by those people. That is what our wait list is at this point. There are 184 individuals on the wait list for day services as opposed to residential. Fifty-five of those have been identified as being in critical need. That brings the total for the two lists to about 500—plus on our list. To put that in perspective, I think the total caseload in that whole area currently is about 3300. That gives you a sense that our wait list is somewhere in the 15% region of our total cases in care.

Mr. Cummings: Is there any indication of whether the wait list is longer in rural versus urban settings?

Mr. Sale: I am informed that there is no particular pattern, rural or urban. It is mostly a question of demography. People who were caring for a disabled family member losing the ability to provide that care and saying we just cannot do it anymore. We have people in their seventies, sometimes even older, who are still caring for people in their forties and fifties, and obviously that is just not something that can go on.

Mr. Cummings: The reason I was asking the question—I understand the demographics. I was wondering if it was also related to the availability of the necessary services and not necessarily caused by any fault of the Department, perhaps in total numbers sense, but caused more by the reluctance of people to have whoever it is that they might be caring for moved further away and may not be a statistic that is kept track of. I was asking the question because I wondered if there were people on that wait list who maybe have deliberately kept themselves there because they did not want to have their loved one moved further away than necessary. I think I only need to say that for the record because, from a practical sense, I realize it is probably not something the Department would really be able to know unless it manifests itself in longer waiting lists.

Mr. Sale: First of all, I would say the Member is right. We have no direct evidence of that, but this is another situation where I think Manitoba in many ways does not tell its own story as effectively as it might. We have had an Association for Community Living and other advocacy groups active for 25 years, along with the Department that has embraced the idea of community living for, gosh, about the same amount of time. We have residential and day services in every corner of this province now.

I am sure the Member knows that is true out in his area. We might always say that we could develop another one, but I do not know of a significant community in Manitoba down to the very smallest ones that do not have some service of some kind or another, whether it is a group

living situation or a day program or an employment support program or whatever. I am sure the Member as an MLA is as proud as I am of the fact that we have a tremendous network of services. I do not think there is a need for people to move or to keep someone in their care longer than maybe they were able to cope with.

* (16:40)

The readiness of the community, the voluntary community and our department to move in even very small communities, I think is quite remarkable. I see that as one of those great success stories, a voluntary advocacy public-private partnership that has evolved over the years very effectively.

Mr. Cummings: Under Adult Services, the comment is that it provides program direction and funding for supported living programs for adults with mental disability and vocational rehabilitation for adults with physical, mental, psychiatric, learning disabilities. This is a question I am asking for my own edification as much as I am to critique the Department.

So occasionally I am concerned if we are providing programs—some of these services end up training people to live independently, and some move on into jobs where under supported conditions they can carry forth with those jobs.

Is this an area where in the opinion of the Minister there is a broad enough scope for training? I want to link that, and I will ask the second part of the question. There are obvious changes coming in remuneration for the staff. I just about said rehabilitation of the staff. The costs are quite significant in terms of balancing out the ability to maintain personnel and at the same time have enough money left over to actually have clients supported in the system.

I look at the growth in dollars and I wonder if I could tie that to the supposition that this is as much as anything tied to maintenance of staff, or what is the increased number of spaces that may come with this funding as well?

Mr. Sale: The Member asked a number of questions, and I am not sure that I got all of them. Is the Member referring to 9.3.(b), the in-

crease year over year of about \$12 million? Okay. I will try and provide a response.

Mr. Chairperson, the total increase in this area is \$11.6 million, year over year, or 13.5 percent. The bulk of it is in Grants to External Agencies. Essentially a purchase of service is another way of looking at it. Residential Services, \$7.1 million, and that is made up of an additional 103 adults with a mental disability, some from Pelican Lake and some others.

There are Day Services of \$3.1-million or \$3.2-million increase, and that is made up of new volume of services, additional numbers plus a general across-the-board increase of 2 percent for Day Service per diems, Special Rate and Administration Support. Special Rate is where a day service is providing a higher level of service to an individual than the basic level. That is what Special Rate means.

Vocational Rehab has for the first time in many years an increase of \$400,000 which will help us work with about an additional 122 individuals in several ways. Respite Services is up about \$727,000. That is the bulk of the \$11 million.

Mr. Cummings: There is a pent-up demand in the system as there is in a number of areas. It generally happens after you have gone through a period of recession. Thank goodness, we do not also have significant inflation at the moment.

But there has long been concern about the level of remuneration. As I understand this area, funding is for services provided, and then the local group would have to decide what level of benefits and salaries that it would be paying in order to provide that service or decide whether or not they can provide the service at the level available. Is that correct?

Mr. Sale: I think, essentially, yes, that is correct. We have per diems that we pay, and agencies sometimes do their additional fundraising, so sometimes some of them have more capacity. But, essentially, the Member is correct.

What we have done this year is provide an increase of 2 percent across the board for both Residential and Day Services. In addition,

though, we know that we have a wide range of salaries being paid in both urban and rural settings. Interestingly, it is not higher in urban and lower in rural. It is all over the board in both. So we have an additional amount of money available to target the lowest wage-paying groups, who often are the groups that were funded at old per diems. Because increases, in general, over previous budgets have been across the board, it really has not helped them much because 2 percent of 6 bucks is 12 cents, whereas 2 percent of 12 bucks is 24 cents. So when you do across-the-board increases, as I know the Member knows because he has been a school trustee, the spread in the wage scale just continues to increase rather than decrease.

We are targeting to the lower end of that wage scale to try and narrow the spread, but even more importantly to retain staff. As I know the Member is aware, this is tough work and to ask people to do it for \$6.50 or \$7 an hour for a long period of time, that is not a wage you can live on. It is certainly not a wage you can raise a family on. So we feel we have to get the lower end of those wages up. We also have to improve our training in that area, and we are beginning to develop some expectations in terms of service standards that we also think should come with a better funded system and a better trained system. We should also have some better outcome measures that give us a sense of that accountability that the Member and I were speaking about earlier.

Mr. Cummings: This leads to, at least in my mind, discussion on the question of unionization. I understand the rights of workers to organize, but this is an area that traditionally has not been. Do we know, or can you tell me, is there only the one facility that is unionized currently that would be contracting in this area, or am I categorizing the facilities wrong and perhaps there are several that might be?

* (16:50)

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chair, I am informed that the actual number is about 25 percent of the residential services supported by organizations that have union agreements.

Mr. Cummings: Well, that is at least an appreciable number. This may be a redundant

question, but are they operating successfully within the system? Obviously, they must be or they would not be on the list. That is why I say it is a redundant question, but let me expand on that a little bit. It has implications for some of the volunteer and locally funded organizations, at least one or two of which I am familiar with. There is pressure for increased salary opportunities in this area, the same as there has been in a number of the areas where the pay scales traditionally have been modest. But the impacts on government and on this department are generally a lot more than modest, particularly when you have growing number of people who may need the services.

Has there been any thought given, other than wrestling with the volumes, as to whether there is need for re-evaluation of delivery of the services, or do we continue to, I would suggest, skirt around the edges of what may become, as the economy continues to stay as active as it has every indication of being over the next few years, that there could well be a shortage of workers in this area?

Mr. Stan Struthers, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I am wondering if that has manifest itself in the way that the Department has seen it, or is it only in one or two areas where it has been brought to my attention that this is actually happening?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, let me respond to that with a little bit of history, hopefully, briefly. I think the emergence of every new sector in the economy generally starts out with workers who are not very well paid, jobs that are not very well defined and service expectations that are probably relatively unclear.

I think you can look at almost any of the service professions and you can see that what happens is that the services emerge. The public, the service recipients, the providers, the voluntary sector all work to keep refining those services until they really are doing the job that the people think they ought to do, and at that point, they become invaluable. So at that point, when people say, you know, this really is providing the service we really need, it becomes, in effect, an essential part of our social fabric. At

that point, we have two choices. We can start to pay those staff and treat them fairly, reflecting the value of their work, or we can continue to pay them the wages that the emerging sector typically gets, which are typically low. You can look at almost any sector you want and see that pattern.

Unions emerged out of that kind of history of workers who felt ultimately that they were unable to earn a fair living and be treated fairly in the workplace, so they banded together to demand that. Where there was a surplus of workers or where the industry was not terribly essential, they had a tough time, and where it was a tight labour situation and the industry was deemed essential, bargaining generally went along at a pretty good clip.

I think the Member is right to sense that we are closer to the latter situation today than we are to the former. I will not be at all surprised if unions see this just as strategically as anyone else would in that situation. I do not fear that particularly, because I think in the long run we are all well served when valuable work is done by people who feel that they have dignity in their workplace and are treated fairly, have some security for their families and for their own careers, and the public feels it is getting good value for the dollars that are being paid. I do not see unions as irresponsible in that regard. I see it as a legitimate process of weighing what is available in the way of resources against the needs and trying to figure out what is fair.

So, yes, I think there will be continued pressure in this area, and in a sense we are victims of the history, that we know now how to do community-based services for vulnerable adults. The trouble is that we have done it pretty cheaply in the past, and we are going to be under pressure to review that situation in the future.

Mr. Cummings: Well, it is not so much an issue of unionization, although that certainly can be part of it. My motivation for asking is that I know there are concerns about the average salary level and ability to retain employees with appropriate skills and taking that to the next level with the increased demand for services, and that being driven by the numbers, the waiting list, the demographics of our society.

A 13% increase in this area is a significant increase and one that I am quite prepared to say to the Government that it is an appropriate expenditure, but I see an issue here about which I am sure the Minister and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) will have to have a discussion eventually. The 10% growth year over year for very many years is going to be a tiger by the tail. I do not think that he nor I nor the Minister of Finance will be able to come up with a definitive answer, but it is obviously an area of pressure that governments of any stripe are going to have to deal with.

If the Minister would agree, I would like to ask a few questions on the Developmental Centre, and then we will go into Housing. We will follow up with Housing until we adjourn at six o'clock.

The Developmental Centre, from time to time, people have questioned its longevity, its necessity. I think is a very good institution that is providing care that is needed and a pretty high level of care, but I wonder if the Minister can answer the simple, direct question: what does he see in the future, in the immediate future at least, for the Manitoba Developmental Centre?

Mr. Sale: Well, the Member is certainly correct. There are about 480 residents of the Centre at the present time. The vast majority are aging quickly. It is not a young centre.

* (17:00)

Mr. Chair, there are almost no admissions to the centre on an annual basis. There might be one or two at most. In fact, the Member probably knows you cannot get into the Centre now without going through a legal process of testing whether admission is absolutely necessary, which in my view is a good thing. But what it means is that inevitably this centre is going to continue to get smaller every year. There is something in the order of 15 or 20 per year deaths, somewhere in that neighbourhood. So it does not take a lot of math to project out the kind of time line that we are looking at. What we have been doing, as the Member may know—if he has not had a tour of the centre recently, I would certainly be prepared to offer him an opportunity to see it. We have been working to

greatly improve the so-called cottages which are the smaller group living facilities around the campus, I guess you might call it.

We have also extensively renovated some of the less ancient buildings to provide just a better quality of life internally. A lot of the people there now might best be called psychogeriatric people who need a range of care related to their age as well as to their disability. We also have a small number of people who are, for all intents and purposes, in a forensic, high-security area. They are people whose disability make them violent and quite difficult to manage. So the centre is, I guess, a stable declining kind of pattern.

In the long run, in our whole society, if we do not figure out ways to help our families have healthier babies and to deal with the childhood areas, the costs are so extreme of some of the children that now live who would not have lived 10, 15, 20 years ago and who essentially produced the population that we have now. I simply do not see this pattern changing. I do not see admissions growing. I do not know where they would come from, frankly, because we are so good at helping people with quite high levels of need live in more normative settings in the community.

We do have the challenge of a very old plant and very costly plant that at one point I think had as many as 1400 people in that physical footprint, if you can imagine that. That is not a very nice place to be. We have used the downsizing of the facility to greatly, greatly improve the quality of life for those who are there, particularly through the cottage renovations. I encourage the Member to go and see the difference between a fully renovated cottage and one of the ones that has not been renovated, even though they, themselves, were buildings built in the '60s, I think. They are not that old as buildings, but there is an enormous difference between the ones that we have done a refit on and the ones that we have not.

There is also more treatment, modalities. There are more effective ways of helping people deal with their behaviour than we used to know about, whether it is music, whether it is movement or whether it is colour, a whole variety of

these things that is helping make quality of life somewhat better for people who have been there for a long, long time. So there are no plans to close or materially change the centre at this point, but I think the Member would appreciate that, when it is getting smaller each year by whatever the amount is, at some point down the road we have to rethink what our needs will be.

Mr. Cummings: I do not have a hang-up one way or another in terms of—and frankly I would agree with what the Minister just said in terms of long-term services needing to be provided, the nature of the services that are needed. I would accept what the Minister says; the nature of the client may well be evolving. I just would then, I believe, summarize what the Minister has just indicated, that he sees the service continuing to be provided, but he does not see a large intake from the nature of the people who would and perhaps not anticipate any numbers that would come into the facility, so we are probably looking at another 10 to 15 years, maybe 20, in demand of this facility. Is that a fair question? Anybody reading this, I do not want to raise undue fears or concerns in their mind by asking the question in that respect, but if there is not an intake, then eventually that number will become quite small, but it may then be stable—is that possible?—at quite a small number.

Mr. Sale: I think it would not be helpful to speculate on what might happen in regard to disability levels among older adults in our society as a whole. I think it is just too hard to know. I think all we can deal with is the pattern that we see now, and it is a pattern, as I have told the Member, we do not see any major changes taking place in the next five years. We will continue to try and improve the facility for those who are there in terms of the cottages and just the general standards throughout the whole building. I think, also, it is probably important for the Member—he may not know because it was not his critic area, but The Vulnerable Persons Act basically makes it impossible for us to admit people to this facility without a pretty strenuous court process. I think that was an act that we both supported, us in Opposition and he in government. We think it is the right way to go, but one of the consequences of that act is essentially freezing the institutional population in place apart from a very strenuous process.

Mr. Cummings: That is actually a very relevant point, one which I was aware of but did not think about when I was asking my questions. A couple of more questions in this area: Is it reasonable to assume that the resident-staff ratio has been fairly static, or does the ratio of staff to residents—has it perhaps gone up because of the aging of the population?

Mr. Sale: As I was saying in regard to the overall centre, the reduction in residents has allowed us to improve the quality of service. So, while there have been some modest changes in staff, we basically use the opportunity to convert positions into direct-care positions so that we have got more hands-on care for the people who are there, which is needed because their level of need is higher as they age. So we have used the declining numbers to improve the quality of service and the ratios.

Mr. Cummings: That is a fair comment. It is quite appropriate given the make-up of the population. I think if it would be appropriate we could ask some questions of Housing now.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): If the Minister does not mind, I would just like to—~~I understand~~ you have probably passed the Day Care line by now, or are you dealing on a global?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Cummings: I am talking global. Go ahead.

Mr. Laurendeau: Good. Mr. Minister, I asked you a question back in the House about two or three weeks ago in reference to the school-age programming in the day care community. The facts that I had received were not quite accurate, and I would like to apologize for putting some of those inaccuracies on the record at the time.

* (17:10)

I would like to compliment you on bringing forward a plan that I thought would work especially after I had been out on the road for a number of months visiting the day-care community within our province. I visited over 100 day cares and talked to a lot of the community out there. Even though some of the

government members today did not think a mechanic from the past had any knowledge or any right or reason being out there having that discussion, I must say that I had an opportunity to learn a lot. I am glad that the Minister had the foresight in taking the recommendations of the committee which I recommended be established, and that the committee's recommendations are being brought forward today. I would like to congratulate the Minister on his foresight and his initiatives that he is taking on day care today.

Mr. Sale: I thank the Member for his comments. I guess it just took a change in government to see the wisdom of his ways.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): I do not have too many questions on Housing. In looking through the Estimates book, I can almost rationalize a lot of the changes. I guess one of the things that pops out very, very readily is the increase of staff regarding the Housing Services and also the Capital Planning Services, but I recognize that that has a lot to do with the increase in the transfer from the federal responsibility of housing to the provincial government where we had to take on additional staffing in that.

So those two areas pop out quite readily. But I did want to ask the Minister one question in regard to under the Capital Planning program. It says it is developing a 10-year capital plan for public housing projects. Is this an ongoing plan, or is this a plan that has been put in place to address the public housing projects because, as he knows, and I was well aware, we are faced with an aging infrastructure of housing and it is declining on the fixed amount of money that is coming from the federal government with the devolution.

Does the 10-year capital plan look at the divestiture of some of the public housing under his portfolio?

Mr. Sale: I want to just provide some information to the Member because I believe he may have misunderstood the staffing issue. It is easy to understand why he would from the way the Estimates are presented because in the Estimates you only see the Department, you do

not see the Manitoba Housing Authority. I am sure he knows that. So the transfer in of 16 full-time equivalents is a transfer from Manitoba Housing Authority of existing jobs and existing people and existing dollars into the Department of Housing, because we have sort of separated the functions of the Department from the manager. The manager is becoming more of a pure Housing manager, and the Department is taking on the policy and overall direction roles. Research planning policy work is done in the Department. Housing management is done under Manitoba Housing. So these are not new positions at all. These are existing transfers into the Department.

In terms of the 10-year capital plan, that is actually long term. That has been in place for many years, and it is a rolling plan. I am sure the Member knows because he was the Minister. The plan does not imply any planned divestitures on an overall basis. As the Member knows, when he was minister, sometimes we sell off surplus units for one reason or another, but those are decisions that are reached in regard to that specific unit for a particular reason.

It is not an overall policy of divestiture, which I think is what the Member was asking, so the answer is, no, there is no policy of divestiture applied in the 10-year capital plan.

Mr. Reimer: I was just also wanting to get a bit of an update. When the divestiture was negotiated with the federal government, we naturally tried to get the very best we could for the Province in our negotiations. What we ended up with, I recall doing at the time, was negotiating with the federal government, and what ultimately ended up coming into Housing was approximately \$37.5 million. There was \$15 million that was put up by the Province in regard to the program and 15 matching. We had to do that to get the 15 matching from the federal government, and the federal government also kicked in an extra \$7.5 million.

That money there was a juicy plum that Treasury Board looked at quite enviously, but we were able to keep that within the Housing portfolio. I was wanting to get just a bit of an update as to whether that money is still under the management of Housing and the investment of

that, where it is shown in the Estimates and where the interest that might be accruing from that, if it is still in the Housing portfolio, is shown in the Estimates book?

Mr. Sale: Again, I am probably reminding the Member of stuff he already knows. The 15-15, the \$30-million fund was not part of the devolution; it was a side deal basically. It was set up to fund the 10-year capital plan. It is still there, minus part of the year, of course, and still in the control of the Department of Housing, and nothing has changed.

Mr. Reimer: There was also another \$7.5 million that was negotiated at that time. Is that still in the department also?

Mr. Sale: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, that is still in the Department. It is in the trust account.

Mr. Reimer: Would that be shown in the Estimates book here or would that be under the MHRC?

Mr. Sale: That amount would be in the MHRC annual report and does not form part of the Estimates.

Mr. Reimer: I just wanted to know where I might be able to find it when it does come up. If the Minister can keep that away from Treasury Board and the Deputy is here to hear it, they are doing a good job because I know we had to do some fighting to keep it.

An Honourable Member: Thank you for highlighting that.

Mr. Reimer: That is right. I was afraid to say it when the Minister of Finance was still here sitting at the table. I hope he does not read Hansard.

Mr. Sale: We have told him about it. It is okay.

Mr. Reimer: They will scoop it.

Mr. Sale: I also told him he cannot have it.

Mr. Reimer: Anyway, in the Estimates book, there is one line that I just wanted to get some clarification on, and that is under subappro-

priation 9.5(d). The rental supplementary program, I noticed, is down almost 9 percent. Is there any reasoning for why that program would have less funding?

Mr. Sale: I recall with some humour the debate between the Member and a certain member of our party in regard to a similar question. I trust we will not repeat that debate. My answer actually is the same as the former minister's answer: that this is a reflection of the actual program volume uptake. If there is an uptake that is greater, then the line will be greater. I give the same answer to him that I believe he has given in the past to some others.

Mr. Reimer: Just trying to catch the Minister, that is all. On a new question, there was a fair amount of correspondence at the time of devolution and lobbying done by the co-op group here in Manitoba to not be part of the devolution to the Manitoba government for administration and the handling of their accounts. At the time, just before I left the Ministry, I did write to the federal minister, Alfonso Gagliano, requesting that they do take back the federal portion of the federal co-ops. I was wondering whether the Minister could give me an update as to whether that has formally happened. Has there been a transfer back to the feds of the co-ops?

Mr. Sale: What we have is a formal agreement from Minister Gagliano to accept the co-ops back. Four provinces had refused to accept them in the devolution, and the co-op association, as you know, asked that they go back, because they want to form a national association and lobby for a renewed co-op program that is national.

*(17:20)

So we have supported that, as your previous government did, and we were happy to have a letter from the current federal minister. I think it was in February or March. I cannot give you the exact date confirming that he would take them back. They are now in negotiation as to how that will happen, and we, of course, have to figure out the dollars associated with that, because the dollars were transferred for that. We have to transfer them back now. But that negotiation process, I think, is actually at a fairly early stage, because the federal government is dancing a little bit on how this is going to be played out.

The agreement has been reached. The association is still actively lobbying that, okay, we have reached the agreement, now let us get on with it and do it. The federal government has not yet actually moved to do it.

Mr. Reimer: There was an initiative that was taken in regard to what was referred to as self-management by some of the housing complexes. In particular, I am referring to Lord Selkirk Park and Gilbert Park in regard to they were wanting to sort of take over self-management of their operations. We were moving along that path very cautiously, but we were moving toward a degree of self-management by the residents association in those two groups.

I must say that the latest update that I had from Lord Selkirk Park, which, at one time, I think the Member even can recall, there was a fair amount of problems and concerns and vacancy and vandalism, and a fair amount of concern in and around that particular housing complex, was that it has turned around. From my last contact, talking to them, actually the occupancy rate now is at an all-time high and the fact with the neighbourhood police and the other programs that we put into that complex have really stabilized that area. That was the type of thing that we were building upon with the tenants associations to look at a form of self-management. I think that those were the directions and the ideas that sort of spurred a sense of community and a sense of involvement in that particular complex, which also was reflected in Gilbert Park towards self-management.

I was just wondering whether the Department is still pursuing that program and whether they have had a degree of finalization of working toward self-management for either one of those complexes.

Mr. Sale: The short answer is, yes, we have confirmed that direction, but we have also increased the staff resources associated with trying to move towards self-management by seconding a staffperson to work more or less full time on this issue.

I think the Member is correctly reflecting the fact that this is a difficult process. Managing a housing complex is complex. We do not want

to set people up for failure, any more than I think the previous government did. So we are moving deliberately but cautiously. We are viewing that any transition would have to have a significant training component and a kind of mentoring component to help people make sure that they have the skills to do this in the long term. It also means community development work to make sure that the tenants association is strong enough, representative enough, and not just a small group of people who do not really represent the whole complex.

I would agree with the Member that things have improved around Lord Selkirk Park. Interestingly, we were looking at some data from Child and Family Services the other day where they show quite a remarkable improvement in that area in terms of their area of service. They have a unit in there, as you know. It seems that, in combination with community policing, the tenants association, Child and Family Services, Native Alliance, Turtle Island, all those things in combination seem to have helped produce some stability, and that is a good thing.

Mr. Reimer: I think that anything that can help to stabilize a lot of those housing complexes that Manitoba Housing has in regard to neighbourhood policing, like in Keenleyside and some of these areas. I think they all bring in a sense of stability and safety into the various complexes. It helps not only the neighbourhood, but indirectly it brings the occupancy rate up because people feel safe to move back into the area. There is a sense of pride that comes into working in those communities. I would encourage the Department to keep aggressively pursuing those areas, because I think that they show very, very positive results and a positive attitude that grows in the community. It actually works into a lot of the programs, not only what we introduced in government but what the Minister is introducing.

One of the things the Minister did talk about and mentioned was the fact of the \$8-million new money for the housing initiative. What is it called? There is a word for it. Anyway, it is \$8 million of new money. Is that money that came from a new appropriation, or is that money that came out of some of the devolution money that was available to the Department?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, the \$8 million is a new appropriation in the sense that it is new

money that was not in the system last year for these purposes over a four-year plan. The money comes from surpluses in MHRC, which are related in large part to the devolution, to surpluses run through that process and, I think, a very appropriate way to use some of that money, so that is where it comes from.

* (17:30)

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Chairperson, one question. The Member mentioned the new staffing that came over to the Department. I know in Manitoba Housing and MHA you are faced with two and, I think, even three various unions for those departments. Is there any movement to an amalgamation of those under one union or one bargaining group, because right now it is very apparent in some of those departments where you see people working right across from each other on the desk, one making one salary, one making a lower salary, and they do the same, almost identical, work, but it is because of the union and the bargaining that it sets up that difference. Will you be looking at amalgamating those into one union or one bargaining agent?

Mr. Sale: The short answer is that we have not considered that at this point. It does not mean we will not do that in the future, but it is not an issue on our radar screen at this point.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Chairman, we can move into section 9.4. Child and Family Services.

Mr. Sale: I am sorry to interrupt the Member, but I have been remiss in not introducing staff. Martin Billinkoff was with us earlier, is the ADM of Community Living, and Kim Sharman is the acting ADM of Housing and has done a fabulous job in that job as an acting person, who actually had not been involved much in housing much in her life other than living in one, has done a wonderful job in that area. So I should have been introducing staff. I apologize.

We have Peter Dubiński coming and Kathy Reid. Peter is ADM of Child and Family, and Kathy is Director of Day Care.

Mr. Cummings: Under Child and Family, I would like to move directly, for a few minutes, to Child Day Care, following on the comments

of my colleague from St. Norbert, but the Minister, for the record, can he indicate to us the number of new spaces that will be available as a result of the additional funding that he has made available?

Mr. Sale: I am informed that the total new spaces is 324, mostly related to day cares that are being built in schools that are under construction at the present time. In addition, 1500 existing spaces, which were not funded under the previous regime, will receive funding with the increases that were provided this year. So those are not new spaces in the system. They were spaces that we did not fund in the system. So 324 is the actual answer to the Member's question.

Mr. Cummings: Is there a number that the Ministry has of potential demand out there for additional spaces that they see needing to be funded?

Mr. Sale: I think the short answer is no. What we do have, though, is a sense of where the priority areas are because of the numbers of requests we get, and that is in what might be called non-standard care. In other words, not nine to five or eight to four-thirty, but care in the evenings, care on the weekends, infant care for families who absolutely have to work to keep the family together, but they have an infant, or child under two is an infant, basically, or child who is not toilet trained, I guess, is even more to the point. So those are the areas where we have high, high demand. The other thing that we know is that our subsidy levels are very low, so people essentially lose their entitlement to subsidy, in some cases, before they even hit the poverty line, in terms of income. So there is a real problem for people in that working poor area that the Member identified yesterday as a high priority area. Child care is extremely expensive for somebody who is in that working-poor category, which is where an awful lot of our recipients of subsidy are, or they would not be getting a subsidy. But our subsidy levels cut out really close to the bottom end of what we would all agree was working poor in terms of wage levels.

So a total demand: We know how many kids there are of working parents who would be eligi-

ble for child care. We have roughly 22-23 percent of that population we have spaces for. So if you want to talk about the real demand out there, it is roughly four times what we have got in the way of spaces, but these kids are receiving care in a variety of other ways, or they are latchkey kids.

Mr. Cummings: Well, because of where I come from and the area I represent, I would acknowledge and encourage, given the education that some of my constituents have been giving me in this area, in the area of the working poor and/or those who are looking for flexible services, that that to me is a priority as well.

This whole section, by the way, Mr. Chairman, for the record, I would like to spend a lot more time on this section, but it seems to me that as an overall strategy of how we deal with the Government's Estimates, I will be finishing up this section this afternoon, and I will essentially only leave the Secretariat, the Healthy Child Initiative and the final formalization of passing the motions for Monday, so you can organize your staff appropriately.

I would like to spend a bit of time right now on Children's Special Services and the activities that are associated with this area, thanks to a bit of briefing that I received this morning and some understanding, but, again here, I would ask if the Minister can give me some idea of what might be the pent-up demand in terms of services from the point of view of children who can expect services out there. There must be a line that is drawn. It is a relative judgment, I suppose, because there can be the full range of services, the full range of demands, depending on the issue related to the child.

But does the Department have a known waiting list in this area as well?

Mr. Sale: This is pleasant information, Mr. Chairperson. There is essentially no waiting list in this area. Manitoba has done extremely well under the previous government and under the present government. I am pleased, very delighted, that \$2.8 million in additional funding in the day care area is going to allow us to reach 1000 children in total in our day care system who have special needs as well.

So I think we are doing better in this area, and it is very good news that we do not have, for all intents and purposes, a waiting list in this area.

Mr. Cummings: The Financial Assistance and External Agencies that are listed here in the—I think I better clarify which section I am in here. I was on the Day Care line, but I did move back up to the Children's Special Services, item (b)(1)(c) Assistance and External Agencies that are referenced there. Can you give me an example of the agencies that might be recipients of those supports?

Mr. Sale: Probably the largest amounts would be the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities, St. Amant Centre, therapy services, Rehabilitation Centre for Children. Those are the kinds of services. If the Member wants a list, we could certainly provide him with that, if that would be helpful.

Mr. Cummings: That clarifies where those agencies fall. I was looking for where I might ask this question, a similar line as the Portage Developmental Centre. I would be interested to know where St. Amant is at in terms of increase or decrease in support to the agency.

Mr. Sale: As the Member may know, St. Amant has been shrinking in size over the years, but it has also developed at the same time a range of community living homes which it supports. So, in total, it has not declined as much as the congregate care centre has in St. Vital.

The Centre itself has declined slowly, and I think there is a planned decline of, if I am not mistaken, 35 people over the next year or two years. I am not sure what the time frame of that is. *[interjection]* Three years, but they have had a year. So 35 over three years out of a population of—I am sorry. From about 250 to about 215 will be the end result of that process of helping people move out into the community.

* (17:40)

Mr. Cummings: Well, as I stated, this whole section is part of the Department. We could probably spend a week or so going through this in terms of line by line. But in fact the Department has done remarkably well in the reflection

of the dollars that are being allocated year over year.

The area that undoubtedly causes the most grief for everyone involved in many respects is the Child Protection and Support Services. I am interested if the additional dollars are anticipated for growth and volume and demand or is this the result of something else?

Mr. Sale: I will just give the Member a breakdown of the approximately \$10.3 million of increases. All of the agencies, by the way, will be on the grants list, so the Member can look at that as well, but I will give him a bit of a breakdown.

The support of the Desktop Initiative, that is the big, common front end for all government computers, about \$419,000. Increase in the funding for Winnipeg Child and Family is \$5.2 million. That is largely related to wages and costs that they keep seeming to need. Base adjustment for Central and Western to other CFS is \$540,000; cost increase for children in foster care, \$1.9 million; the very high level, exceptional circumstances kids, level 5 kids, \$334,000; 2 percent across the board in foster care maintenance rates, \$365,000; food that we talked about yesterday in my opening remarks, the northern food allowance, \$150,000 for foster care; an additional worker for Central and Western agencies, one each, \$156,000; 2% increase across the board for child care treatment centres, the big four as it were, as well as, some others that we purchase service from like Hydra House; reclassification of one facility, \$100,000.

Salary adjustment is due to change in the composition of families for the Family Centre of Winnipeg, where we purchase homemaker, that kind of service, from Family Centre to keep a family together. If they have a sick parent or a disabled parent, somebody recovering from an accident, rather than take the kids into care, we put a homemaker in the family. Increase in volume and cost adjustment for support of the program grants to First Nations agencies is \$295,000. Family Centre, were you asking how much it was? \$251,000.

It is a complex issue, but we have been recovering the National Child Benefit paid on behalf of children who are in care, and we have

been essentially taking that from First Nations agencies. Under the agreement with the federal government, those funds should have been available to those communities to reinvest in services in those communities. So we are this year giving that money pro rata to the First Nations agencies since it is from their National Child Benefit that the money was being taken away. So we were inappropriately profiting from that under the previous arrangement. Those are the main items.

Mr. Cummings: That amount would be?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chair, \$10.3 million, rounded.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Chair, 10.3 is the total, but the National Child Benefit—

Mr. Sale: No, no, I am sorry. I beg the Member's pardon. \$320,000.

Mr. Cummings: So the increase is not related to volume. Does that mean there is a prediction that volumes are levelling off or that this is manageable within these expenditures? The re-classifications, the additional wage costs and so on, none of that directly, as I understand what I just wrote down here, reflect demand one way or the other. So can I assume that this is predicted to be flat?

Mr. Sale: The volumes have flattened out over the last year or two years, so our total caseloads are slightly down but not materially so. We certainly hope that it is going to be the pattern. We hope that we are beginning to see some of the results from some of the preventive programs that have been implemented in stopping the escalation at least.

I think we are hopeful that some of the innovative programs which were implemented over the last couple of years, for example, the emergency after-hours program that is coordinated by Macdonald Youth Services, partnered with a number of agencies in the city, we think we are seeing a different pattern of numbers coming out of that as a result of the effectiveness of that work. That is an extra cost, but it seems to be reducing the numbers of kids who are coming into care perhaps unnecessarily.

We are hopeful that what the Member is projecting is going to be the case.

Mr. Cummings: Well, if in fact what the Minister has just referenced starts to come to fruition then there will be a lot of people who will have to take a bow because, as in healthcare, sometimes preventive medicine, if you will, or preventive actions, are impossible to quantify, except if you do get a levelling off in this area, it would be, I suppose, one yardstick by which some of those preventive measures could be judged. The Family Support Innovations Fund, could the Minister give me some concept of where or how this would be accessed?

Mr. Sale: I would be glad to provide the Member with a list. It was introduced by the previous government as a way of providing incentive and support to CFS agencies to become more innovative and preventive in their focus of services. Programs have to be approved, projects have to be approved under this program and they have to be evaluated. They have to have some targets in them in terms of cost avoidance at least, and if not, cost reduction. So they are supposed to show ways in which the same resources can do the job better or even more cheaply.

I do want to just make one cautionary comment on what the Member was referring to in terms of preventive programs. Nobody would like more than I to have a party in which we invite everybody who had anything to do with any of these programs and have a toast to their success. Unfortunately the biggest single predictor of child welfare levels is poverty. As the economy improves, not only the social assistance caseloads go down, but child welfare cases go down, because poverty is one of the things that causes kids to come into care. When poverty eases off a bit, that cause for kids coming into care obviously eases off a bit too.

I do not think we know for sure why the caseloads have levelled off and started to decline a little bit, but I never want to claim success for something that we may turn around a few years from now in a recession and suddenly see ourselves with more kids in care. If you read the research on what brings kids into care, unfor-

tunately it is tightly correlated with poverty. I just want to say that.

I will just give the Member a list of the programs that are funded under that area. There is a huge array of them. They have to do with everything from better training and recruiting of foster parents through to the after-hours emergency service that I referenced earlier and the community development initiatives that are taking place in some of the core area parts of our city where CFS is working in a much more community-based way. There is a whole range of things. If the Member has questions about any one program, I am sure our staff could give him a summary of what the program is about anytime he would like to ask that question outside of Estimates. If he wants to know more about any of those programs, we would be glad to give him information about them, because I think many of them are really interesting, some of them seem to be really effective. We are evaluating all of them in terms of whether it is good to continue them.

* (17:50)

Mr. Cummings: That leads into the next section very appropriately, actually, Family Conciliation, and the activities there. I think I need a better understanding. I understand that people can be referred by the courts. Is it only court references that this section takes?

Mr. Sale: These are good questions, because I keep learning stuff too. I guess that is part of the process of Estimates. What is a day without a surprise? The core services of the Department, of that branch, are all court ordered, 2555 families or individuals, as the Member sees from the Estimates supplement—mediation, court-ordered assessments, information referrals, counselling, et cetera, but, in addition, there is a program that is sometimes court referred and sometimes self referred and sometimes agency referred, I would guess, to about 2800 divorcing or separating parents in terms of parent education around the issues affecting families in divorce, separation, particularly affecting children. We know now some things that we ought not to do to kids, if we have the choice of not doing them, in terms of divorce and how it is handled for their kids. That is what that program does, and it is not

court mandated in all cases. Although it may be court referred, it is not mandated.

Mr. Cummings: Is this service provided on a regional basis?

Mr. Sale: I assume the Member is asking about the parent education program component? It is regional, and all of our regional offices have trained staff now. This is reasonably recent that they have these trained staff for that program now.

Mr. Cummings: I had another reason for asking, and that is related to the cultural appropriateness and so on that would go with the problems of delivery in wherever different population would become your main plans. I am thinking, whether it is in the North, where we might have more Aboriginals who would be referred or whether it is in the southern part of the province or in the rural parts, I guess all I am seeking is a simple acknowledgement or some detail on whether or not that in fact is a consideration in the service that is provided. It is not an insignificant amount of money, it is a significant amount of money. It is also a very difficult area to work in, one which would probably have some pretty difficult challenges that I am quite prepared to accept, but, also, finding the right people to put in the right place at the right time must be a huge challenge. I wonder if the Minister, or if the Department, through the Minister, can comment on whether or not they are able to meet that challenge.

Mr. Sale: I think, Mr. Chairperson, the honest answer is that I cannot give the Member an answer in terms of the cultural appropriateness of the staff configuration at this point. We will attempt to get an answer for him. That issue is a challenge for us in every area. In general terms, I think the Member is aware that First Nations, Aboriginal people are underrepresented in most staff configurations of provincial government services and private agency services, with the exception of First Nations Child and Family Services agencies themselves. On-reserve or reserve-provided services are increasingly provided by skilled First Nations or Métis people. So I think it is a very important question. I will endeavour to find out what the cultural appropriateness component of this training is

and provide the Member with an answer as soon as I can. It may not be Monday, but I will provide him with that answer.

Mr. Cummings: Not to dwell on it, but I would be equally as happy to hear that in the end the First Nations communities, where it is possible and where it is available, are in fact entering into this area themselves. So it is not a shot at the Department, it is more of a kudos to recognize the difficulty of dealing in this area and what limited knowledge I have of the challenges that face them, which is no doubt extremely difficult. The same is true of the next section. Again I would expect that this is a regionally provided service, again, an extremely difficult area, but is this area currently a fully staffed, violence prevention section?

Mr. Sale: I will just refer back briefly to the previous question and give the Member one example of a program where we are working with five First Nations through the Family Justice program. It is with the Department of Justice, as well, as a partner. In that case, we are working with the First Nations communities around issues of family violence, family break-up and family relationships on reserves. So that is an example of, where we have moved in that area, I think we probably need to do more. The family violence prevention is fully regionalized. We have centres in many, many centres across the province. They range obviously in size because the communities range in size. In Flin Flon we go many days without anybody living in the shelter. In other places we have people living in the shelter all the time because of volume. But, yes, it is available across the province. Sometimes it is by a hotline, sometimes it is the immediate centre that is there and open all the time. It depends on demand.

Mr. Cummings: Particularly in the area of shelters, I would assume that, in the main, services are provided by contract with co-operating agencies?

Mr. Sale: I did not hear the question.

Mr. Cummings: Sorry, Mr. Chairman. If you will not see the clock for a second, we will wrap this up. What I was asking the Minister was, I assume that the external agencies, in the main, deliver shelter programs across the province, not directly delivered by the department.

Mr. Sale: As is the case with so many of our services, that is true. These agencies will also all appear in the grants listing. There is a whole page of the services in terms of where they exist. There are about 10 actively functioning shelters and then a series of other programs in other smaller communities. All delivered through things like the Y. Laurel Centre, Native Women's Transition Centre, Westman Women's Centre, Thompson Crisis Centre, Nova House in Selkirk, the Parklands Crisis Centre in Dauphin, Ikwe-Widdjiitiwin in the city of Winnipeg, and so forth.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., the Committee shall rise.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

* (15:10)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): Good afternoon. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will now resume the consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Education and Training.

Consideration of these Estimates left off on page 57 of the Estimates book. Resolution 16.1. Administration and Finance. The floor is now open for questions.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): I believe, Madam Chairperson, I was in the midst of a response to a question when the time expired, if that is correct.

We were talking about the Research and Planning branch of the Department and some of the areas which the Branch would be examining and its utility vis-à-vis the operations of the Department and policy development in the Department. I just ran through some of the areas in the public school side sector where we felt that the Research and Planning branch can have a positive impact on policy development within the Department and the operations of the Department generally.

I wanted to just touch briefly on some of the areas where I am hopeful that the Research and Planning branch will have a positive impact on post-secondary policy. The issue of college expansion, for example, Madam Chairperson, of

course is a major initiative that the government has announced as part of its mandate to double the number of college spaces in the system over the course of the next five years. The Research and Planning branch will assist the Department fundamentally in having the best possible strategy for the College Expansion Initiative, utilizing the research capacity of the new branch to target in the most efficient way possible and in the best way possible for the expectations and needs of industry, needs of economic development, needs in the province generally, to target the College Expansion Initiative to areas that are areas of need in the province.

I think that the Research and Planning branch in this capacity will be very, very helpful to the director of the College Expansion Initiative, Dr. Curtis Nordman, in really focussing the energies of Doctor Nordman and focussing the College Expansion Initiative on areas that are recognized throughout the province as being areas of need in the private sector, areas of need in the workforce, so that those graduating from our community colleges can have the best opportunity to take advantage of the economy in the province of Manitoba and indeed contribute to economic growth in the province of Manitoba generally.

I think the Research and Planning branch, as well, in terms of providing advice on Access programs in the post-secondary system, the advice and the work done by the Research and Planning branch as expected will have long-term positive impacts on Access programs in the province of Manitoba in making our post-secondary system more accessible to those areas of our society that are not currently gaining the best possible access to the post-secondary system in the province.

The Labour Market Development Agreement is another area that falls under the responsibility of the Minister of Education and Training. Of course, and I know the Member will agree, the development of Manitoba's labour market is something that all members of the House are very concerned with. It is expected that the Research and Planning branch will have a tremendous impact on providing the best possible advice on how to develop Manitoba's labour market and also what areas the energies

can be best directed towards of the Department and in the development of the labour market in the province of Manitoba.

Another area where the Research and Planning branch can have positive utility is in developing a long-term capital plan for the Province of Manitoba in meeting the very real needs that exist throughout the post-secondary system for capital needs and providing best advice on prioritization and, I think, also in terms of generating partnerships which are really very important in providing for the capital needs of our post-secondary institutions in the province.

So in a very real sense, the Research and Planning branch is going to have significant utility, both in the public school sector and in the post-secondary sector in terms of allowing the Department of Education and Training to use best practices; to be strategic in how it allocates its resources most efficiently; and to have information at our fingertips in order to inform our policy deliberations on a wide variety of issues as I mentioned in my earlier remarks vis-à-vis both the public and post-secondary systems.

There is one area that I would like to touch upon just before concluding on this. It is the whole issue of tuition fees and affordability. There is a real expectation in the Department that the issue of affordability to young Manitobans in the post-secondary system is something that has been of growing importance and is recognized as an important issue that is raised regularly by student leaders to myself and to the Department. The whole issue of affordability, tuition fee policy, levels of support to offset the need of post-secondary institutions to constantly have a very significant growth trajectory for tuition fees certainly is something that I know that all members in the House are concerned with.

I am very hopeful that the Research and Planning branch can assist us in the Department, as well as assist the decision making at the post-secondary level in individual institutions, in working together to create a long-term strategy on affordability that will connect tuition fee policy, accessibility, affordability, program sus-

tainability, program delivery, and have a thoughtful consideration of all these issues, how they interconnect with one another, how they can best be connected, and a policy can best be developed that recognizes the various areas of significance for creating a comprehensive policy that addresses affordability, but addresses affordability, not just in terms of tuition reductions, or tuition increases, but how affordability relates to the broader delivery of programs at post-secondary institutions in the province. It is a very small branch, but I think it is going to be a very significant branch in terms of planning in the Department of Education in the future.

* (15:20)

As I mentioned when I first began these remarks, it was quite a surprise to me, given such a large infrastructure that the Department has responsibility for, that there was not, in fact, a research capability formally put in the Department of Education and Training. I think it will be a very positive addition to the Department, and something that will provide for best practices in our decision making and policy development. So I am very happy to have, as part of the new organizational structure in the Department, a branch that is responsible for research and development. I think it is going to have a very, very significant planning role in policy and in providing the best possible information and advice to the Department, to provide, in turn, the best opportunities for post-secondary institutions and the public school sector, to have the best possible decisions being made in the Department in partnership with stakeholders in both the post-secondary and public school areas. Thank you.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): I thank you so much. In fact, you answered a couple of other questions I had, so I checked them off as we went. I thank the Minister for that, and for the coffee this morning. It was very good.

I have another couple of requests. I had requests, Madam Chair, that we have a list of the boards. Is that ready? Could we inquire with the Minister if that is ready at this point for a submission?

Mr. Caldwell: I have been advised it is not quite ready. It should be ready tomorrow, or not tomorrow, but the next time we sit.

Mrs. Smith: We had also talked, I had asked a question. I have to go back over a couple of things because I am trying to clean up some of these areas. I am an INTJ personality, so I need to have everything sequential, orderly, as it were.

Madam Chair, I would like to ask the Minister, I had asked about capital projects earlier, and we had agreed that we would talk about that at 16.8, and maybe I am missing something, but I did not see 16.8. We can do that today, or at another time, just so I can clarify when we can talk about those capital projects.

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, we could go to 16.8; it is page 169 in the Estimates book. But I would like to pass, if we can, sequentially again, through 16.1 and so forth.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair. I wanted to ask one more question. What has been added under Communications to require an increase—we are talking about 16.1(g). What has been added under Communications to require an increase from 5.0 to 29.1? I see there is a dramatic increase in FTEs for Professional Services from 0 to 20.1. Could the Minister please explain what the reason for this would be?

Mr. Caldwell: Just for clarification, Madam Chair, is it Communications that the Member is referring to, or Supplies and Services? I heard Communications, but then your numbers indicate Supplies and Services.

Mrs. Smith: Supplies and Services. My apologies.

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, the 1999-2000 expenditures represent indicators from last year. There was no branch last year, so those are the indicators that were estimated to be spent by Jean Britton in 1999-2000. The 2000-2001 expenditures represent the fact of the establishment of a branch.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, would it be all right at this time for the Minister to answer some questions regarding the continuing education

from the University of Winnipeg and the new post-secondary education; to be more succinct, the CEI, the College Expansion Initiative.

We talked briefly about that a few minutes ago when you were talking about college expansion. I wondered at this time, Madam Chair, if it would be appropriate to talk about the new office that has been created to implement the College Expansion Initiative.

Mr. Caldwell: I would be pleased to, Madam Chair. I would like to go through it sequentially if I could though. We are at 16.1 right now. I think College Expansion is 16.7.(e). If the Member would agree to go through things sequentially, it would be helpful in terms of getting staff here as well, obviously.

Mrs. Smith: That would be just fine with me.

Could we go now to 16.2.(c) Assessment and Evaluation?

Mr. Caldwell: I take it we are ready to pass 16.1 then?

Mrs. Smith: I am not going to pass right now, but what I am going to do is I will look back over it and see if there are any other things. The Minister has answered a lot of the questions that I had prepared, so there is no sense in being redundant. I am trying to keep organized with it.

In the Minister's answers, Madam Chair, he covered a lot of the things I was going to ask. So there is a gap there, but what we would like to do is just continue on.

Mr. Caldwell: I would like to proceed sequentially if we could, so I would like to pass 16.1 before we get into 16.2, just for sequential procedure.

Madam Chairperson: Could I ask if it is your intention to ask questions sequentially and then pass all lines at the end?

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, yes, we will be passing all lines at the end. I know some of my colleagues have questions, and they are not here right now, so this is the reason why I cannot go totally sequentially, but I will try to do that to the

best of my ability. Of course, if staff needs to be here, I will make sure that we are appropriate in that manner. I know you need staff here, too.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, the reason why I cannot pass every line right now is at the request of some of my colleagues who had some questions, but I am prepared to start at 16.2 if you would prefer to do that at this time and go sequentially through that because I have most of the questions in that area.

Mr. Caldwell: The concern, I guess, with going on to 16.2 is coming back to 16.1, because we will not be prepared necessarily for questions if we get two days hence and then we have to go back to 16.1 again.

I am quite willing if the Member desires—she has expressed a concern that her colleagues are not here. I am prepared to recess for 10 or 15 minutes so her colleagues can come in and ask the questions that are necessary, but I would rather proceed sequentially.

Mrs. Smith: I will proceed sequentially. I cannot ask their questions, and they are unavailable at this time because they are in another meeting. Is it possible to start with 16.2. School Programs and go through that?

* (15:30)

Mr. Caldwell: If there could be a suggestion about how we could proceed because we do want it to proceed sequentially, because we do not want to be, if possible, bouncing around the Estimates booklet, as it were.

I know that it is only 16.1 right now, but I am more than prepared to allow for a recess, so that the Member's colleagues can ask the questions, but I would like to proceed sequentially. I know that the Deputy would as well, primarily so that the Department can have information on hand as we proceed, and there can be some order to it to have staff present.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, I have asked my questions in 16.1. We had agreed at the beginning to go globally, and that is to give some leverage. I appreciate what you are saying about sequential. I am trying to do that line by

line as best I can. I have agreed with my colleagues not to pass anything until the end. Not to be stubborn about it, it is just to accommodate everybody as best I can.

Mr. Caldwell: I understand what the Member is saying about 16.1, and I guess I need to get some clarification. If we go through 16.2, is the Member prepared to go through 16.2 with her questions and then pass 16.2 at the end of the questioning, or are we going to be in a position where we are not prepared to pass anything?

Mrs. Smith: It is not my intention to hold the Estimates up at all. What I would like to do is get through the relevant questions that I need to ask. I have a certain set, and some of my colleagues might have to go back. This is why we do not want to pass it globally, but our intent is to get through the Estimates as prudently and as quickly as possible, and I want to be mindful of the fact that you need staff as well.

Perhaps, if you want to stay at 16.1, then I can attempt to ask some of my colleagues' questions, but we will not be passing anything until the end, because we have agreed to do that. But that is not to hold the Estimates process up. I have a certain amount of questions I want to ask and then just move on, so it is not a ploy. It is just I would like to get this done.

I could ask the Minister at this time: Is this time where collective bargaining boards have to be dealt with in 16.1? Is that a question that would be appropriate at this time? We could go into things like that as well, but, as I say, I had my set of questions and my colleagues had others.

Madam Chairperson: Is it agreed that questioning for this department will follow in a global manner with all line items to be passed once the questioning has been completed? Agreed? *[Agreed]* The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, we have gone through this whole discussion. Could the Minister please— where did we leave off? *[interjection]*

Oh, absolutely, Madam Chair, I will give the Minister notice. What my intent is, as I said

before, is to cover as many of these specific questions that I have. However, nothing can be passed to allow my colleagues to come back if they need to in this section.

Madam Chairperson: Just for clarification, then, you are telling the Minister that you are prepared to give him sufficient notice to have the appropriate staff available for your questions.

Mrs. Smith: Absolutely. So which line did we leave off? *[interjection]*

So, Madam Chair, the Minister has his staff here to go through 16.2 School Programs?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, yes, we can proceed. The deputy has advised me, if there are any crises, he will give me an elbow in the ribs.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, to the Minister, previously, there was a special unit, under ADM Carolyn Loeppky, responsible for Special Education Review. I see this has a passing reference in the description of School Programs. Could the Minister please clarify what status does the Special Education Review hold at this time in Manitoba Education and Training?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, organizationally, the Special Ed Review is now under 16.2.(f) Student Services. Dr. John VanWallegham from the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 has been seconded to undertake the implementation stage of the Special Education Review. That process has commenced. There are a number of meetings going on. Doctor VanWallegham has established an advisory committee.

We, like the previous government, take the special ed needs in the province of Manitoba very seriously. I commend the previous administration for undertaking the Special Education Review. I think that there was very good work done in that regard by the previous administration. Certainly it was a very thoughtful document. It was one of the first documents that I had the pleasure to make myself familiar with upon being appointed Minister of Education and Training. It certainly has far-reaching implications for the public school system both operationally and financially.

I think that both this government and the previous administration recognize that special

education needs in the province were needs that had to be addressed very seriously and very systematically by the Government to provide best practices in special education delivery. There is a number of very significant issues being addressed by the Special Education Review, and I feel very fortunate to have Doctor VanWallegham being the individual responsible for the implementation stage of the Special Ed Review. But, of course, the process of implementation will have to be undertaken very thoughtfully with consideration for the very profound implications in many areas of the public school system.

As the implementation proceeds, Doctor VanWallegham, as I said just previously, has begun a process of taking the review into the field to get advice on how best to implement the recommendations made in the review. The review itself, as I mentioned, is a very thoughtful document that I commend the previous government again for undertaking. Some of the issues that Doctor VanWallegham identified—in fact they were identified by the review itself—is the whole issue of fetal alcohol, FAS children in the system, how we can best address that very terrible reality for many children in the public school system.

There has been considerable research work done on fetal alcohol, but the impacts on the public school system of fetal alcohol children are very real, are very profound, both in terms of delivery generally but also in terms of the individual child's success rates and opportunities for success in the public system. So I know that Doctor VanWallegham and the Special Ed Review recognize fetal alcohol syndrome, FAS, as being something that requires considerable work in the public school system and is a considerable resource allocation and considerable sensitivity to the issue of fetal alcohol syndrome.

*(15:40)

As well, issues being addressed by the Special Ed Review include emotional behavioural problems in the public school system, in the classroom. There is significant Level I support for those sorts of behavioural issues in the public school system, but it is recognized, I

think quite broadly, that there has been a growing demand for additional resources to deal with the emotional, behavioural issue in classrooms in the province of Manitoba. Certainly one of the other issues that Doctor VanWallegham is involving himself with is the whole issue of training of teachers and support staff to be sensitive and responsive to special needs children in the province of Manitoba.

I know in years past there was a criteria for credentials for teachers who dealt with children who would now be known as special needs children, and we moved away from that in the province of Manitoba over the last number of years, last couple of decades frankly. I know that there has been some considerable interest in the field and certainly a great deal of interest in parents of special needs children—that training of teachers and support staff in special needs areas is something that parents, at least, would like the Province to reintroduce some significant training, some significant certification of teachers and support staff who are dealing with special needs children in the province.

The special needs review will also connect with the Healthy Child Initiative that the provincial government announced a couple of months ago, the interdepartmental initiative on children that involves the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Health, the Department of Justice, the Department of Family Services, and the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. The Special Education Review will connect with the Healthy Child Initiative, for example, in the whole area of fetal alcohol syndrome prevention, in the area of screening for vision and hearing of children in the public school system, and also in the area of adolescent parents who are at risk.

So I think the present government, like the previous government, is truly committed to enhancing special education opportunities for special needs children in the public school system. It is certainly interested in enhancing training for those who are on the front lines, those who are educating special needs children in the public school system. We are interested, like the previous administration was, in working very closely with parents in the development of special education policies in the province. It is

an issue that we take very seriously. It is an issue that we want to be very strategic about addressing so that we can have the best possible impacts for children in the public school system. It is currently expected that an action plan will be issued in the autumn of 2000 or during the winter of 2000-2001, for further progress on the special ed issue, in the implementation phase of the Special Ed Review. And I should mention, just while we have been talking about Doctor VanWallegham, that Jim Hoddinott and Adair Morrison are working very closely with Doctor VanWallegham in supporting his work on the implementation phase of the Special Ed Review.

Just in closing again, I want to put on the record, as I have done a number of times, with regard to the record of the previous administration, I think that there are considerable accolades that should be given to the previous government for undertaking the Special Ed Review. The Special Ed Review is a very thoughtful document. I think that the previous administration should be commended in developing that document. I hope that the Member will take some assurance in the fact that this administration, like the previous administration, is committed to making the public school system more responsive to the special education needs of young Manitobans.

Mrs. Smith: I would like to thank the Minister very much for that answer. Madam Chair, I would like to say to the Minister, I am very familiar with these programs, so it will not be doggedly going through every page because it is quite self-explanatory in a lot of areas. The questions that I do ask will be based on the information that I need because I am not sure about the interpretation of it.

Madam Chair, my question to the Minister: Could the Minister tell me, one of the responsibilities of the section appears to be to provide support to schools for curriculum implementation and school plans, so what changes have been made in curriculum recently? Have there been any specific changes? I am talking generally under the Special Education program. Are there any additions to the curriculum or anything that has been done that is new since the Government came in?

Mr. Caldwell: Just for clarification. If the Member is asking about, Madam Chairperson,

curriculum development as it relates to Special Education specifically, and the Member is acknowledging yes.

The Department is currently working with the field in developing curriculum surrounding the issues of fetal alcohol syndrome, emotional behavioural problems. In those areas, the Department is working with the field to develop a curriculum that is sensitive to those areas.

* (15:50)

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, I would like to ask this minister—I thank him very much for the comments he put on record about the former government and Special Education and the review. Along with Special Education and some other initiatives that were put forward was the school plans for all schools in every school division. That would incorporate not only Special Education but the school plans per se in terms of program development.

Could the Minister advise this committee if the school plans are still in place and if that is something that he will be expanding on in the future?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chairperson, I have been advised that while there was a provision for school plans that was determined by the previous administration, in many schools the plans were not taken up. There was an uneven take-up. There has not been any change in terms of policy from this government, but we are taking stock of where the school plans were taken up, where they were not taken up, and we were doing an assessment on the nature of the take-up of the school plans. It was a very uneven record. Some schools did extraordinarily well in taking up the plan. Other schools did not. So we are going to assess the take-up of the plans at the end of this school year and have some further development in this regard for the next school year.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, could the Minister please table the educational service agreements that are in place with institutions providing education programs outside the public school system for students with profound exceptionalities?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chairperson, we will take that as notice and be pleased to provide it as

we get it from within the Department. It is, obviously, not here with us today.

Mrs. Smith: Thank you for that. Could the Minister please let me know when I could receive that information specifically?

Mr. Caldwell: I would think by mid-week next.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, I would like to go over to 16.2.(b) Manitoba School for the Deaf. Could the Minister please outline—I would like to refer to page 51, Salaries and Employee Benefits—and have some explanation in terms of the kinds of goals and visions that the Minister has for the Manitoba School for the Deaf. Could you please explain the table on page 51, because there are some differences that have occurred. I think there are several. If you could explain, starting from the first line, rather than my asking you every individual question, if you could just give me a summary, starting at line 1, under Managerial.

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, there is virtually no change in programming between the 1999-2000 year and the 2000-2001 year. There are some minor changes in terms of merit increase, increments and reclassifications and so forth, but the totals in terms of total Salaries and Employee Benefits: in 1999-2000 there were 55.35 full-time equivalents for a total expenditure of \$2,876,000. In 2000-2001, the full-time equivalents remain the same, 55.35 full-time equivalents. The dollar amounts are essentially the same. They declined \$2,000 or \$3,000 essentially from \$2,876,000 to \$2,873,000, so there is virtually very, very little change in terms of either the full-time equivalents number of staff there or the cumulative dollar amounts. Those changes that do exist in terms of dollar amounts which are about \$3,400 reflect just small changes in terms of salary increments, and so forth.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, could the Minister please advise this committee: Does he feel there is a need to expand these facilities or to provide more supports at this school in terms of the demographics and the numbers of students that have been affected in this area?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, the Department is in contact with the school and with the deaf

community regularly. The sense is that from within the community, from within the school in terms of our ongoing dialogue with the school and with the deaf community, the people are generally satisfied with level of support and the services provided.

Mrs. Smith: I would like to now go to 16.2.(c) Assessment and Evaluation, at this time. Madam Chair, it is our favourite topic here, is it not?

Madam Chair, my question to the Minister is, certainly, he will appreciate my all-time favourite question, which is the Grade 3 assessment. I know that the Minister and I have differing views in this area, but still I have respect for what the Minister is trying to do, as well. Having said that, could the Minister please explain the new Grade 3 assessment or project that is on-line right now? I understand that it is a proposal, and I understand that it has gone out to the schools for the teachers. If the Minister could fill in exactly what is going to be done with this particular proposal and what the goals and objectives are.

Mr. Caldwell: Yes, we have had spirited discussions on this in the House. There is no doubt about it. The objective, broadly stated, of course, is that Grade 3 students in the province of Manitoba have a capacity to be literate at the end of Grade 3, and if they are not, that remedial action will be put in place to help ensure that that reality comes to pass.

* (16:00)

The Grade 3 standardized test that existed previously was, of course, an end-of-year test. The current administration felt that the opportunity for skilled development throughout the Grade 3 academic year was missed as a consequence of having a year-end test. It was determined that a more appropriate protocol would be to have an assessment take place early in the school year, assessing the child's literacy skill level, and that if a child's literacy capabilities were found wanting, the academic year could be utilized then to assist the student to enhance his or her literacy skills in the classroom context with a program that involved the teacher, the student and the parent.

I think that, in terms of philosophy, it is our philosophy that the utilization of the school year,

the academic year, to enhance a child's literacy skills was preferable to having an assessment done at the end of the school year and therefore no opportunity provided to use the resources available in the classroom throughout the school year to enhance a child's literacy skills.

In terms of how the Grade 3 assessment is progressing for the September 2000 school year, in November 1999, the Province of Manitoba assured parents that they would receive an assessment of their child's reading and numeracy abilities at the beginning of the Grade 3 year. As a first step in fulfilling that promise, Manitoba Education and Training undertook a wide-ranging consultation process with parents, educators and community members. The process of that consultation took the form of the Grade 3 Assessment in Reading and Numeracy, a parent consultation document which was widely distributed throughout the province of Manitoba and was designed to share important information about new assessment proposals at an early stage of development. We wanted to ensure that there was a significant comfort level in the field, in fact, more than a comfort level, but that the field and parents were part of the process of designing the assessment for young Manitobans in Grade 3. The consultation document contained key elements of a proposal that would require teachers to assess each Grade 3 student during the fall months, then provide a report of the results of the assessment to the parents and consult with parents to develop follow-up plans for children who are experiencing difficulties.

Department of Education and Training actively sought parents' and teachers' thoughts on this proposal. There were some 14 000 documents provided to the field, and we had responses from over 4000 parents and 800 teachers to the document, which was a very good response, some 5000 responses back. The response to Grade 3 testing skills assessment from parents was quite positive. The Department will now work with the field to fine-tune the implementation of this and provide supports to teachers. This next academic year we will study how it works so that we can have the best practices and the best opportunities for young Manitobans to develop their skills.

Mrs. Smith: Could the Minister please advise this committee? I understand a questionnaire

also went out with the document. Could you tell me how many questionnaires were returned, and what the teachers' reactions were to the assessment? With our spirited comments in the House, I know that the Minister knows that I have some concerns about that.

Mr. Caldwell: I mentioned previously that there were some 5000 responses to the consultation document that came back, a little over 4000 from parents, and a little over 800 from teachers. The responses were quite positive. The sense was that an early years assessment was something that did provide an opportunity for skills development throughout the school year.

There are some concerns in terms of how the assessment will take place in the schools, and I think that there has to be some further work done by the Department as to the best delivery in the public school system. Parents like the relatively clear and simple report that was provided the questionnaire that the Member alludes to. It is a five-page document: the Grade 3 Assessment in Reading and Numeracy, a parent consultation document and, likewise, a teacher consultation document. We are very, very pleased with the number of responses we got back. As I said, in the range of 5000 responses. The analysis from the Department is underway on those responses. The general tone is very positive. The consultation document, I think it is about 10 days now, the deadline for responses was. I think there are some still trickling in now. So the Department has just begun the assessment of the responses so that further development of the Grade 3 assessment can occur. But preliminary indications from those that have been returned to the Department are very positive.

Mrs. Smith: Thank you for that information. Could the Minister please outline very specifically what the teachers' duties are in that document? It is my understanding that they design their own tests, and they analyze the tests and they give the report to the paras. Could the Minister please clarify this?

Mr. Caldwell: The teachers do not design their own tests. There are a number of testing protocols that are pre-existing that the teachers can choose from within that range to use. There are existing protocols that a range from which teachers will be able to choose from.

Mrs. Smith: Would this minister please table or give me a copy of the questionnaire? I do have a copy already of the proposal, and also a copy of the testing prototypes or testing and assessment opportunities that teachers have to choose from, so I can take a look at them and have a more knowledgeable view of what is expected of the teachers.

Mr. Caldwell: There is quite a wide range of testing protocols. In some instances, school divisions have their own. For example, Winnipeg No. 1 has its own skills assessment device, so we are working currently with divisions to identify more options. So, that constellation has not been—it is still in flux, essentially.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, just to clarify, it is my understanding that the testing will not be designed by the teachers, but rather they will take from their own bank of tests. Is that what the Minister is saying? I am not clear on this. Could you please clarify it?

Mr. Caldwell: Teachers will be using, Madam Chair, existing and well-validated skills assessments that already exist. We wanted to ensure that any assessment used is solid, is widely recognized by the pedagogical community, in some cases internationally, as being valid assessment devices, and that is the way we are proceeding. We want to ensure that the testing devices are ones that are validated, are ones that are widely accepted pedagogically, and have a track record.

In terms of approaches, the assessment approaches for the skills assessment include reading surveys. During a reading survey, a student would respond in written form to questions. The survey provides information about students' attitudes towards reading, how they perceive themselves as readers, how they perceive reading, and their knowledge of reading strategies. This survey may be administered in the field, in classrooms, to a whole group in one session.

Also, another assessment approach, suggested assessment approach, is the reading interview. During the reading interview, the teacher poses predetermined questions to individual students, listens to them, and writes

exactly what they answer on the interview sheet. This interview brings out how students perceive themselves as readers, how they perceive reading, and their attitude and knowledge of reading strategies. The interview enables the teacher and students to interact in a collaborative context in which they share responsibility for the assessment.

Another assessment approach is the observation checklist. The observation checklist is used to record how students perform an oral reading task. That allows the teacher to observe and record such features as fluency and reading strategies, that is, syntactic, semantic, graphophonic, and visual cues.

Another assessment approach, in terms of the approaches found in the assessment approaches for reading and numeracy, is the running record. The running record is especially useful for beginning readers, but may also be used with students of all ages who have reading difficulties. This simple tool requires minimum preparation. As students read, the teacher notes in code form on a sheet of paper whether the word that was read was written, or whether there was a miscue. This systematic observation enables the teacher to understand how students are reading each word in a text, to appreciate how much progress has been made from one assessment to the next, to analyze the difficulties encountered, to observe what strategy students use to reconstruct the meaning of a text, and to determine the difficulty of the text for each student.

Another assessment device is the oral reading and miscue analysis, something that I am engaged in right now, I think. Oral reading miscue analysis is an assessment technique used with oral reading to determine how students process print. [*interjection*] No inflection, one of the members says. While each student reads a text out loud, the teacher notes each miscue in code form on a photocopy of the text. Afterwards, the teacher analyzes the miscues. A miscue is said to occur when readers read something other than what is written. Miscues indicate the importance that readers give to semantic, syntactic, visual and graphophonic cues. Research has shown that all readers are subject to miscues, some of us more than others.

Effective readers spontaneously correct miscues that alter the meaning of the sentence and ignore those that do not.

Another reading assessment approach is story retelling of text read. The story retelling is used as a reading comprehension assessment technique. Students are asked to retell in their own words what they have just read. It provides information about how students predict, infer, analyze and synthesize what they have read.

The advantage that story retelling has over questioning techniques is that it shows how students organize what they have understood as they reorganize the story using the information that they consider to be important. To retell the story, students use prior knowledge and their knowledge about how writing is structured, giving the teacher an opportunity to gather important information regarding reading skills.

* (16:10)

Another assessment device approach to reading is questions. Of course, questions are used to evaluate students' understanding of a passage. This assessment may be conducted orally or in written form, using various types of questions. The questioning calls on various mental processes such as identification, selection, grouping, inference, prediction, and evaluation. When used along with retelling, comprehension questions supplement or verify the information provided in the retelling.

Just briefly in terms of the numeracy assessment approaches, there are five main protocols: the structured interview, the first one. During a structured interview the teacher poses predetermined questions to individual students, listens to them, and writes exactly what they answer on the interview sheet. The teacher also notes impressions about students' skills and knowledge regarding the degree to which students understand key concepts and processes. The interview enables the teacher and students to interact in a collaborative context in which they share responsibility for the assessment.

The second numeracy assessment approach is the investigation/teacher observation. Students are given authentic tasks that are designed to

allow exploration of mathematical concepts. While the students are engaged in the task, the teacher observes the children individually, gathering information about the ways in which they solve problems in different contexts, self-assess, apply their understanding of mathematics, and how new mathematical meaning is constructed.

The third assessment approach is the performance of task and teacher observation of the performance of task. Students are given a task that is designed to provide an opportunity for them to plan mathematical concepts, skills, and processes. While students are engaged in the task, the teacher observes children individually, gathering information about the ways in which they assess personal performance, apply mathematical concepts to the task, solve problems, and make connections with other knowledge and skills.

The fourth assessment approach is open questions. Open questions are designed to prompt students to apply concepts, solve problems, and make connections mathematically to establish questions. There are no prescribed methods for responding to the questions. Rather, they are open-development, open-process questions. Because of this feature, teachers are able to observe the strategies, skills, logic concepts and connections students make as they work their way through questions.

The final numeracy assessment approach is comprised of quizzes. Quizzes, of course, may be written or oral. They are especially valuable in areas of recall, number sense, and managing data. Quizzes give teachers an opportunity to gather information in a range of student knowledge and skills.

Teachers, schools, or school divisions will select some of these tools as needed to provide feedback to parents on the 16 proposed indicators. I am pleased to table for the Member the Consultation Survey for Parent Councils and the Consultation Survey for Educators for the information of the Member and the Committee generally.

Mrs. Smith: Thank you so much for that clarification. Just to go over a couple of points.

To clarify, would this minister agree that what you are saying basically is that with all the indicators in literacy and numeracy, teachers within a given school division will have the opportunity to select one or more? Or, has the Minister requested that they select more than one, or are there a variety of indicators that the Minister believes is necessary to be able to assess the children in all areas?

Mr. Caldwell: The consultations with the field are still ongoing in that regard. At the end of the day, the expectation will be that the teachers, schools and divisions will select the most appropriate approaches for the children in question. I fully expect that there will be more than one assessment approach chosen.

Mrs. Smith: Could the Minister please advise the Committee who will develop the professional learning opportunities in support of sound assessment methods and evaluation techniques for classroom teachers?

Mr. Caldwell: It is kind of an exciting time obviously. The fall of 2001 will be the first opportunity for this new protocol to occur. The Department will be providing professional development opportunities for teachers. It is our hope and expectation that our partners in the school divisions will also join with us in providing opportunities for Grade 3 teachers, but this is something that we will assess as the beginning of the year assessment proceeds this year and years to come. But there is an expectation that, as well as the professional development opportunities that the Department will provide, there will be a very real partnership with school divisions as well, with the recognition that the primary consideration is the enhanced literacy of young Manitobans.

* (16:20)

Mrs. Smith: Will professional days be offered or be used for these learning opportunities? Could the Minister please advise this committee as to whether or not this will be the goal?

Mr. Caldwell: It is something that is under consideration right now. As I mentioned earlier, it has only been 10 days since the deadline for the consultation process or consultation phase of

this process ended. As I mentioned, there is still material trickling in to the Department. There is an expectation that whatever develops will likely involve a wide range of professional development opportunities that could include professional development days. It could include school visits. There are all sorts of different protocols that will be examined in this regard, on-line material support documents as well through on-line capacities in schools throughout the province of Manitoba. That will become clearer as we progress through this process. But there is a very real determination within the Department that resources and skills development will be a central feature of this protocol. Much of this, of course, is not new. Professional development does occur through on-line opportunities, professional development days and in-school visits.

Madam Chair, if I could, you have asked me, and I am sorry that I neglected to introduce the staff that is with us here today. I am very pleased to have with us Dr. Gerald Farthing, Mr. Norm Mayer, Mr. Claude Fortier and Dr. Ben Levin, who are ably assisting me in my answering these questions.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, I would say to the Minister that I think indeed you have an extremely capable staff, a wonderful track record. Madam Chair, I would like to ask the Minister: If classroom time is to be used for workshops to help develop this initiative, has the Minister thought through whether or not the school divisions would be reimbursed for substitute costs for teachers undergoing training if there is training he feels is needed?

Mr. Jim Rondeau, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Chair, as in most other areas where professional development takes place, oftentimes there is assistance towards the substitute cost, and certainly the Department is open to that in this area, as it is in other areas, in terms of professional development in the public school system. Much of this is very, very early in the day for this particular assessment protocol. As I said, there are still consultation documents trickling in. The Department is just now assessing, in a thorough way, the consultation documents that

we have received. General trends, as I mentioned earlier, are positive, but a detailed analysis is just underway.

Mrs. Smith: Could the Minister please outline his intent to this committee, Mr. Chair, whether or not the Grade 6 and the Senior 1 and the Senior 4 tests and the other testing that is in place will remain intact at this time?

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Chair, there are no changes contemplated in the 2000-2001 school year with regard to the other testing protocols. I might take the opportunity, if I could, to read some material into the record that we have received from the field in this regard, from young Manitobans actually, on the testing protocols. I have, as you may well imagine, received many, many letters over the last number of months on testing. I would like to read into the record just a few. I am not going to read too many because I literally have hundreds from students in the province of Manitoba with regard to the testing protocols that currently exist in the province. I might add they are not all on one side of the issue. They are not all against testing, and they are not all for testing. I think it illustrates the thoughtfulness of Senior 4 students, at least in the province of Manitoba—I have got my Senior 4 file with me right now—in terms of how testing is perceived in the Province of Manitoba.

Starting with one letter from Jasmine Harry [*phonetic*], a student at Windsor Park Collegiate, Jasmine writes: Dear Mr. Caldwell: I am writing this letter to tell you my opinion on provincial exams and hopefully persuade you to take action and solve the problem. I find the exams to be a waste of time and also a waste of money that can be put to better use. Not only do they pressure students, but the money that is put into them grosses to \$7 million. This money could be put to better use, such as textbooks or extracurricular activities. Our classes are overcrowded, taking in at least 30 students. This causes the teachers to have less time with the students one on one. The money could also be put to enlarging our school so that it would not be so overcrowded.

This exam also gives no leeway in differences. Students with an Aboriginal descent are less likely to pass the exam, since they are taught in a different manner. They learn their

culture, and since they must write the same exam that the rest of Manitoba writes, their marks may suffer. This also goes for English as a Second Language students who are having trouble with English altogether. Keep in mind that these students' self-esteem could be greatly affected and cause less effort in the students next time around.

Another thing that alarms me is how much this exam will affect your mark. Thirty percent is a large chunk, enough to fail an average student.

Another factor that gives me great concern is how the test is produced. Over the years we have gotten used to the way our teachers mark, and how they expect an exam to be written. Every teacher is different, and they have different ways they teach. Because of this, our marks can be greatly affected. Our usual teacher knows our weakest points and the way we try to explain ourselves. The teachers that actually mark our exams do not have an idea of who we are.

The actual wording of a question can be different from the way our teacher has taught us, which can also confuse us. After marking 40 exams, the teacher might be tired, not paying attention, frustrated, and my exam may come up next, which may reflect badly. From the recent article I have read, it says that province-wide only 53 percent of the students pass the exam. The numbers obviously speak for themselves. The test is not working to the student's advantage. This is a clear wake-up call that these tests are not working. I believe that the division is overlooking why the exams should be put out. I also believe that there is no consideration given to the actual students that have to live with their final mark and that could affect their future plans. I hope that you will consider these facts and, hopefully, come to the conclusion of throwing out these exams.

Another individual who has written to me is Stephanie Champagne. Stephanie lives on Briarwood Road in Winnipeg, and she writes:

Dear Mr. Caldwell: I am writing to inform you that, after reading and taking many viewpoints into account, I believe that the provincial exams are not to the student's advantage. Though

I have not written a provincial exam myself, I have written it in its format. I feel that it is a good format and it tests various areas. However, I do not think that the province should make up the exam. By doing this, they are testing the teacher's ability to prepare the students, more than they are testing the students' abilities themselves.

During my high school career I have had the opportunity to work with a teacher who has taught me for three consecutive years. This has allowed me to recognize his standards and base my work on that. When I write the provincial exam, I am no longer being judged by him, but by three foreign teachers who have never seen my work nor any of my teacher's methods in instructing me.

I believe a \$7-million exam is not required to let our government determine how two cities are doing in comparison to one another. This money could be going towards textbooks and supplies. I have not had a textbook in math since Grade 8. This would benefit the student far more than an exam that our teacher could be writing for us. This exam also takes away from our individuality. It turns us into a percentage in our province. I want to be recognized in the work field for my personality and for my work ethics. What if a friend of the family or a pet died that week, and I was not concentrating on the exam? I would be forever a 68% student according to the field when I was a 90% student only the week before. Not only does this exam categorize us, but also determines which category to put us in, by only one paper that may not really capture our best work.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

* (16:30)

Another student writes—I am sure we will get to a positive one here soon:

Dear Mr. Caldwell: I am writing to inform you of my opinions on the provincial math and English exams in Manitoba. I will be speaking on the side against the exams as I have numerous reasons that the provincial exams should cease

existence. I am arguing against having the provincial Grade 12 exams because I feel that, first of all, it does not do any good for teachers or students at all. It is very expensive. Why should we waste millions of dollars on exams that prove nothing? There is so much more we can do to help education in Manitoba. For example, schools like mine do not have the kind of money to have a hockey team or maybe band instruments. Another main issue is that there is no leeway at all for students or teachers. Some teachers like to structure their educational methods. To students this is unfair with standardized testing. Teachers can teach students how to think better and learn better but the students will get a low grade on the exam and most likely the entire course.

Preparing and writing provincial exams wastes class time. Grade 12s waste quite a bit of time in this regard. Another problem with these exams is that what if the teacher does not do a very good job of preparing his/her class for the exam and 90 percent of the class end up failing. Is it fair for students to suffer and possibly fail the course? No. I feel that the Grade 12 provincial math and English exams are unfair, because some schools will get much more prepared than others, because some of the downtown schools, for example, have a lot of English as a Second Language students who do not speak very much English. How are they supposed to do well? It would bring down the school's average, therefore, making the school not look good. It is the same thing with the modified student in today's schools.

Another downside to having the exams is all the pressure it puts on students and teachers. The last thing a student needs is more pressure from school. Please stop throwing away our money. These exams are not proving anything other than we are great at burning money. Just let teachers make up exams is the best way for students to learn. If you wanted to monitor if a student is getting taught the proper things, then just make a test for a couple of students picked randomly from every school. This is a better and less expensive method. Thank you for considering this letter.

Another student writes, and I am going to try and find a positive one as I go through here,

but I am going to read this one. Dear Minister: I am writing to inform you on my view of the removal of exams in high schools. The following are a few of my reasons. First off, I am very displeased with knowing that valuable money is being thrown down the drain on exams in high schools when, in fact, that very same money could be doing more good than it is right now. Money invested in exams could be better spent on needed books, better teachers and smaller student numbers in classes.

I would like to bring such points to your attention like the amount of time that it takes to write exams, the process in figuring out what each individual student's marks are. All this time, if added up, would amount to many more hours that a student could be learning from their teacher. It is very hard for most students to recall all they have learned throughout a semester and take all that information and write a test on how much they remember. Would it not make proper sense to give a mark on what a student accomplishes for the semester rather than one agonizing test? A test has no meaning if you do not know where you went wrong. Every year of written exams—and I myself do wonder in what way I have messed up. If exams are going to continue, then the least that can be done is to tell students where they went wrong and how they can fix it. In the future, I wish to see an improvement in the format of testing. It is important because when my children go through exams, I will want to know where they went wrong and how I can help them do better.

I will just read one more, because I know that I do have quite a huge stack here, and I think that there are other questions to answer. But I will read one more for right now, at any rate. Dear Mr. Caldwell: I believe that provincial standardized English exams should be abolished. There are a great many reasons why the provincial English exam should be removed. The main reason to abolish the provincial standardized English exam is that it is a huge waste of taxpayers' money, teachers' and students' valuable time, materials, and manpower.

Another very important reason to eliminate this exam is because it does not really take into account ESL students or Aboriginal Manitobans

and their very different upbringings and cultures. Finally, I believe, that the provincial English exam is forcing teachers to follow very strict guidelines to try and prepare their students for the exam. Thus, the exam is mainly testing the teacher's ability to test or to teach a large amount of work in a very small amount of time rather than the student's ability to learn and grow creatively.

The provincial English exam is one of the most wasteful projects the provincial government has come up with yet. For the first semester alone, the exam wasted approximately \$7 million of taxpayers' hard-earned money, and for what? To tell us the exact same information that an exam produced by schools at a much cheaper price could have. Some of the \$7 million wasted on this project is used to gather teachers from around Manitoba to create, discuss, and then write the pilot exam. This usually takes a few months, and these teachers could have been better used by teaching classes in our schools. The pilot exam is then taken to random schools and succeeds in wasting students' time by forcing them to write it instead of learning the curriculum, thus putting these students and teachers further behind.

After the exam has passed this inspection and some further scrutiny, it is then printed in vast amounts and transported all over the province, yet wasting more money. The Grade 12 English students then proceed to completely waste a week of school, writing an expensive, pointless exam, instead of reading a classic novel or discussing a Shakespearean play. This also results in leaving the teachers with only one week of classes, which is useless to teach anything in since most students have had it with English after the exam, and there is not enough time left to cover anything of value at the end of the school year. Meanwhile, the exam is being marked by teachers from all over Manitoba who are being paid their regular wages plus \$100 a day plus \$23 every overtime hour they work.

If the regular schools were holding their own exams, teachers would only be paid their regular wages. Also, substitute teachers would not have to be hired to cover the teachers' classes while they are away marking exams. This would save even more money. Lastly, while the

marking of these exams is happening, the students in the next semester's English class are busy being given work by substitute teachers, thus wasting more class time and putting these students even further behind at the start of the semester.

These provincial English exams are only directed at the majority of Manitoba's population, who are the average students who live in the city and town and have had a regular upbringing. These exams do not take into account the different lifestyles, upbringings, and overall cultures of aboriginals, even though next to the majority they are the second largest group. So this exam ends up pinning the Aboriginal students up against a wall. On one side, they have their culture and how they have been brought up; on the other side, they have this very different provincial English exam which they are handed and told to completely change their train of thought for.

Madam Chairperson in the Chair

There is also the problem which arises with English as a Second Language students in this exam. I have found out ESL students mainly excel in the math or sciences, but struggle with getting their basic English credit. I do not think it is very fair to take students who are just starting to learn the English language and place them in a room with students who have spoken this language all their lives and force them to write an exam which is challenging the students who speak English perfectly.

If we continue to use these provincial standardized tests, we may just end up producing an entire generation of standardized kids. These exams constrict the amount of creativity both the student and the teacher can use. These tests force the teachers to teach to a set curriculum and are given so much to teach in such a small time frame that they must rush through it without letting the students do anything creative with their work. Thus, this exam forces teachers to suppress students' creative ideas and force their minds to fall into a groove that all other students must follow. There is no room for diversity, different cultures, upbringings or ideas, just clear-cut standardized students doing clear-cut standardized work, becoming clear-cut standardized adults.

In conclusion, I strongly believe in the abolishment of the provincial standardized exam. It is a huge waste of taxpayers' money, teachers' and students' time, materials and manpower. The exam does not take into account the vast numbers of different cultures and backgrounds of students, or the English as a Second Language students, who I believe need more time to learn the language before writing the exam.

Lastly, the exam is restrictive and forces the English program to minimize the creative component for students. This exam now turns the English program itself against itself. It once was supposed to release the potential of students and heighten their creativity, but now it is standardizing them and forcing them to fall in line with the rest of society, which I believe eventually destroys the human spirit.

So I do have, literally, reams of letters from students in particular, but educators and parents as well on the whole issue of standardized testing. I believe the provincial government was correct in its assessment to replace the end of year Grade 3 test with the beginning of the year skills assessment so that the school year could be used to further enhance students' literacy skills in regard to the Grade 6, Senior 1 and Senior 4 testing protocols. There has not been a change in that despite the entreaties of these students I have just read into the record. We believe that there is value in fact in a standardized assessment protocol, particularly the S4 level but more generally also at the Grade 6 and Grade 9 levels.

It is the practice of the Department and has been the practice of the Department since the inception of the Department to remain current and remain dynamic with current best practices in education. Of course, every year and every day, I think, in the day-to-day operations of the Department, we are constantly striving to improve best practices and that will continue. In terms of the 2000-2001 school year, the Grade 3 exam will be replaced by the skills assessment at the beginning of the school year, in the fall months. Grade 6, Senior 1 and Senior 4, there will be no changes.

* (16:40)

Mrs. Smith: I appreciate the complexities of assessment and evaluation, but prior to my next

question and putting some remarks on the record, I would request, Madam Chair, that we take a 10-minute recess and come right back at five to five, if that is acceptable.

Madam Chairperson: Sure. Agreed.

The Committee recessed at 4:41 p.m.

The Committee resumed at 4:57 p.m.

Madam Chairperson: Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Smith: I appreciate the Minister's comments and I understand the complexities any government has of assessment and evaluation. I guess you are well aware that probably you and I are on opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of how we look at assessment and evaluation. I do appreciate the comments that you read and the concerns that the students have. Those are things that need to be addressed and concerns that English as a Second Language and Aboriginal students, we absolutely have to make very sure that all students have an equal and viable assessment.

I want to put on the record the fact that no matter what government is in, people are going to write the Minister letters, Madam Chair, and they are going to persuade and they are going to cajole. It is my belief and the belief from this side of the House that we need to look at the global market and the kinds of standards that our students need to meet to meet the challenges out there, although some may not think assessment is the right way to go.

* (17:00)

The Tory government, as you know, has made it quite clear that we do believe that accountability and assessment are integral parts of the educational system in the province of Manitoba. I understand in terms especially of mathematics and science, our own son is a software computer engineer and without having tremendous competency in mathematics, you just do not get there. So you have to have this

kind of continuity. Our students across Manitoba, I will put on record, are facing new challenges in the year 2000 and beyond, and I would appreciate what the Minister has to face on a daily basis in terms of assessment and evaluation as well because I do know there is a balance and we have to look at the whole child. But in terms of accountability and assessment in the core subject areas, it is a well-known fact that our students are in competition with students across the world. When we see other jurisdictions with testing methods, this is something that is near and dear to our hearts.

Having said that, that is why the questions this afternoon with the Minister to better understand where the government is coming from, and also to appreciate the challenges that are there. It is not an easy task.

I would like the Minister to advise this committee: Does the Minister anticipate that this procedure for Grade 3, or this proposal, will be implemented in a consistent way early in the fall? Is that a guarantee for Manitoba students?

Mr. Caldwell: The expectation is that schools in Manitoba during this first year, as is the case with activities that are being undertaken for the first time, will be all participating in the skills assessment this year. During the first year of the assessment, as is the case whenever a policy or a program is implemented for the first time, schools will be in different stages of readiness. There is no doubt of that. The first year will be somewhat of a learning year for educators, parents, and the Department alike. But there is an expectation that all schools will be participating in the skills assessment this year, that best practices will be underscored by the Department and by educators and by school divisions and trustees in the implementation of the assessment that is going to take place in the fall and that the assessment will be constantly refined in accord with trying to achieve best practices as we proceed into the future.

I just want to comment briefly on the remarks about the differences between our philosophies, the philosophy of the government and the philosophy of the Opposition in this regard. While there is a substantial disagreement in terms of the Grade 3 tests inasmuch as when it

should be undertaken, beginning of the year, end of the year, and perhaps a lesser disagreement on what the tests should focus on. I think we both agree that skills development is the primary objective to try and enhance children's literacy skills. Our position, of course, on the Government side of the House is that the best practice would be to have the assessment take place early in the school year so the school year can be utilized to improve those skills. In terms of the Grade 6, S1 and S4 testing, which is for three-quarters of the whole, three out of the four tests, there is no substantive change between this government and the previous government for the 2000-2001 school year.

Mrs. Smith: I thank the Minister for those remarks. Madam Chair, could this Minister advise this committee whether some assistance, if any, applies for training to marking co-ordinators for Grade 6 mathematics and Senior 1 language arts? Will that marking procedure take place in the same manner as members opposite set it up prior to this government?

Mr. Caldwell: The practices in terms of providing professional development from the Department and the local marking protocol, as has been in the practice in the past, will continue this year.

Mrs. Smith: I would be interested in this statement, that one activity will be to "Work with the Education Information System to develop, implement, and maintain a data management procedure that results in a single collection of data for multiple uses or purposes."

Madam Chair, could the Minister please clarify what multiple uses and purposes would the information be accumulated for?

Mr. Caldwell: The data collected is to give an assessment in the Department, how children in a certain setting, whether the educational philosophy of this school or geographic area or set up of the school—open concept schools; that sort of thing—how they perform vis-à-vis other sorts of educational environments and geographic environments.

Mrs. Smith: Could the Minister clarify how a student's privacy is guaranteed under single

collection of data? Has the Minister qualified that in any way?

Mr. Caldwell: There is limited restricted departmental access to the information, as has been the case previously.

Mrs. Smith: Could the Minister please advise this Committee what national and international tests are expected to be administered to the students this year?

Mr. Caldwell: Just while staff are putting the details of that together, I will read into the record just for some balance, a letter advising that standardized testing is a good idea. Dear Mr. Caldwell: Despite what some of my fellow classmates may have said, standardized testing is a good idea. Standardized tests provide teachers and students with a goal to reach for, as well as feedback to teachers and parents to determine whether desired educational material has been covered. In addition, these tests give a more accurate depiction of what a student knows without external influences such as biased marking. Without a solid goal to reach for students and teachers get off topic and end up not covering necessary information. The reason I know this is because I have been in this situation. In Grade 10, S2, I had a course without a provincial exam in which the teacher was persuaded by the students to teach things outside the curriculum. In short, necessary learning which was critical in the continuing S3 credit was left out, and I was completely lost.

Some people say that standardized tests cause teachers to teach to the test, but is that not the purpose? The standardized tests cover the bases of the curriculum, and if the teachers do teach to the test they are in actuality teaching to the curriculum. With the final exam, teachers are forced to follow the curriculum and all pre-requirement information is covered. A well-designed provincial exam can give feedback to teachers, parents and governmental educational representatives. Provincial exams show whether students have in fact attained the desired learning as set forth by the government. If properly interpreted, these tests could show the effectiveness of the school's educational programs and teacher's effectiveness in the teaching of the curriculum.

In addition, to do this, the feedback can help to detect problems in the curriculum itself or in the teaching of the high school staff. These tests show more accurately the potential and knowledge of students. The marks that are received in a standardized test show only the knowledge and dedication of the students, not how much a student can suck up or brown nose. The marks received are completely non-biased. These non-biased assessments are useful for colleges and universities, for admitting new students, and in awarding scholarships. Although I am in favour of the standardized tests, there are some concerns I have. I do not believe that the tests should be issued to children in Grade 3. Children of that age should not be subjected to the kinds of pressure associated with provincial exams.

* (17:10)

In closing, I hope that standardized tests remain to help better our province. More importantly, I hope we do not let our quest for advancement make us lose touch with our humanity. Sincerely, and a student, again, from the city of Winnipeg. So I thought I would put that on the record, as I have read four or five the other way, with opposing views previously.

In regard to the international standards, there is only one right now, and that involves the third round of mathematics through the Council of Ministers of Education, School Achievement Indicators Project, the SAIP for the spring of 2001, and that is a sample of ages 13 to 16 students.

Mrs. Smith: I see on page 55, Assessment and Evaluation, the number of staff have gone from 71.50 to 47.00 FTEs. Could the Minister please outline what positions were eliminated and where the staff members are working now?

Mr. Caldwell: I have been advised that the majority of those were vacancies. There were four redeployments and the rest were vacancies that were not filled.

Mrs. Smith: Does that explain the difference in cost for staff turnover from 162.1 to 304? How is that explained?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chairperson, this is an estimated turnover which is the standard practice

here. The number is relatively high. It has been high in previous years. If the turnover is lower, as with any other unit, we will have to make adjustments, but it is an estimate of turnovers and this has, I think, been the standard practice in years past as well.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, in item 16.2.(d), the objectives set out for Program Development seem fairly comprehensive. Would the Minister please elaborate on plans to integrate technology and resource-based learning?

Mr. Caldwell: There are a number of projects underway. The philosophy of the Department has been for a number of years to try and integrate as much information technology into the normal curriculum applications. Through its Curriculum/Technology Projects, government is acting to provide Manitoba students with the information and communication technology and competencies required for the 21st century. Current status is: supports for teachers who are working with students to achieve information and communication and technology skills and competencies are provided for under the umbrella of the Technology as a Foundation skill document which the Member will be familiar with. Specific initiatives include the following projects: the Interdisciplinary Middle Years Multimedia Project, the Curriculum/Multimedia Integration Project, the Computer Guided Learning Projects, Curriculum Information Technology Integration Project, the GrassRoots Program, Web-based Course Research and Development Project, and the Kindergarten to S4 Web site.

In the future we hope to have the integration of information and technology skills and competencies within the Manitoba curriculum taking place within the development of the Curriculum Navigator.

This on-line teacher resource will be available for beta testing by interested teachers in the fall of the 2000-2001 school year. I see here that the contact is Pat MacDonald, director of Program Development Branch, now the superintendent of Morris-Macdonald School Division. I think that is an announcement that has been recently made. Good for Pat.

Mrs. Smith: Could the Minister please advise the Committee: How does the Department plan

to provide educators, parents and community members with continuous learning sessions that focus on new policies and curricula to support learning, teaching, and assessment? Will the parent advisory councils across Manitoba be involved in this?

Mr. Caldwell: The Department is consulting with the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils right now to how best to accomplish the dialogue in consultation with parent groups throughout the province. If I might, if the Member is finished with the assessment portion today, I could allow Mr. Mayer to go home, if that is okay. Okay. Thank you, I appreciate that.

He is taking his bundles of paper with him. They are very possessive of their papers, these bureaucrats. It is a hallmark of their existence, the ADM advises me.

Mrs. Smith: I understand there are 20 pilot projects at various schools throughout the province designed to integrate technology into curricula, especially in mathematics, language arts, and science. I believe it is called the Interdisciplinary Middle Years Media Project as outlined on page 58.

Could the Minister please advise what schools were selected for the pilot projects?

Mr. Caldwell: We do not have the school list with us right here, but we can provide that for tomorrow. There was some material that we committed to bring back to Estimates. I guess it was two weeks ago now. I have some of that information now in terms of the heads of branches and their responsibilities. I do have some of that material now that I would be pleased to both table and read into the record. Or we could do it later, too; it does not matter.

Mrs. Smith: Because of time, and trying to get relevant—to table it, just give me a copy of this, I could certainly read it for myself, and if I have any questions, I can ask the Minister. I do not feel the Minister has to read every single page. I can certainly do that myself. So, if I could have the copies, that would be great.

Mr. Caldwell: I will have to wait until the deputy gets back because I just noticed that there

is a whole bunch of his stuff in this file folder as well. We will just carry on right now. Thank you.

Mrs. Smith: The Minister could also hand those things over. I could read them as well, you know.

Mr. Caldwell: His laundry list.

Mrs. Smith: Could the Minister please explain why the project is limited to one classroom in each school? Is there a purpose in that, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Caldwell: I am sorry, could the Member repeat the question? I am sorry.

Mrs. Smith: Certainly. Why is the project limited to one classroom in each school? Could the Minister please advise us? For example, only one Grade 8 class in Morden will have the technology when there are five Grade 8 classes that could have it.

* (17:20)

Mr. Caldwell: As in so many areas of every endeavour, this is primarily related to resources. The Department just does not have the resources to put it into every classroom in a school or indeed throughout the province. However, the expectation is that the teachers who are using those resources within the classroom will, in turn, share their skills and information with regard to this with their colleagues. That is the expectation.

Mrs. Smith: Thank you for those comments. I appreciate that. Could the Minister advise this committee: When will the Department determine if the multimedia project should be expanded to all middle-years students?

Mr. Caldwell: The program has proved to be very popular. The feedback that has been coming in to the Department from the field is very positive in this regard. The program is expanding as resources become available, and it is our intent to continue to expand the program as resources become available. But it is a popular program and we acknowledge that and are committed to continuing its growth.

Mrs. Smith: In view of the Expected Result to "provide learners with more equitable access to education and increase program options," what provisions are there for students enrolled in distance learning delivery to obtain computers and computer training? Are these obtainable in remote rural areas of the province specifically?

Mr. Caldwell: There are computers available in schools throughout the province. In fact, Manitoba, in terms of ratios, has amongst the best ratios in the country in terms of numbers of computers to students. The student-computer ratio is very, very good. But there are opportunities throughout the province of Manitoba within schools. It is our intent to continue to build on those resources to in fact enhance even further the ratios that exist.

Mrs. Smith: What changes have been made in the staff and options in the distance delivery courses in the past year, if the Minister could advise this committee on that?

Mr. Caldwell: There has been a 2.7 reduction in the distance delivery in terms of the Department. One of those was a vacancy. The process that we are following now, we have entered into partnerships with 13 divisions to provide for distance delivery to try and get that delivery to occur, to develop courses and deliver it to get that capacity into school divisions proper as opposed to within the Department to build capacity and local divisions. We have also implemented an on-line S3 math course, and an S4 math course is being developed.

Mrs. Smith: I am just wondering if I could diverge at this point and ask the Minister if we could maybe extract the laundry list from the Deputy Minister's file and get the rest of the copies of the committees.

Mr. Caldwell: It is not the committees. The committees, we hopefully will have for Monday. It is the job descriptions of directors of different branches; the Native Education Director at the Human Resource Services, Administration of Finance, Information Technology, and one other, the Research and Planning Branch. The Native Education Director, of course, Juliette Sabot, is here. A couple of weeks ago, Jack Gillespie, who is the Director of Human Resource

Services, Tom Thompson, Director of Finance and Administration, Greg Davis, the Director of the Management Information Services, and of course, the vacant position for the Research and Planning Branch. They are the job descriptions of these individuals and their branches. That is what I have before me. I can table this information for the Member and would be pleased to do so.

Mrs. Smith: I appreciate the Minister doing that, and I understand the committees and the other requests will come by Monday?

Mr. Caldwell: That is our hope.

Mrs. Smith: That will be fine. That would great. Thank you so much.

Going back to the previous question, in talking about distance delivery courses, could the Minister please advise this committee who the staff members are who lead the divisional management team?

Mr. Caldwell: Pat MacDonald and Sam Steindel. In terms of the curriculum distance learning courses, the feedback from school divisions and districts has indicated a need to review previous approaches to locally develop the required curricula in distance learning courses. The factors from this feedback include a desire for greater flexibility on the part of the school divisions and districts in order to provide meaningful learning experiences to students; the desire for school divisions and districts to provide course content in an innovative and responsive ways; and, the opportunities offered by the rapid evolution of internet-based technologies.

There has been a draft consultation document developed. The Member will know the *Beyond the Boundaries* document, a local learning experience in curriculum in distance learning courses handbook for school divisions and districts, which has been prepared and is ready for circulation within the internal and external consultation process. This document proposes policies in the following areas: The first area is the locally developed and acquired curricula; conditions for the use of locally developed and acquired curricula in fulfilment of

students' credit requirements for seniors' graduation; the requirements for the content and structure of the curriculum documents and rules and responsibilities of Manitoba Education and Training for the school divisions' districts.

* (17:30)

The second area is the locally developed and acquired distance learning courses. This document proposes policies in the areas of rights of parents and students with respect to accessing distance learning courses. Conditions for the use of locally developed and acquired distance learning courses and fulfilment of students' credit requirements for seniors' graduation, funding responsibilities, peer review process of distance learning courses, administrative issues relating to course designations, reporting of student grades, and rules and responsibilities of Manitoba Education and Training in the school division districts. The draft consultation document will be circulated internally and externally in a structured attempt to gather input. Resulting data will form the basis of a revised field validation draft that will be circulated to the field, it is hoped by this fall. The regional workshops may be held throughout the 2000-2001 school year for this final version in terms of the local learning experience, curricula and distance education courses is anticipated for the fall 2001 school year. That may answer in further detail some of the previous questions.

Mrs. Smith: On page 61, 16.2.(d), I see the number of FTEs under school programs has gone from 73.54 to 67.04. Could the Minister please advise this committee who left the section and are they on the redeployment list, or have they been rehired in some other area?

Mr. Caldwell: There have been no redeployments as of today. Everyone has a job. The main reductions were the sending back of three secondments and the non-filling of vacancies.

Mrs. Smith: I would like to at this time, and I hope it is the appropriate time—could the Minister please advise under School Programs and Program Implementation. It could be answered all in one question. I understand some of the regional managers who have overseen the

programs across the province are not there anymore. Could you please tell me which ones are not there, and where they are at this point in time?

Mr. Caldwell: Regional offices have been reduced by the closures in Rivers, Gimli and Portage. There still is a regional presence in the field, in the central region, in the North and in the Westman region, with the desire to have a delivery of regional services more streamlined essentially and more targeted.

Mrs. Smith: Could the Minister please advise the Committee which regional managers are not in place right now in terms of also where they might have gone, or are they redeployed back to the school divisions?

Mr. Caldwell: The regional managers are still part of the Department. There has been a reassignment of duties.

Mrs. Smith: I would like to go now to section 2.(e) Program Implementation. My question to the Minister is under Objectives. I know the Department will attempt to determine the areas of support for educators and incorporating sound strategies for both prevention and intervention for students experiencing behavioural problems. I know, Madam Chair, that this is an issue that many teachers face on a daily basis in the classrooms. Madam Chair, I would be interested in knowing or this committee would be interested in knowing what strategies are being considered and who is developing these strategies?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chairperson, as has been practice in the Department for a number of years in this regard, a number of strategies have been utilized and explored within the classroom context. One of them is the increased use of student aides. I know in my own hometown of Brandon there is a work in progress between the Brandon Regional Health Authority and the Brandon School Division centring on the use of Ritalin and monitoring that. There is also a bit of a conjunction taking place in this regard with the Special Education Review to try and determine best practices for incorporating sound strategies in terms of intervening or preventing students experiencing behavioural problems in the

classroom. In the main, the initiatives that have been underway for the last number of years in terms of students behavioural problems are continuing to proceed. The one exception, I think, in this regard is the fact that the Special Education Review, having been completed, is now also in the implementation stage. Some of the recommendations from the Special Ed Review are now being also incorporated into this area.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, could the Minister please advise this committee on what specific recommendations of the Special Education Review does this Minister expect will be implemented in the school year, and who will be involved in the project teams for this implementation?

Mr. Caldwell: Many of the recommendations of the Special Ed Review, of course, were very general. The work of Doctor VanWallegham is just underway. In terms of the initiative for this school year, I think in terms of information support, there is a behaviour support document being developed to provide educators with the resource of best available instructional information for working with all students. That is hoped to be released sometime during the summer months. There is also an FAS/FAE support document being prepared, which would provide educators with resource of best available instructional information for working with students with FAS/FAE, and it is hoped that this fall we will see the publication of that particular support document.

A further support document is the assessment support document, which will provide educators with the resource of best available assessment strategies supporting programming needs of students. It is hoped that that support document will be prepared for the 2000-2001 school term. In terms of the Special education review initiative in action areas, there has been an advisory committee struck by Doctor VanWallegham to receive information and advise on various aspects of the implementation process. That advisory committee includes representatives from the children's coalition, the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the Manitoba

Council of Exceptional Children, the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Student Service Administrators' Association of Manitoba, the University of Manitoba, Manitoba Family Services and Housing, Manitoba Health, and the Native Education Directorate.

The Special Ed Review, as it moves through the implementation stage, has a number of fairly exciting initiatives to keep the Special Ed Review before the field and before the public in a formal sense. There are plans for an annual brochure that will provide special education review implementation information, planned tasks for the year, means of contact and input, and Doctor VanWallegham advises that he wishes to begin the publication of that annual brochure beginning this autumn. There is also a Special Education Review implementation web page being developed to develop web-based communication and to publish materials on-line, as well as to maintain and update materials so that the public in the field and those interested could have instant access. There is a Manitoba service database being developed by Doctor VanWallegham and his support staff which will give a database of government services, advocacy and support groups, service organizations, and professional associations. It is hoped that some time during the summer that that database will be available.

As well, Doctor VanWallegham is proposing an annual conference on special education in the province of Manitoba to provide for a public forum, to update committee work, provide a forum for input and discussion, and to validate professional practices. The hope is to have an annual conference, again, take place beginning some time in the fall term. The Special Education Review initiative was also developing a policy handbook which would publish a position paper on inclusion, which would establish alternate funding models and do research under alternate funding models, which would work with the Schools Finance branch regarding new funding models, and make recommendation regarding alternative funding models to government some time in the 2000-2001 school year.

There are a number of intersectoral collaborations also that have been established by Doctor VanWallegham with regard to the Special Ed Review to establish linkages between

government and non-government organizations and other agencies that serve children with special needs. This intersectoral collaboration will research and provide information regarding opportunities that may exist intersectorally to help support special needs students in the province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, will the activity of the organizations involved in the interjurisdictional and interagency projects and initiatives for integrated services for at-risk children and youth be documented?

* (17:40)

Mr. Caldwell: Yes, Madam Chairperson, it will be documented. There is also a real desire from the Healthy Child Initiative to have available the best information possible for intersectoral opportunities that may exist in the province and more broadly I suppose in the country, so that Manitobans can take advantage of any opportunities that may exist in this particular field in the province and throughout the country.

Mrs. Smith: What does the Minister anticipate from the Manitoba library resource sharing model, and when will it be ready for presentation?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, can I get the Member, please, to repeat the question. I have got quizzical looks from my colleagues from the Department here.

Mrs. Smith: What does the Minister anticipate from the Manitoba library resource sharing model? When will it be ready for presentation?

Mr. Caldwell: If we could take that as notice, the staff member responsible for that particular item is not present right now, and the Deputy would like an opportunity to get him here.

Mrs. Smith: I would be very pleased to do that and look forward to the answer to that. I would be very interested in a description of the various projects listed under bullet 5 on page 63, where the Minister elaborates on the projects and programs and their status. Thank you.

Mr. Caldwell: I guess everybody is getting a little bit tired around here, because the deputy

has asked me again if we could take this one under advisement and provide the information to the Member on Monday.

Mrs. Smith: I would be very pleased to do that.

Mr. Caldwell: I believe the Director is not here. Sorry.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, could the Minister please advise this Committee if he is contemplating resource sharing for both school and public libraries in the province? How will the public library system be involved in developing the report for a seamless provincial library system?

Mr. Caldwell: The staff just provided me with some of the answers to the last question, so I missed this question. I am sorry, if the Member could repeat it, please. Thank you.

Mrs. Smith: Yes, Madam Chair. Would the Minister please advise this Committee if he is contemplating resource sharing for both school and public libraries in the province? I will repeat my second part of the question later, because I know it is getting late in the day. One part of it first.

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, the short answer is, yes, we are contemplating trying to share resources as widely as we can with regard to the library system. The development of a common on-line catalogue is one area that we are looking at. We also have to work intersectorally with the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism as the Department responsible primarily for public library services in the province. We are committed to trying to develop an interlibrary loan program and co-ordinated journal subscriptions in the province, as well as, co-ordinated book purchasing in the province to help us assist in linking all Manitoba libraries, schools, public college, university and government to foster resource sharing and improved library services in the province.

I think it is important to note that linking libraries began in 1994. I believe the Honourable Len Derkach was minister at that time. As the Manitoba Education and Training initiative to establish an affordable system of universal ac-

cess to information resources for all Manitobans, I think that it is important to acknowledge the good work again that the Honourable Mr. Derkach performed in this regard. In 1994, it was determined that this would involve the electronic sharing of library catalogues and resources amongst publicly funded libraries, which would enhance citizen access to educational resources, interdepartmental committee meetings with Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship at that time. Rural Development and Urban Affairs took place. However, due to loss of funding and staff, the initiative moved ahead very, very slowly.

The two libraries of the Department, the Direction des ressources éducatives françaises and the Instructional Resources Unit, are able to participate fully in an electronic resource-sharing network now. The Instructional Resources Unit has refocused this portion of the initiative to include only school libraries and the role of the Department. A contract employee has developed a draft report and resource sharing among Manitoba school libraries and within the broader Manitoba library community.

A final report will recommend an affordable, equitable, electronic model and an appropriate organizational structure with policy standards, procedures, protocols, et cetera, and a course of action in this regard. The consultant's report has been submitted but has not been reviewed or analyzed due to the staff time constraints. The Instructional Resources Unit is planning to develop a pilot project with a small number of schools to test existing resource-sharing software in this regard on their school library automated systems. Problems, of course, will be identified in this pilot, solutions sought, and protocols for a resource sharing will be developed.

* (17:50)

A report will be prepared with recommendations for possible province-wide implementation, and I would hope that that report would be provided and prepared sometime during this current academic year.

Just a couple of other points. What I have just outlined is in fact what the Manitoba resource library sharing model refers to.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, thank you for your comments, Minister, on this. Could the Minister please advise the Committee how the public library system will be involved in developing the report for a seamless provincial library system, and will the public be consulted prior to that happening?

Mr. Caldwell: The consultation will take place through the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship as the Department responsible for public libraries, and there will, no doubt, be an opportunity for public input on that as the process moves forward.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, if libraries are to be amalgamated throughout the province, could the Minister please advise this committee on how the denial of access to schools after hours will be overcome, or is that something that the Minister has had a chance to take a look at?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, there are two points to be made here. One, the Department is going to be maintaining some after-hours access to the departmental library on Portage Avenue. The second point to be made, apart from the hours of operation after a standard workday, is that with on-line access it is less important, in fact, to have physical facilities open after hours, but we are exploring both of those avenues. The library will be open after hours with the schedule, and the library catalogue on-line will be enhanced.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, turning to page 65 in 16.2.(e), the number of FTEs in the sub-appropriation has been reduced from 86.50 to 62.0. Where have the staff members gone? How many were redeployed, and to what departments or areas of the Department?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chairperson, the permanent people in this area have been redeployed within the Department. The remainder were secondments and vacancies.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, so we do not run out of time, I just want to set the foundation for tomorrow or Monday. Monday, I think it is tomorrow. These are the things that I would like to definitely have covered on Monday, if possible. I want to just clarify.

We will be going into Student Services, 16.2.(f), and I did want to clarify three topics that I wanted to discuss, and clarify when this would be appropriate for the Minister to cover these areas. Schools of choice, I do have some questions on, and I understand that the Minister would like to cover that under 16.5.(d). Is that correct?

An Honourable Member: Sure.

Mrs. Smith: We had talked about capital costs and the Minister had mentioned 16.8, if I remember right, and I could not find 16.8, so I think it must have been at the end of the day. When would the Minister like to cover capital costs? I have some questions in that area.

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, 16.8 is page 169 in the Estimates book. If the Member is amenable, Tuesday would be fine, Monday or Tuesday. Would you preference Monday or Tuesday? We could do them all on Monday, if you wish.

Mrs. Smith: Oh, fine, that would be great.

Madam Chair, I do have some questions on the College Initiatives, the expansion of the College Initiatives in reference to Red River College. I understand 16.8, or at what point would it be appropriate to cover that?

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, if the Member wants to cover that on Tuesday, the Executive Director is on holidays, but the Deputy advises me that between the two of us we can somehow muddle through.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, I see we have a couple of minutes left so we might as well continue on, and there are certain questions. We might as well start Student Services, if that is all right with the Minister at this time.

Mr. Caldwell: We could carry on for a couple of minutes. Before we go, it may be that we are just about done anyway because I just saw the Speaker walk into the committee room, but I would like to thank the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) and the Member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), as well as the Member for Fort

Garry (Mrs. Smith) for sitting through this afternoon's Estimates session. Thank you very much.

An Honourable Member: We are happy to be here.

Mr. Caldwell: Happy to be here, they said—*[interjection]* And quietly sitting through the Estimates, that is right.

Mrs. Smith: Madam Chair, I will ask my first question then. We might as well keep going. I see one of the Objectives under Student Services in 16.2.(f) is to provide program and specialized support through the services of consultants for the deaf and hard of hearing. Would the Minister outline the programs and specialized support available to deaf and hard of hearing students?

I realize there are only two minutes left, and I understand that we will be cut off at six o'clock. If the Minister would prefer starting this on Monday, it certainly would be perfectly under-standable.

Mr. Caldwell: Madam Chair, we do provide support for a number of consultants throughout the province to assist divisions and schools to develop the capacity to provide appropriate programming for blind or vision impaired and/or deaf, hard of hearing student staff, by supporting school division staff working with deaf, hard of hearing and blind and visually impaired students through direct teaching of compensatory learning skills for blind, deaf, hard of hearing students by identifying intervention programs and strategies; identifying special materials, equipment and adaptive access technologies, by monitoring the progress of programs, identifying and accessing resources for implementation, facilitating and providing specialized staff development activities and promoting parental involvement and program planning and implementations primarily on a consultative basis with individual teachers and educators in the regions. We go out and do it.

Madam Chairperson: The hour being six o'clock, committee rise.

HEALTH

* (15:00)

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): Would the Committee of Supply please come to order. This

section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Health. Would the Minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

We are on page 87 of the Estimates book, resolution 21.1. Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$558,100. Shall this item pass?

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I note that the Minister's staff are on their way in. I do have in my question a couple of comments that I think relate specifically to staff. I would like them to be here to hear them. I know the Minister is just taking notes, but I would appreciate if the staff could be in attendance.

However, before they get in here I could proceed in my line of questioning with an area which does not impact on necessarily the staff here. Last day when we completed the session, I was talking about the services in rural Manitoba, specifically with regard to some issues that put Manitobans, I think, outside the city of Winnipeg at a distinct disadvantage with people who live in the urban centre. Although we understand that there have to be some differences because we cannot afford the luxury of facilities in each and every community, nevertheless, I think we have to work very hard in creating an environment where people who are outside of the city limits are not necessarily impacted in an adversely negative way when they access services.

One of the areas that is still of great concern to me and to people in rural Manitoba is the issue of charges for ambulance services. This is not new, but I raise this with the Minister because I think he has an opportunity to do something about it.

I guess the issue has escalated in recent months. That is that, although the Minister has removed the \$50 fee for residents from northern Manitoba, what it has done to rural Manitobans is it has increased the disparity in service, because in rural Manitoba if you can be transported by ambulance between facilities you pay the full cost. In northern Manitoba, you cannot be transported by road ambulance. You are transported by air ambulance and the cost is paid for by the Province. Now, it is rare when people

are transported by ground ambulance in northern Manitoba. It is understandable because of distances, but, for example, in an emergency situation, when an air ambulance is called in because a patient requires immediate attention and if that patient is not accepted into a facility in the city of Winnipeg, he or she is then rerouted to another facility where air ambulance does not take part. So therefore at that point in time a ground ambulance is engaged, and the ground ambulance then is at full cost to the patient.

I have several examples, but one glaring one is where indeed that happened, when in the end the patient had to be transported to Winnipeg because even facilities like Brandon could not handle his case. So in the end there was a combination of air and land ambulance to get the patient the care that he required.

Mr. Chair, having said all of this and what I said last day, I do have to say that the Minister's staff have indeed I think been as helpful as they possibly could in these individual circumstances. In addition I have to say in one case where I did appeal almost on bended knee to the Minister, the Minister did not hesitate to put his staff on it right away and do everything possible to indeed address the case. So I do have to give the Minister credit in that regard, because he I think does have compassion for people who perhaps find themselves in unfortunate circumstances. I did want to say on the record that I recognize that the Minister does address those situations as best he can and did in fact address the issue in a very timely and a very positive way.

My comments in no way reflect on his staff because indeed I know his staff and I have worked with them, especially Ms. Sue Hicks, who has been more than helpful to us in addressing some of the issues that we have in rural Manitoba. So I will stop here and allow the Minister to perhaps reflect on some of the comments that I have made and perhaps give me a response to some of the questions that I have posed in this whole area of rural health and rural access to health as well.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Yes, Mr. Chairman, I thank the Member for those comments. I found the comments of the

Member useful and informative. I also appreciate his comments about some of the discourse that occurred yesterday and the acknowledgment that the staff in the Department try to do the best they can, as they did, as they have always done, both when I was in opposition. The pattern basically continues that we try to help each other out when we have difficulties. That was the pattern that was provided to me when I was in the opposition. I hope that we will continue the same pattern. We have tried to continue the same pattern with members opposite, because the bottom line is trying to do what is best for Manitobans where we can.

I want to deal with some of the specifics of the Member's comments, because I did take notes yesterday. I just might note for the record that I have been again joined by Ms. Sue Hicks, Mr. Rick Dedi, and Mr. Dwight Barna from our department. I did take notes yesterday and I wanted to deal with some of them specifically. I also wanted to inquire of the Member opposite for some more specifics.

The Member did indicate that the difficulties that he is mentioning are not new. I appreciate that there have been long-standing difficulties in a number of areas. I just want to point out to the Member something that occurred when the Member was a member of Cabinet.

When the previous government was looking at a number of issues in rural Manitoba they did three things. They undertook a number of studies of emergency services in the province, primarily in rural Manitoba. There was over a period of three years at least two, possibly three, reports done on emergency services. The most recent came to fruition when we assumed office, the recommendation of a task force, a working group on emergency services. So there was a pattern over the past several years of a recognition of a problem with emergency services in the province, and the previous government undertook studies to deal with those difficulties. That is the first issue.

* (15:10)

The second issue was the question of rural hospitals' minimal standards, et cetera. A process was commenced last August for a review and a

study to determine minimal standards for rural hospitals which has come to fruition with respect to the template that the Member has referred to which was basically a creature of the rural health authorities, with the acquiescence and acknowledgment of the previous government and with our knowledge that this was going on as well. So that is the second issue that was being studied both by the previous government and that we assumed when we came into office.

The third area was the area of lab consolidation, which the Member did reference but is also a significant issue outside of Winnipeg and in Winnipeg that has been studied, dare I say, to death since the early '90s. A process was again put in place by members opposite to deal with lab consolidation with specific directives. Again a report came to our attention when we assumed office.

So the Member correctly states that these are not new issues and that these issues have been ongoing difficulties. The previous government, I could be political here and say they were put off and just studied and studied and studied, but I will not, but the previous government was trying to come to grips with these difficulties. All three of these reports and all three of these issues came to our attention when we became government.

Now, clearly they are three areas that require address and require action. I do get very sensitive and I do resent these issues then being turned into political footballs and characterizations that (a) the NDP is going to close hospitals, (b) the NDP is out there to destroy ambulance services.

If we want to be intellectually and logically consistent, lab consolidation, small rural hospitals and minimal standards and emergency services have all been studied and all reviewed. Correctly, though, we are the Government. We promised in one of the planks in our health care—and our platform was to try to improve the quality of health care, and whether one agrees or disagrees the fact is we were elected on that mandate. We now have the responsibility as government. It is now our responsibility to implement or not implement or make effective change or not make effective change. That is

now what we have to do. So, yes, it is now our responsibility to act.

With respect to the emergency services report, what we did on assuming office when we received this report with recommendations was we farmed it out again. We said municipalities, organizations have not had an opportunity to perhaps comment on the recommendations, so we threw it back out to the various regions, municipalities and organizations and said take a look at this report, tell us what is good, tell us what is bad and what should we do in this area?

With respect to lab consolidation, we did the same thing. We threw it back because there was criticism that certain groups and individuals were kept out of the process, and this is not political. The report was put together and there was a limited audience that reviewed that report, and we thought we would broaden the audience in that report.

Now we have the template and there are all kinds of rumours and all kinds of stories floating around about certain actions that were taken. We are not taking any actions on the template. We have the option of accepting it, of rejecting it, of accepting some of the recommendations, of accepting some of the recommendations and moving them back for discussion. This is such a huge issue and is so significant for all of Manitoba that we are going to try to do this properly whatever course of action we choose, but as recently as today, a member came up to me and indicated that plans were to close X hospital and that is not the case.

When I was asked about the template, I said publicly, I mean there are various options. The ideal option would be to raise the conditions in rural Manitoba so that minimal standards can be met by all of the facilities. That would be a preferable option I think we would all agree to. Whether or not we have the resources, the ability to do that is the question, but that certainly is an option.

So the Member is correct to state that these are not new problems, but it is also correct to state that we have to take action on it. I wanted to put on the record those three issues, because they flow through the Member's statements and

the Member's comments about concerns in rural Manitoba. The Member correctly also stated that these are not new issues.

The fact is perhaps they could have been dealt with five years ago; perhaps they could have been dealt with 10 years ago. The reality is we have to deal with them. We have recommendations. We have reports. We have to take action.

On the emergency services issue, what we did this budgetary year is take what we thought were the most significant recommendations in that report and take the recommendations that we saw made the most sense, and we put resources into them. Now those resources are the most significant financial contribution to emergency services that have occurred in this province, in my experience, in at least a decade or maybe a score of years.

We literally doubled the funding in rural Manitoba for essentially ambulance services. We almost doubled the resources available in the city of Winnipeg, recognizing that the resources are woefully, by the very nature of the report, inadequate. The areas we concentrated on were areas where we thought we could achieve the most significant impact to improve access to emergency services in rural Manitoba: the communications issue, the doubling of the amount of fleet vehicles available for rural as well as providing for training and upgrades.

I will get into this more when we get to the line item specifically dealing with this. There are all kinds of ramifications to those issues: the point that the Member made about volunteer services, the impact of volunteer services, the impact and the interaction between firefighters, et cetera. I mean, the option remains for us to have done nothing and to continue and not done anything on the report or to put significant resources into this area.

Why do we put significant resources into this area? Because it was recognized that there has been a deficiency, and there is need for improvement to precisely deal with the point the Member was making that distances, particularly outside of Winnipeg, are crucial and access to emergency services is dependent upon long

geographic distances. We have to improve, before we do anything, the access to emergency services to provide improved benefits to people outside of Winnipeg. So we took that action.

When you take action, naturally there are going to be individuals who have different viewpoints, but generally the recommendations we follow were those made by the committee that was set up by the previous government, and they were recommendations that generally met with the most acceptance by all organizations and all groups outside of Winnipeg. So it was a genuine attempt to fill the gap on emergency transport issues in a first year of a government, within nine months.

The Member talked about the question of transportation and the fees and the costs. I am not going to get into the argument about northern versus rural and southern because we are going to have to agree to disagree on that one and/or we can discuss it further when we get to that line and I have the individuals from the Department here to discuss that issue, because there are wider ramifications in that.

But I can remember sitting as a critic, and it was particularly the minister, Jim McCrae, and constantly dealing with the ambulance issue. What he always said was ambulance services were not covered by medicare, they were not in the normal, and we do not have the capacity and the ability to pay for those.

* (15:20)

I have also been to conferences where I have heard a suggestion that that is perhaps one of the areas that medicare should extend to, that particularly in many jurisdictions where there have been many conversions and closures and problems with the distances, that if you are going to have access and if you are going to deal, if you are going to have trouble maintaining hospital facilities, then you should have augmented emergency services to counteract the effects of not having a closer facility nearby or things along those lines. I have heard people argue that that is one way that medicare should go. I understand in B.C., I think ambulance service is funded in B.C. I have heard suggestions that other jurisdictions are actually talking about it.

So that is a larger issue, and that is an interesting issue to debate in the context of all of the changes that are taking place in medicare. I mean, part of the problem with medicare, and I have said this consistently for years, is we are locked into the old view of what medicare should be and what should be covered, and as we have changed and moved to the community and done different things, we have not extended the coverage to the community and to other agencies.

So the anomaly that is often used is that we want people to go in the community. You pay for their drugs when they are in the hospital. You want to get them out of the hospital and into the community, and then they go into the community and you do not pay for their drugs, except for your coverage under medicare plan. That is a strange anomaly for a system that is evolving. But I digress. I am getting a little bit philosophical here, but it is part of a larger issue.

So the ambulance issue and the ambulance transport issue has not changed in terms of policy or criteria since when the Member was a member of cabinet. Now the Member does raise issues. The Member raised with me an issue of policy changes with respect to admitting privileges to Winnipeg hospitals, and I followed up on that the very day the Member raised it. I checked with the relevant officials myself as to whether or not there had been any change in policy between last year and this year that would somehow suggest that people were not being provided with the same access to hospital facilities in Winnipeg as they had been before. The answer was negative, no, nothing has changed.

Now I trust the Member's good will, and I trust the points the Member brings to my attention. I would like to do some follow-up on specifics, and I would like the Member, if he could, to outline for me specifics, and I will track down all those because sometimes, I know, in the health care field, policy changes take effect that are not actual policy changes. Practices change, and as a consequence, the effect of the policy or practice changes amounts to a change in policy that is unstated. But I do want to assure the Member that I made specific inquiry about the issues the Member raised

previously about whether or not there had been any change whatsoever in the policy, and I was assured, no, that is not the case. In fact, it is not even that there were a change in players generally. The same participants who were generally doing the same activities when the Member was government are the same ones who are doing the same activities now that we are government. So it is not even that there is a new person in there who is making a different judgment and says: No, I do not think that is a policy. In fact, it is the same players.

So I tried to follow up on that, but I would like specifics from the Member with respect to those issues so that we can do follow-up and see if in fact there has been a change that has occurred—while unintended, may possibly have occurred. If it has occurred, obviously we do not want to encourage that, and we do not want to obviously decrease access to care. That is clearly not what any of us want to do. So, if the Member could provide me specifics, I would be happy to follow up. I would appreciate if we could follow up on those, so that I could actually get a systematic view of what is happening and locations and that, perhaps to try to determine what the pattern is. But I assure the Member that there has been no policy change that we are aware of that has occurred.

Now I was concerned with the Member's comments yesterday about the Member's reference to a change in cardiac care and the access to cardiac care. I would also like if the Member could provide me with specifics on that because if I could understand what the Member suggested yesterday that some physicians or some authorities have been told or directed to provide certain standards of cardiac care prior to movement into cardiac care, say, specialists in Winnipeg, and that this is a change from past practice. The Member is nodding in assent. So if I understand that correctly, I will do a follow-up to try to determine if in fact that has taken place. Again, to my knowledge and I did not ask this specifically, my officials do not think that is the case. I did specifically ask for this and run it through the system, but I will specifically ask for this as well and run it through the system just to see if there has been, but I do not think there has been a change in policy.

With respect to the bookings and the slates and the hospital bed availability in the city of

Winnipeg, I also did a direct question on that as a result of the Member's previous inquiry, and I was told there has been no change in policy. So, again, if the Member could provide me with specifics along those lines, I will try to determine whether in fact there has been a change as a result of perhaps some practice changes or some other systematic changes that we are unaware of.

Generally, I think from my notes I have covered most of the issues the Member, I believe, raised. I am sure the Member will follow up with respect to some of the specifics, and we will follow up from Health with respect to the specifics. I am not going to get into an argument at this point about the \$50 northern transport fee. We can have that discussion later on or we can have it now and we will end up agreeing to disagree on the issue. I understand the Member's position. The Member, I think, understands our position with respect to that.

I do want to make the point that the Member suggested in his comments yesterday that maybe things are better in Winnipeg—I mean, he conceded that—and I think that they are generally, and somehow I think was implying that there had not been attention paid to rural Manitoba. I can tell the Member that that is not the case. I can tell the Member though that we are dealing with things systematically, and we want to do things right.

As I indicated, the three major areas that were previously commenced studies under the Government: rural hospital issue, lab consolidation, and the issue of emergency medical services were all reports commenced under the previous administration, came to our attention, and we are actively pursuing all three of those areas. Though I must tell the Member that the template issue has not been dealt with. It was recommendations in reports done by the rural health authorities, and I outlined for the Member what options are available to a government to deal with it.

It is our view that generally the initiatives that we have undertaken, which I think are—now whenever we do this members suggest that we are being less than humble. I am not, I am just relating the facts, the facts that we announced

our hallway initiative, which is a very aggressive and had been a well-recognized approach to hallway medicine, benefits not just the city of Winnipeg but all Manitobans. Certainly, our five-point nursing plan is particularly accepted and particularly important in rural Manitoba.

* (15:30)

The Member knows—because I am sure the Member talks to nurses—that of the two most significant issues the nurses will tell you—and I have talked to hundreds of nurses, and I know the Member probably has, as well—the two issues they brought to our attention, the numbers one and two issues over and over again were (a) bring back the diploma program, which we have done, and secondly, get us training money for upgrading. So we took \$3 million, and we are putting \$3 million out to the regions for nurses to do professional upgrading and training. Those were the numbers one and two almost universal requirements and are particularly important not just in Winnipeg but throughout Manitoba.

Our initiatives with respect to cardiac care that we announced will have significance not just in the city of Winnipeg but throughout the province, the first time a comprehensive all-encompassing approach has actually been implemented and will be worked upon. There will be tangible benefits this year, particularly on the equipment side, which, as I suggested to the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), is clearly—and the Member knows, and I know, and members of this Legislature know how significant those factors were with respect to the cardiac inquest for pediatric heart surgery that is going on now, and we know it has been a problem. One of the attractive aspects of the cardiac program will see within the first six months significant improvements to the equipment for all cardiac care for all Manitobans, albeit located at the two cardiac sites in Winnipeg. That does not address the Member's issue about the other cardiac-related issues that we are going to follow up on.

Our initiatives on mental health that we have commenced, the PACT program that we have put in place for the first time in a decade, while it is mostly directed to Winnipeg, it is interesting, and I think this is a credit to rural

Manitoba, when I asked should we put a PACT program in rural Manitoba as well, I was told, you know, that is one area where, in rural and smaller communities, that is almost in effect, that there is a coming together of resources and an outreach that is not available to many of the wandering—[interjection] Pardon? Yes, to many of the wandering wounded in Winnipeg. So while our PACT initiative is largely confined to Winnipeg, that kind of effort and that kind of assistance is already provided in rural Manitoba.

There will be further initiatives in mental health. There will be significant initiatives in mental health in this province that will benefit all Manitobans. That has been one of the more satisfying issues about being in this position, that the initiatives that were well done—I have said it publicly, they were commenced and well done by the previous administration, but then stalled, for a variety of reasons. We intend to pick that up and move it along, not insignificantly, not different from a lot of initiatives that were earlier announced. It has always been a non-political issue in this Chamber. It has been non-political because of the significance of it, but I can assure the Member that we intend to do that.

One of the reasons that Bill Martin has been brought into the Department of Health—Bill Martin is now working in the Department of Health—is to provide us with assistance and advice in this area and to move that along.

The expansion of a variety of programs, some oncology expansion will take place, oncology services in rural Manitoba. We are looking to some of the more innovative community-based programs in rural Manitoba. There will be further dialysis initiatives, and there will be a variety of—I am not looking at notes; I am going from memory, and if I did refer to my notes, there would be a whole series of other initiatives and measures that I could relate to the Member that are occurring that would outline that, while we have done significant changes in the city of Winnipeg, those changes will continue throughout the entire province.

One of the areas that I am sure the Member will be interested in is in northern Manitoba, a number of Aboriginal health initiatives have and

will be undertaken, significant initiatives, changes in approaches. We are trying to do things differently in the North with relationships with the federal government. We have had a very good rapport with the federal government, and we are trying to cut down the jurisdictional boundaries and trying to improve services, forgetting the jurisdictional questions and just trying to put services in place. In some areas, we have met with some interesting success. In other areas, we are still working, but that is another area that we are moving aggressively in.

Another area where we are going to see significant changes is in personal care homes. That affects all of us. Not only do we have an act before this Legislature concerning personal care homes, The Protection of Persons in Care Act, but we have, for the first time in almost a decade, actually increased funding to personal care homes for supplies and services and for staffing—[interjection] And construction as well, but what has happened in the past, and I used to check that line through every Estimates.

What has happened in the past is there had been increased resources to personal care homes, but the increased resources went to the increased debts. There have not been base-line increases in personal care homes, and they have been suffering under a—we have actually, not as much as I would like, but for the first time, increased both supplies and services ability and staffing to personal care homes, plus the standards issue that was commenced as a result of numerous inquests. We have put out the first form of standards across all personal care homes for implementation, with all of those ensuing difficulties but recognizing that it is a need that we must address.

Mr. Chairperson: The time of the Minister has expired. Is there leave to extend his time?

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, I thank the Minister for his response. I found it enlightening in certain areas in terms of what his department is doing. I have to say to the Minister that I understand, and I guess it comes from having been in government previously, the way in which the department functions, and the fact that initiatives that were started under a previous administration are carried on by a new

administration, and of course, the new administration does take credit for them.

The fact that we have fewer people in hallways today is not just a reality of the last nine months, indeed it is initiatives that were started long before that. I would say a couple of years ago, at least, when 100 beds or more were added to the complement of emergency beds in our hospitals. Of course, I am not going to belittle any effort that this new government has undertaken to try and reduce the number of people in hallways in our hospitals, because I do believe that the Department, along with the Minister, is trying to not only do what is politically correct, but indeed what is practically correct for people who are in our care facilities.

* (15:40)

Mr. Chair, I listened to the Minister's comments carefully and specifically with reference to the changes or not changes that have occurred with regard to transfer of patients into the facilities in the city. I guess you have to live in rural Manitoba to visually see and to feel the impact of not being able to access a facility and what that has on a family. I cannot help erase a particular situation out of my mind because I happened to be in the hospital at the time that the situation occurred, where I will just call him a constituent had suffered a heart attack.

The doctor actually went out to the home of his patient, came back soiled, brought the patient in, and immediately, without changing his clothes or without cleaning up, and I was sitting right in his office, grabbed the telephone and immediately called Winnipeg to get this patient in. The patient was still alive. He spent an hour and a half on the phone, but he asked for an air ambulance to come in. In frustration, he called his wife to bring him a change of clothing. He jumped into a shower, changed into a new set of clothing and jumped into the ambulance with the patient and accompanied that patient to a facility in Brandon because he could not get permission to get the patient into Winnipeg. The end result was that the patient died. He may have died had he been admitted into Winnipeg as well.

If that situation had occurred here in the city of Winnipeg and if I, as an MLA, had been

watching this unravel itself in front of my eyes, I could have made a significant political issue out of it in this House with the media and with the Minister. But that was not going to have any impact on the family in terms of consoling them in a time of this loss, so I did not choose to go that route. Instead, after the doctor returned, he returned in complete fatigue and frustration because he had been working on this patient for several hours, in addition to trying to get him into a Winnipeg facility.

The doctor, who is a South African doctor taking up residence in our province, said to me this is the most frustrating part of my job. He said as a professional my job is to look after the needs of my patients. It is not to fight with the bureaucracy of government or of other health districts to try and get my patient care.

I was joined by the two other doctors in the facility who expressed that same frustration and concern that they have in trying to get further care for their patients, and yet they tell me they do not have the facilities and the equipment in their hospital to deal with these issues. This is just one narrow case of care, because there are many others out there as well. I do not blame this on the Minister. I do not blame this on the present government or on any particular individual in the health care system. It is the way our health care system has evolved for one reason or another.

The Minister also referenced professionals and nurses in our hospitals as well, and I happened to be talking to some nurses last night. I have to indicate that, in our discussions, one of the areas that was raised was the whole issue of care of people in hospitals and whether there has been a change with the change in administration.

One of the acknowledgements of the nurses is that they are still working every bit as hard and even harder than they were before. They have not seen any changes in that regard. They are somewhat frustrated, because they were assured that more staff would be added to the whole complement of nursing. They recognized that there has been some effort made to retrain and train nurses, but the greatest frustration is that we still have a situation in our province where we are short, desperately short, of

professional nurses in our facilities. I do not think that is going to go away overnight.

One of the things the nurses did acknowledge was the fact that the changes we have seen in our health care system are not changes as a result of the last few months of a new government administration, rather they are changes that have occurred as a result of changes that were made a number of years ago, which are now taking effect in our health care system.

Although the Minister takes credit for a lot of these initiatives, I have to say that I temper that credit a little, because indeed I think they are initiatives that, the health care field, the people, the professionals in the health care system, our hospitals, including government, have been taking over a period of time in terms of improving our services to people in our province.

One of the most glaring, I think, disparities in health care in Manitoba is the quality of service and the level of service that is provided to people outside the city of Winnipeg. I have been in hospitals right through this province. I think I have been in hospitals in Morris and in Winkler and in Morden and in Brandon and in Russell and in Neepawa and in Thompson and in The Pas. We are a unique province, Mr. Chair.

We have one large city and many, many small communities and towns, a secondary city that is significantly smaller, and then we have the tiny cities that used to be towns, like the new city of Dauphin, the community of Virden, The Pas, Thompson, Swan River. These are communities that are a long distance from Winnipeg, and although we started during our administration to move services out, such as dialysis and other services, to some of the regional hospitals in our province and some of the smaller hospitals in our province. If there is any message I can give this minister, that is to try and ensure that more of those services are, in fact, decentralized.

It was brought to my attention that women who need the services of specialists in rural Manitoba have to take time from work to be able to travel to get those services, because they are just not available in even our regional hospitals

adequately, and those services are basically here in Winnipeg. They need to travel to the city of Winnipeg. They, first of all, have to take a day of work. Then they have to pay for their transportation costs. They have to probably pay for accommodation or a hotel in the city of Winnipeg. If they have a late afternoon appointment, and they cannot control those, usually it means that they have to take another half day off work in order to be able to travel back to their own communities.

I think that this is sad in today's society and in today's world, and, yes, we as an administration were moving in a direction of providing more of those services in rural Manitoba, and I guess I have to encourage the Minister to continue in that route. I guess the biggest concern I have is, and I did not lay any blame on this minister with regard to the template, the paper that was produced. As a matter of fact, I was somewhat oblivious to it when it was initiated. It did not come to my attention until after the election someone gave me a copy of it and said, did you know? I did not run into the House here and start waving the template around and blaming the Minister for it, because this was an initiative, as I understood it, from the rural health authorities launched—I do not know when. The Minister tells me it was launched in August and I do not have any issue with that.

I have an issue with outcomes of the report of the template that was put forward. It is somewhat scary to people who live in these regions of the province, because when you start taking down the hospital signs because the hospital does not meet the specific standards that had been established, what it means is that people bypass that community. Not only is it a diminishing of the health services in an area, but it means that whole community begins to diminish as well. People walk by the health facility because it cannot offer the services, and they go to neighbouring communities to find those services. They often do not return back to that community, because they establish a relationship between physicians in other communities.

I can tell you where that is happening and it is right in the western side of the province where because of lack of the types of standards, types

of equipment and services, people are bypassing communities and are going to other communities to try and find the services that they require. And, yes, they are driving long distances, they are paying for it, but I think they are doing it not because they want to but because they desperately need the services of some of these specialists that they cannot find in their own communities.

* (15:50)

So, that is one area that concerns me about the template. There are certain facilities that seem to be targeted to change their function. If I recall in the southwest part of the province, I think six out of the eleven facilities will remain as acute care facilities. The rest would be changed into facilities that provide different services. I think this is unacceptable because if you look at the distances in these areas—and it is fine for us to sit here in Winnipeg and say, oh, well, that is just the way it is in this world, the population is decreasing. If these people do not like it, they will have to find another place to live.

I do not think that is an adequate explanation, Mr. Chair. I think we need to ensure that wherever possible we leave at least a minimum kind of facility where there is emergency services for the people in that community, or in that region, so that indeed there are some acute care beds which can accommodate the needs of those people so that they do not have to drive long distances. When I look at the distances that are recommended and the times that are recommended in the template, it somewhat scares me. I mean, put that scenario in the city of Winnipeg and see what the reaction of the population here would be. I think you would find that there is no way that that would ever be accepted. Even a report like that would create such an outrage in the city of Winnipeg that, I think, a government would never ever even consider implementing anything like that. I say that because I think it impacts on other rural members. It does not only impact on my communities that I represent, but it impacts other rural communities, whether it is Dauphin, Swan River or communities in those regions, whether it is Ethelbert, Eriksdale and many of those other smaller communities in rural Manitoba.

I have to tell the Minister that I am not taking issue with the \$50 reduction in northern transportation. I mean that is a prerogative of the Government to do because they form government and that is a policy change that they are going to enact, and I have no argument with that. All I want him to do is to recognize that there is a growing disparity in terms of costs for people in southern Manitoba as compared to the rest of the province. When I say southern Manitoba, I am talking about anything south of the 53rd parallel, Mr. Chair.

So I want to ask the Minister, Mr. Chair, whether or not the services that we were working on as a result of the studies that were done to enhance services to rural Manitobans such as dialysis, chemotherapy and other services that are important—and he did mention the whole area of mental health, and I have to acknowledge that it is an important service in our communities. We do not have enough trained professionals in that area, and we need those services. We need the physiotherapists, we need the other professionals that tend to the needs of a society that is growing older by the day. I want to ask the Minister whether or not he is committed to continuing with the expansion of those services to rural Manitoba, given that the resources of the Province today are in far better condition than they were five and ten years ago.

Mr. Chomiak: I will deal with the answer to the Member's question momentarily. I just wanted to reflect on some of the comments the Member made earlier during his statement. The first is the issue of the cardiac care, and I appreciate that example. I had two or three of those examples in the last several years on the flip side, the same issue. I think it is a really tragic situation, and I will pursue that specifically.

But with respect to the issue in general, I will never forget 1993 when Don Orchard announced, the Minister, there was going to be a bed registry set up. I remember doing an interview with CJOB, and they said, you are not criticizing. I said, no, it is a terrific idea to have a bed registry set up. Then every year I would come to Estimates and say where is the bed registry, and the bed registry has never been set up. We are trying again.

One of the initiatives that we want to try to do is tie in a bed registry with a transportation-

communication set-up that will allow instant access to every part of Manitoba to knowing where beds are, what is available and the quickest and closest spot. That is what we are trying to do. I would not be so bold as to say we are going to do that. I am saying we are financing it, we are budgeting it, we are trying to do that. I hope we can do that. If we can bring that point to bear and the reason I mentioned back to '93, it will help with the ridiculous issue of phoning around to find a bed and finding access to a bed. There has been a recognition of that. It has been worked on for years. We are trying to put that together. I am hopeful that we can put that together. I am also a bit realistic on this knowing that well-intentioned people tried to put it together now for eight years.

It would really serve to deal specifically with the issue that the Member was raising that I encounter, that is, if it were up and functioning properly, that physician would know immediately when and where and how to best access that bed for that patient. I am hopeful that we can do that. It has been too long in coming, but I am also realistic enough to know that the reason it has not come was not because people did not try. People were trying. Obviously, there are problems in doing it. I do not think I am any smarter than anyone else who is here, so we will try. If we can get that in place, I think that will help deal with part of that issue. Notwithstanding that, again, we have to do some specifics on this for the Member to find out how often this is happening and where it is happening and how we can resolve this issue of access to the cardiac care.

I do want to comment about it is true that changes will take place over a longer period of time than I would like or any of us would like with respect to nursing and nursing conditions. I think the fact that we are providing some of the immediate needs of nurses with the re-education and retraining, the significant amount of money that is going into that will have a small effect. Stability in the system will have a better effect, and giving them better working conditions will address the issue more than any other issue. We do have a working group of nurses and a three-person working group of nurses in looking at specific quality of work-life issues, day-to-day issues, security issues, issues of day care, issues

of scheduling, burnout, et cetera, that we have asked for a very quick turnover on so we can implement some immediate changes as fast as at all possible to improve working conditions.

The Member is right. We are still asking nurses to work long hours. It is a difficult situation for them. It would be nice, for example, this year not to have any traditional summer closures. I would love to not have traditional summer closures this year. I would love to have not done that, because that would deal with the issues of traditionally slowdowns over the summertime. But we just could not risk not letting those hardworking professionals get some time off because of all of the extra work and time they have put into it. We just could not risk burning people out anymore. So you make a policy, you make a decision. You make a decision, yes, we are going to have the usual summer closures. I would rather not do that because it would help deal with the demand, but the fact is that nurses and doctors and nurse's aides and all the health professionals need that rest period.

* (16:00)

I can assure the Member, and I can give the Member assurance. The Member used the word "decentralization" when he referred to the expansion of services to rural Manitoba. I do not look at it as decentralization. I look at it as enhancement and improvement of service. It is just a word change. All of those initiatives are continuing, and there have been some initiatives move in other areas, including palliative care, which the Member did mention. As I understand it, all rural health authorities now have a palliative care co-ordinator. Am I correct in that? *[interjection]* They all now have a palliative care co-ordinator to move on the palliative care, and there are going to be further initiatives regarding palliative care that we will be announcing with respect to palliative care. It is one area that the Member did mention, but the dialysis and the chemotherapy and the palliative care are all continuing as the same level or greater but not lesser than when the Member was a member of the Government. There are other initiatives that we are going to be undertaking as well.

The issue of specialists is a perennial problem that we are addressing as members

opposite continue to address. But I can assure the Member that we will also be announcing a new rural doctor initiative. It will be an attempt to deal even more aggressively with the issues of maintaining and more importantly retaining and training rural-based people and northern-based people to become physicians. So we will be undertaking further initiatives. In fact, that process was started under the previous government. We will be funding it and proceeding with a whole series of initiatives in that area. So I do not think there is an area that the Member can point to that we have decreased. In fact we are enhancing all of the resources in that area and will continue the same pattern.

I appreciate the Member's comments with respect to the issue of the template. Those are useful to have on the record, and those comments are useful to us with respect to that. Generally I think I have covered most of the Member's comments.

Mr. Derkach: I thank the Minister for his response, Mr. Chair. As a matter of fact, I look forward to the initiatives that he and his department will undertake to enhance services in rural Manitoba, especially in the areas that require people to travel long distances and wait for long periods of time to get access to regular procedures and regular examinations that can be done in smaller facilities and what happens in fact to allow those facilities to be utilized more fully and allows the physicians in those areas to practise their profession in a more full and more complete way.

I have a question with regard to nursing in rural Manitoba. Acknowledging the fact that the Minister has moved to attempt to encourage more nursing graduates to go into the programs, one of the areas of difficulty I think in rural Manitoba showed itself with the Treherne situation, but indeed it is prevalent right through the rural part of the province. The rigid approach, and I do not know whether it is a result of contracts or negotiated agreements, but the situation is such that nurses today do not get the same ability to take holidays as other professions do. I think the Minister referenced that with regard to the closure of surgeries and procedures for summer months. But it persists throughout the entire year for rural Manitobans.

I see nurses who are working part-time having to travel between facilities to gain enough employment for themselves simply because there does not seem to be an ability for them to work on a full-time basis in some facilities where there is a shortage of nurses. Why that is, I do not understand, but I guess it has something to do with contracts and something with agreements that are negotiated and perhaps the training and the level of nursing capability of those individuals. I think nursing in rural Manitoba is different than it is in urban centres because of distances that have to be travelled. I would like to ask the Minister whether or not he is prepared to set up a review or whether there has been a review recently of the deployment, if you like, of nurses and the usage of nurses in rural communities in rural hospitals?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chair, just before I deal with that issue, I just want to point out to the Member I have just been advised that in June of this year, we are putting in a new cardiac monitoring system in South Eastman. Brandon, in June of this year, was provided with five new cardiac monitors. Brandon was also provided this year with an echocardiograph. So there has been some new equipment recently with respect to cardiac equipment.

The issue of deployment of nursing and nursing mix has been something that—the Member is right to indicate that there are differences between rural and urban Manitoba. I should point out I referenced earlier the fact that we had set up a working committee to deal with some nursing issues. Two of those three members are rural nurses. So there are three nurses: one is from Brandon, one is from Marquette and one is from Winnipeg. One of the reasons we did not want a study and a review is we wanted to have a quick action group that knew nursing, that were involved in nursing and would come back with some real quick fixes. I do not mean quick fix in a negative sense, but I mean things that we could do in the short term that would help nursing conditions. So that is one of the small initiatives we are undertaking.

With regard to staff mix, we have asked every RHA to outline a plan for us as to the changing staff mix and to the employment of

full-time nurses. We have asked them to do that quickly and to get back to us, so we could aggressively pursue that, and we are doing that. In addition, we have also asked that the utilization of LPNs be enhanced, not just in rural Manitoba but in urban Manitoba, to utilize LPNs to the maximum of their ability. We have also asked a directive of that be done and asked for plans from all of the regions for implementation of that. We have asked, and I think quite correctly following the pattern through the RHAs, for them to provide us with those initiatives and what they are doing in that area. We are going to assess it across the province and implement changes where we can.

* (16:10)

It is not as simple as one might hope, because it is bound up in a whole variety of issues but where we can make changes we intend to. Where we have to take further initiatives and further measures we will do that. Basically the health care sector is people providing care, and anything we can do to improve their conditions and improve the way they can deliver that care will have benefits right across the system. That is actually a principle that we are using in all areas. In this area specifically, we have asked for specific plans from each specific region to be put in place and report back to us. This is not over six months or over eight months, this is a relatively short time frame. We are going to review those, and, in addition to that, we have also asked for the utilization of LPNs to be included in that.

In addition, the practice and the issue of nurse education and training outside of Winnipeg is significant. We have continued the practice. I anticipate that that practice will expand, because what we have learned—and by the way, that will happen to both nurses and doctors. What we have obviously learned is the best way to retain people in rural Manitoba is to have rural Manitobans train there. They are far more likely to continue if we can provide them the ability to have their training and if they have opportunities in rural Manitoba. So there are going to be initiatives in those areas as well.

Mr. Derkach: Once again, thank you for the answer, to the Minister. This is not to give our

government or myself a pat on the back, but I go back to the days when the now Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) was Chief of the Opaskwayak band in The Pas. I found myself in the Department of Education. We were able to launch a program at The Pas. I think Mr. Dedi was still part of my staff then. Yes, good guy. We were able to launch a BN program at The Pas. The purpose of that program, of course, was to try and attract more Aboriginal candidates to nursing. That was an expressed view of the then-Chief and his council and also of the people of that northern region.

As I travelled through the North with my responsibility as Rural Development Minister and responsible for northern Manitoba in an economic sense, and Nunavut, what I found was that we lacked Aboriginal people working in the health care field when we had so many Aboriginal people in our health care facilities. It seemed like we needed to enhance even beyond what we had done the availability of training for these people. I extend that to rural Manitoba, because I think that, through the course of our mandate, we did put in nursing programs from our community colleges in satellite communities such as Dauphin, Russell, Flin Flon and others through the, if you like, satellite campuses.

I am wondering whether or not this minister has given us some comfort in terms of the fact that he is looking at how we can continue training in these areas, but whether or not the LPN program and perhaps an upgrading program can be implemented at these satellite campuses, because I note that this year, for example, they have not included a nursing program component in some of the satellite colleges that they had that used to deliver these programs. Now, I do not know if it is just a shortage of students in those programs or whether in fact those programs have run their course. I did not get into that level of detail, but I would like to know from the Minister whether or not he has discussed this issue with the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) and whether they have addressed that issue with regard to training of nursing personnel in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: The Member makes a good point. He is correct. In fact, I can indicate that that is one of the directions we are going in. The

Assiniboine College, which trains LPNs in the province, we have been very encouraging of their efforts. Those efforts will continue. I dare say there are going to be further initiatives. There are going to be further initiatives in this regard.

It was not coincidence that we brought over someone from Education into the Department to assume a position here. One of the reasons for that structural change was to have someone who had experience in that area, who could work directly with Education and be assigned the responsibility of spearheading all of those initiatives. I thought that functionally it would make a lot of sense to have someone who had done that before in the Department of Health, because clearly we are going to move in that area, and we are. In fact, I would like to have been far more aggressive this year, except there is a capacity, with the launch of the diploma program, with some of the other initiatives, there is only a certain capacity that could be met. Although ideally, in terms of need, it would be nice to do it immediately, but we are moving in that direction. There will be initiatives in that direction. The Member is dead on in terms of what we found.

The BN program has met with some success. In some communities, it has been disappointing, and we have to enhance that capacity. Certainly, as well, when I am up North, it is one of the top two or three issues. I mean, clearly, we have a nursing shortage in Winnipeg that it is bad, and we have a nursing shortage in rural Manitoba that is worse. We have one that is terrible in the North. It would be foolhardy not to recognize we need more northern nursing initiatives. We need more rural nursing initiatives and we need more nursing initiatives in urban areas, but clearly on a scale there is no question that we are moving in that direction. That is clearly the intention.

I might point out we often get criticized for just talking about nurses. It will not just be nurses. There are a whole variety of other professionals that require training in a whole variety of areas that we have to undertake initiatives. That is a major preoccupation of some components of our department, and there will be action in that area.

Mr. Derkach: Well, if I can get the Minister to be a little more specific with regard to this effort, I know that he may not want to divulge his plans in the future for how he is going to address the issue, but I believe that this is such a critical issue right now that indeed we can talk about capacity. I do believe that that is an area that has to be moved on right away.

We do have facilities in the North. We do have Keewatin Community College in The Pas. There is also a branch of it in Thompson that I know probably can handle these programs. One of the areas of expressed interest, I guess, in this whole area was in the communities in Nunavut, when we travelled through Arviat, Rankin Inlet and those areas, who do send some of their students to a hospital in Churchill to get some training. Most of them, unfortunately, go to Edmonton, Alberta, and get their training there because of programs that Edmonton has for people in the Nunavut area, so we lose that. I think we lose a resource there because not only are these people there for the training, but indeed it becomes a pool of people. Some of them, in fact, do want to stay in Manitoba and practice their skills in Manitoba before they go back to their communities in Nunavut.

So I would like to ask the Minister whether he can lay before us a more specific plan with regard to his expansion of nursing training in northern and rural Manitoba.

* (16:20)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I would actually like to at this point, but I am not in a position at this point to actually outline the specifics because of various negotiating issues that are sensitive. All I can assure the Member is that we will be expanding capacity and training, but at this point I cannot give the specifics, frankly, because of negotiating sensitivity that is going on right now.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Chair, we have so many areas to move on in Health that I do not want to preoccupy the Minister's time in this one area alone, but I do want to go back to the emergency services area because that is one that I think, in terms of making sure that the people of Manitoba can access service when they are in

difficulty, emergency services are indeed important.

Mr. Stan Struthers, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I want to bring to the Minister's attention the area in the eastern part of my constituency that I represent. That is the Clear Lake, Onanole, Erickson region, which is part of Marquette, where there is I think a critical situation, especially in the months of July, August, and early September. I happened to be in the Erickson community during the Trans Canada Relay team coming through. It was brought to my attention that the team that is providing that service in that region is pretty well burnt out. They just cannot keep up to the demand and to the requirement that is before them, and yet they cannot attract volunteers because of again the requirements under I guess the rural health authority or whoever it is under with regard to standards that have to be met by personnel who are volunteering. So volunteers, for all intents and purposes, have backed away because they just cannot ask their employers for any more time, any more leave to be able to participate.

The other problem is that the standard with regard to being a certain distance away from the ambulance has also turned away some of the volunteers. In rural Manitoba it is a little different than it is in urban centres, because some of the people live five, ten, fifteen miles from a town. They still have livelihoods. They are volunteers. They are prepared to volunteer their services, but they make it very clear that they cannot be in that community in five minutes and have the ambulance out of the garage in less than ten minutes. That is not practical. These are tiny communities. Nevertheless, I think residents in rural Manitoba are prepared to cope with that difference because they understand that these are all volunteers and they will get there just as quickly as they can.

So this is a bit of a concern in that particular area. I hate to draw the Minister's attention to one specific area, but I do so because it is an area that has a significant amount of population during the months of July and August. A lot of people from Brandon, from other areas move out to the cottage area of Clear Lake during that

period of time. There are a lot of people who move out into the communities of Onanole, Lake Audy, and there is Ditch Lake and other areas, small areas in that region which attract a lot of people during the summer months. It is almost impossible to have one ambulance with two people attend to the needs of these people.

I want to ask the Minister whether or not this issue has been brought to him from the Marquette Regional Health Authority and whether or not he has had the ability to be able to address that issue.

Mr. Chomiak: I believe that the Department of Health has been working with Marquette on this issue. We are looking at some proposed options and solutions to try to deal with it, which I understand did not come to any fruition. We will ask them to go back and take another look at it and see if something can be put in place to deal with it.

Mr. Derkach: I thank the Minister for that answer on that specific issue. I will not pursue that one anymore, because I will leave it to the Minister to address. Hopefully we can get a resolution or at least some comfort to those people who are trying to provide the service.

I think one of the areas that has, and I mentioned this before in my opening remarks, and that is—[interjection]

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): Is there agreement then that the Committee will recess for five minutes? [Agreed]

The Committee recessed at 4:26 p.m.

The Committee resumed at 4:31 p.m.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, I want to just pursue the issue of emergency health services. I think one of the areas that is of greatest concern to rural people is the—and I am sorry I am dealing on rural issues, but as a deputy critic for Health, I have been sort of given the area of rural health to concentrate on. That is the area that, I guess, I feel a little more comfortable with and most informed about, and so therefore my time is

going to be spent in that area with the indulgence of the Minister.

I do want to talk about the training with regard to emergency health services in rural Manitoba, and I think that we would have a lot more people who would volunteer their services for emergency services if, in fact, through our health authorities we could become more lenient in the way in which we approach training.

I had a discussion last evening with some health professionals who probably had the same view that I was putting out. If we invested the money to pay for the training of these people rather than having them have to dig into their own pockets to pay for the training, and if we even went so far as to pay their mileage to training centres—which we do not at the present time—so that they could get the training, and if we, in fact, paid even for the substitute time, if you like or whatever you want to call it, leave time that they have to take from their employers, I think we would have a lot more participation of people in the volunteer section of emergency health provision in rural Manitoba.

That is the way we used to do it at one time, Mr. Chair. We used to allow people who volunteered their services for emergency provision of services in communities through our municipalities some small stipend to be able to accommodate or replace perhaps a cost that they had to incur in training. I think we get a significant value from these people. When they come back to that community, they have whatever levels of training that are required and then they basically volunteer their time and services any time of the day, any time of the night, to help out in their community, to help out in the provision of emergency services.

Now, the Minister may say, well, we do provide that, but I can tell the Minister that, yes, we provide for the trainer and we provide for the space where the training is going to be provided, but it is usually done in a distant community; in other words, we cannot do that in every community. What the shortfall is, is the provision of some funding to that individual or group of individuals to get them from point A to point B to that training, first of all, otherwise they have to pay out of their own pockets for the time spent.

The other thing is, in some instances, they do have to take time of work to be able to get that training because it is not provided necessarily when these people are off work. So they have to go to the employer, beg for time off. The employer usually says: Well, okay, if you are going to be away from work, you do not get paid. So there is a significant sacrifice, if you like, in terms of money from these individuals who try to do this as a community service. I think that if we invested some money in providing for that training, we would gain that back in multiple times when these people volunteer their services for emergency health services. We are faced with two scenarios, I believe. One, we either do that and gain some volunteers, or we are going to have to go the other route, which says we will have to have full-time employees who we have to pay pension benefits for and all of the rest to run these services.

I think that in rural Manitoba the preferred option is to do a bit of a mix of having some staff that are there on a full-time basis and also having volunteers, who are so important to our communities. They know our communities, they know the people in our communities.

I want to ask the Minister whether or not he or his staff have given any consideration to this element of training for emergency health services.

Mr. Chomiak: I think the Member has illustrated the issues involved, the issue of volunteers versus regular full-time staff and the tensions and the combinations that occur outside of Winnipeg and the conflicting issues in that regard. I do not have a specific emergency expertise here at the table. The Member is correct. We do provide for training. I have been informed that in some cases some health authorities do provide for some wage benefits and loss. I think the suggestion is valid. I will take it up with the Department and see if in fact where the policy is applied, what cases it is applied. It is an interesting suggestion.

I have had many municipalities into my office. I have visited with many with respect to the issue of how we train staff and the issues surrounding the training. It is an interesting suggestion.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, I would like to defer to my colleague the Member for Morris to ask a few questions in this area if I might, because they are within the whole area of rural health and emergency health services.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): I would just like to bridge with the Minister a specific issue that has been brought to our attention in the central region health area. We were asked to join a group called the BORMAD, the Boyne Region Mutual Aid District, which is a group of volunteer firefighting agencies.

When we did meet with them they discussed with us an issue with regard to communications. I realize that communications is a multi-departmental initiative. But they were very concerned from the standpoint of being volunteer firefighters that the direction that Manitoba Health was going with regard to fleet net communications was a direction that really concerned them. In fact, the chairman of the Boyne Region Mutual Aid District wrote to us sort of a chronological sequence of how the communications are developing. I would like to read this into the record.

This is dated June of 2000. He says: The following is a historical list of the development of fleet net communications in Manitoba. Prior to this any provider on fleet net had existing talk groups. The further development was to enhance existing functions.

In October 1998, the Government Services Emergency Management Organization had requested a meeting with the Office of the Fire Commissioner, Department of Highways, RCMP, Manitoba Health, MTS Mobility, Department of Natural Resources, City of Brandon, Winnipeg police force, Industry Canada, Department of National Defence, and Manitoba Environment. The purpose was to discuss enhanced communications. The Manitoba Association of Fire Chiefs was not invited to this first meeting. Also, Manitoba Health had already begun their process for a province-wide communications system that would allow access by all agencies.

* (16:40)

As a result of the meeting, engineer Glen Philips from MTS has requested to develop a talk group matrix for all users. The purpose of

interagency communication is to simplify and ensure effective links between all services. Standard operating procedures, guidelines, are distributed to all stakeholders, municipalities and fire departments. The RCMP are in the process of developing their new communication system. They adopt the use of the OPS, which is an operational talk group channel, and move forward to implement their system. The fire service and the Manitoba Association of Fire Chiefs continue discussions with respect to the ability of fire and ambulances to have direct communications.

In December of 1998, a communications matrix is ready. Manitoba Health, particularly Mr. McDonald and Mr. Jones, do not accept the plan. All of the parties are in concurrence with the plan. Central Region RHA begins to oversee more ambulance services, i.e., the R.M. of Cartier ambulance located at Elie and Portage are turned over to the Central Region RHA. Once effective communication links are removed by Manitoba Health, fire and ambulance cannot communicate on a direct basis. Then MTS receives a software upgrade for the Motorola GTX fleet net radios.

MTS waits for Manitoba Health to allow installation of ambulance talk groups during the upgrade. Manitoba Health proposes the use of an interagency talk group for fire and ambulance providers. This method forces each group to use the E-911 service through Brandon as a message centre. Just to go aside here, they indicated to us that by using the E-911 each time they wanted to use it as a message centre was the wrong use for the 911 service as it was for people having emergencies and not used to relay messages.

MTS then advises of the issues with this and with the scan feature—and I am not sure what that means. As each radio must identify with a tower, there are inherent radio issues that prevent scan from working properly. Then Manitoba Health advises that ambulance talk groups are not available to fire due to the confidentiality issue.

A senior Crown attorney, Mr. Lofendale, advises that confidentiality is not an issue. A review of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act as well as The Personal Health Information Act shows that

emergency communications is not contrary to these acts. In December of 1999, Manitoba Health installed specific talk groups in Central Region RHA fleet net radios. This severs any previous links to fire services, and fire services have and do provide extrication services like vehicle accidents, trench rescues, hazardous materials, plus any number of fire and fire-related calls.

Ambulances respond to many of the same calls, but direct communication links are not put in place. Fire services have requested access to health talk groups and have offered to pay for the access through MTS. Manitoba Health has denied the access. Health maintains that their talk groups are specific and vital to their operation. Any communication with other providers will be done as follows: (a) through a VHF radio duplication of the systems and limited function or through the off channels, and there are three in total. All are to be assigned by 911. There is also the private call. This feature has been activated on many radios, and each radio has a specific call number. Any agency would be required to have a directory of all numbers in their area and know exactly who was carrying a particular radio. This feature is radio-to-radio only. There are no links with 911 or any other party.

Numerous requests for meetings with Health and fire have resulted in delays and stalled tactics. A meeting with several stakeholders on March 8, 2000, resulted in no resolution to the problem. Health continued to take a stand on their methods and any suggestions from fire were rejected. These rejections were not qualified nor explained; simply, no, it will not work.

Previous to any and all discussions over enhanced communication or health development of interval communication, service providers communicated directly and effectively. In regional health, EMS directors have largely come from the former Winnipeg ambulance service. I could go on to more information that is in here. In fact, what I will do is I will table this for the information of the Minister so that he and his staff can peruse it. There is also an example of the two, what they call matrices. There is a health matrix, and there is also the matrix which

is referred to as rotary knob. They have the province broken up into zones, and they have eight channels on a rotary knob. This was the matrix that was presented at the outset. This was the one apparently that Manitoba Health chose to reject. Instead, the health matrix was set up with six channels. The only channel that fire could work through with the ambulance is on the 911.

Now what these individuals indicated to us, who are volunteer firefighters, was that it was very critical for ambulance and fire to have a direct communication. They cited several examples to us of situations where this communication was important. The one example was a blizzard condition in an area such as Lowe Farm, Manitoba, where a vehicle rollover is reported with people injured and the actual designation of the area where the vehicle rollover occurred is not known because of the blizzard conditions and not knowing the exact geographic location. Without contact between fire and ambulance, they can be going both in different directions and not find the rolled-over vehicle, because they have to do a search along the highway. They are saying that, without that communication, they can actually be at risk. It puts the ambulance at risk and it puts the volunteer fire people at risk as well with regard to not being able to communicate in that type of a situation. Yet it does not require them to go really through E-911 in Brandon.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

There was also the situation where there was a volunteer firefighter who is also a first responder in a grocery store in Morris and an individual shopping there had a heart attack. She was the first one on the scene and so stabilized the patient. So her communication went back to the fire service. The fire service went through E-911 in Brandon, contacted the ambulance, and the ambulance was on its way. The initial code, I am not sure if it is a code one or code red, something like that, high priority, but the patient was soon stabilized quite well. The urgency of the call was downgraded, and the individual, the only way she could get a hold of the ambulance was to go back through E-911 in Brandon to get the message to the ambulance that it was no longer a high-priority code response.

I will leave that issue, unless the Minister wants to respond to it, but that is the issue that was brought up with us from that Boyne Regional Mutual Aid District. Of course, in our discussions with them, we did not indicate that Manitoba Health, choosing the matrix it did, felt sure that was the right matrix to use for communications, but I did see a lot of merit in the matrix that they presented to us, having the ability to speak to any group, including the ambulance, police, et cetera, on their matrix, and it seemed like a logical matrix system for me to use. The one that is being used by the ambulance services seems to be more or less sheltered within definite parameters without any outside communication. So if the Minister wants to comment.

* (16:50)

Mr. Chomiak: I am familiar with the issue. I am aware of the meeting that took place about two weeks ago with respect to this matter. In fact, yesterday the Member for Emerson showed me a copy of this memo and asked for an update.

I said to him that I thought what we would best do is to try to arrange a meeting between our officials and the Member or related members to discuss the issue, so I do not have the officials here to deal with that. I am open to an option of either having the officials from Health here to discuss the issue with members in the course of Estimates or to set up a subsequent meeting where the issue can be discussed, so that is basically how I think we should probably handle it.

I do not know what extent and I do not know what members opposite have in regard to Estimates and the pattern of how we are flowing through, so I will leave it to members if members wish to raise the issue. When we have the specific officials here, we can discuss it at that time or subsequent to Estimates. I undertook to the Member for Emerson that I would set up a meeting. I actually said I thought I would do it in the next day or two, but that is not going to be possible. I am prepared to set up a meeting to discuss that issue as well, so I am open to either/or course of action to deal with this issue.

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Minister very much for his response. I think the right

avenue is the meeting to put all the issues on the table between all the groups. I think that sooner rather than later is the right way to go before all of the system gets put into place and decisions are made which have long-term effects, because the sooner this can be resolved, there may be some ideas on the other side of the issue that are worthwhile. I thank the Minister for that, and if in order to organize the meeting he needs some help with the contacts or getting people to attend the meeting, I would be more than willing to volunteer to help out on that basis.

Mr. Derkach: To the Minister, he referenced the recruitment of rural physicians in his remarks earlier this afternoon, and that is one area that I would like to pursue because it is an area where our government, under the Minister who was the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) at that time, launched a major initiative in the recruitment of physicians for rural Manitoba. I would have to say that many of our rural communities were beneficiaries of that initiative because we now have in our communities not the opportune number of doctors but indeed a complement of doctors that is far better than what it used to be a few years ago. Many of these people are from South Africa, whose training programs, I guess, are very similar to those in Manitoba but who still have to go through the rigorous program of testing before they are certified in the province of Manitoba, as I understand it.

I want to ask the Minister whether or not he is continuing with this initiative of recruitment, whether he is going to launch another initiative into the recruitment of offshore doctors or whether his emphasis is going to be on working with our universities to ensure that, for the long term—this is not something that can happen in the short term—we get a greater number of students who are encouraged to seek education in that area of medicine.

I have to say that our universities were somewhat negative to rural students entering the profession, and I think we saw some evidence of that. As a matter of fact, I worked very hard to try to get a student into medicine who had passed every conceivable hurdle that was put in front of him and yet was denied access to the program. He was accepted, as a matter of fact, in

three different facilities outside our jurisdiction into medicine and yet could not be accepted into the province until, last year, he was accepted for his first year.

I do not know what the stumbling blocks or what the problems are, but I just want to ask the Minister what plans he has with regard to those areas, first of all, the recruitment of doctors for the immediate future and, I guess, the establishment of programs or recruitment programs from our high schools, if you like, to allow students to seek their careers in medicine in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I can indicate that the initiatives with respect to recruitment of doctors are continuing. So we are attempting to continue to recruit foreign doctors to Manitoba, and that continues. I have been struck, if one looks at the studies and some of the reviews that have been done and the presentation made at the AMM convention by Doctor—the name escapes me. Downs? I was very impressed with the emphasis on retention. I think it has become recognized that, while recruitment will continue and will continue aggressively, an emphasis has to be placed on retention.

To that end, we are working with the MMA very co-operatively to try to enhance. We are doing some different things with respect to retaining doctors in Manitoba, including initiatives that have been successful in other jurisdictions, such as meeting with them, receiving their input when doctors are still in school. There is a variety of initiatives. It is interesting, I think the stats, and I am going by memory, are that Saskatchewan manages to maintain 70 percent of their physicians, their locally trained physicians. We do not go anywhere near that in Manitoba. The Member says 40; I recall 30. It is something like that.

So we are going to spend some time and emphasis on trying to develop strategies and initiatives to retain our locally trained doctors. So the recruitment aggressively continues. An emphasis on retention continues, but we are also going to be announcing some aggressive new initiatives on a rural recruitment and retention strategy. We will be announcing or developing a policy to deal with rural recruitment and reten-

tion. The concept will be to attract rural Manitobans to medicine. It will have supports for rural students. It will have rural participation in courses, a rural medicine program, a committee for rural doctors, university support for rural doctors, possibly an increase to enrolment for rural doctors, and that whole package is being put together. Some of those initiatives are actually in this year's budget, and the final ramifications are being worked on.

My experience with the university has been there is a new openness to this requirement for rural doctors, and, in fact, there is a new openness for a requirement for northern Aboriginal as well. So we are having discussions in that area. I think we will see a change in the attitude or the acceptance from the university with respect to this area.

In addition, we are also going to be dealing with the IMGs, which is a perennial, a long-standing and a very difficult area in Manitoba. I know that initiatives have been attempted before, and we, too, will make our attempt to try to deal with the IMGs and hopefully will meet with some success to deal with that.

So the foreign recruitment continues, an enhanced emphasis on retention, including working in specific programs with the MMA and other parties, a specific rural recruitment and retention strategy, and a strategy for IMGs.

I was noted here that Brandon, for example, has been able to recruit an ophthalmologist, three pediatricians, one orthoreniologist, two anesthetists, two pathologists in the last six months. They are having discussions with obstetricians and emergency room physicians and internists in the next few months to try to attract them there. There are other recruitment efforts as well.

* (17:00)

This issue has not been lost on us. We have also expanded the funding for rural psychiatrists, although the psychiatrist issue is, and I know from my experience, a long-standing and difficult one. The funding is there; the bodies are not necessarily, but certainly the fundings are

there. The funding was there under the previous government as well.

I think Manitobans will be generally pleased with the initiatives that we are going to be undertaking for rural and northern physicians in all of those areas because it will be comprehensive and it will cover a lot of the issues that the Member raised with respect to rural docs, and any further advice from the Member would be appreciated. I think it makes a lot of sense to try to move the retention rate of Manitobans and to target. You know, if we can come up 10 percent or 20 percent nearer Saskatchewan, that would be significant, because it is back to the issue that if you can maintain your home-trained people, they are more likely to stay for longer periods of time.

So those efforts are continuing and those efforts will expand, and there are resources in this budget to undertake those initiatives.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, I will pursue this for one more question, if I might, or a couple, and then I will turn the questioning back to the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger). It does not matter what side of the House you are sitting on, this is an area that is of concern.

I smiled when the Minister was talking about the attitude of the university, and we have had some challenges there in the past. I know the Minister's staff will probably hearken back to days when we tried to launch a first-year university Distance Education program where there was extreme resistance by the university at that time to go ahead with that, and yet it made so much sense to do that.

I believe the university, through the efforts of our government, had set aside 10 spaces for rural students in the Faculty of Medicine. I am wondering if the Minister could tell us whether or not those 10 spaces have still been reserved for rural students or whether that has gone by the wayside. Secondly, I was wondering whether or not the Minister could table for us his plan for the recruitment and retention of doctors.

It is not something that I want to pick apart; it is something that I think we can learn from, something that we can perhaps even support in

terms of providing additional physicians for rural Manitoba because I think that is an important issue for all Manitobans.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr Chairperson, I remember as well the discussion about reserving the spots. I am not sure if that was actually formulated in policy. The staff here are not specifically aware of that. I will double-check that just to make sure. In terms of the information I recall reading, I will have to check back, but I am not sure if that is—in any event, it is a good idea, and it is one of the considerations we have. With respect to our rural retention and recruitment strategy, we will provide it to members opposite as soon as it is finalized, in its final form. The outlines of it I related to the Member in my previous response. It is fairly comprehensive; it is the culmination of a process that was started several years ago. It has come to fruition, and I will endeavour to provide it to the Member opposite as soon as we are in a position to finalize it.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Chairman, I would just like to go back to some of the questions in regard to election promises and wondering what the Minister has seen happen with the \$7-million fund. Is that still in place? And what are some of the initiatives that have occurred? How much money might be left in that particular fund?

Mr. Chomiak: As I indicated in my previous comments to the Member, the fund was established in April of last year, that is April of '99. As I recall, the \$7 million was funding that was taken, not from the '98-99 budget but from the preceding budget and was announced in April, and as I indicated to the Member at the time, I recall the announcement very vividly. I remember indicating at the time that it was long overdue and that initiatives of this kind were long overdue and welcome. The six-member committee which was established, I believe, has not changed, consists of Sue Hicks as chairperson from Manitoba Health; Sharon Corby from Selkirk Mental Health Authority; Arlene Wilgosh from the Regional Health Authority of Manitoba as an employer representative; Jan Currie from the Regional Health Authority of Manitoba as an employer representative; Maureen Hancharyk from the Manitoba Nurses' Union; and Irene Giesbrecht from the Manitoba Nurses' Union.

The committee invited individuals and stakeholders to submit proposals and initiatives that address recruitment and retention of nurses in Manitoba. Over 60 proposals and letters were received. A number of programs were approved, including funding for relocation expenses up to \$5,000 for nurses relocating to Manitoba from outside the province. The information provided to me is: 106 nurses have applied for relocation assistance; financial support of 80 percent of course costs up to \$2,000 per individual has been provided for nurses who have taken refresher courses to assist them to re-enter the nursing profession workforce; to date 90 nurses have applied for assistance—66 RNs, 21 LPNs and 3 RPNs; funding for an additional intensive care nurse course for 45 full graduates—20 students completed the program in May.

Also, funding will be provided to assist with courses for the next ICA course scheduled to begin in September of this year. Funding of \$84,000 to facilitate the delivery of a neonatal pediatric critical care course; funding for an intensive care nursing course in the Brandon Regional Health Authority; funding for programs in preoperative nursing through the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the Brandon Regional Health Authority; funding to support the provision of a primary care skills course for nurses in designated northern nursing stations; funding to the University of Manitoba and Brandon University to facilitate licensed practical nursing bridging that will enable LPNs to further their education and obtain registered nurse or registered psychiatric nurse status; funding at the University of Manitoba and Brandon University for forgivable loans to students who enrol in nursing summer terms; support for the principle of an emergency nursing certification program by Distance Education—we are still working on the details of that particular program—and then the funding of \$3 million to support continuing education of RNs, LPNs and RPNs on a provincial basis. That funding has been allocated, as I have indicated earlier, to RHAs based on nursing population.

* (17:10)

Other recruitment activities include display booths and handouts to support representation at local and national job fairs; advertising in local,

national and international newspapers and journals featuring the come home to Manitoba campaign; Web site access with links to the Nurses Recruitment and Retention Fund, averaging 5500 hits per month; the Nurses Recruitment and Retention Fund line was established and received 2400 inquiries; over 1200 relocation information packages have been distributed in response to inquiries regarding nursing opportunities and/or relocation to Manitoba; regular distribution and posting on the Web site of the Nurses Recruitment and Retention Fund update; five mail-outs have been completed with over a thousand copies distributed with each mail-out; and continuing meetings with the underemployed Filipino nurses in Manitoba, the professional associations of MARN and MLPN and educational institutions to explore avenues to facilitate nurses re-entering the professional workplace.

The fund has also been topped up by the Government, and there is presently \$2.7 million remaining.

Mrs. Driedger: I note that, from a number of those initiatives carried out by the fund, a lot of those were initiatives under the previous government. I am wondering if the Minister could tell me how many nurses were hired under that \$7-million fund from the time it was initiated until the election.

Mr. Chomiak: I do not know if we have that specific information.

Mrs. Driedger: I am wondering if the Minister would be prepared to find that particular information. I am sure I know that committee has met fairly diligently, and they have kept good track of information. I am wondering, because I am sure that kind of information is likely readily available, if the Minister would be willing to take it on to find out how many nurses actually were recruited under that, prior to the election.

Mr. Chomiak: The Member has access, clearly indicated, to the previous briefing notes of the former Minister of Health up until the time of the election. I did not see that particular information in the briefing notes. I do not think that information was compiled. I do not think the

information is compiled, with respect to how many nurses were hired as a result of this fund, up until the provincial election, and how many nurses had been hired after the provincial election, with respect to this initiative.

One of the difficulties that we have in this province that I think the Member opposite is probably not aware of, maybe is aware of, is the whole difficulty with information technology, as a result of the failure of the SmartHealth initiative. We are years behind in technological—much information, when I came into office, that I assumed the Department of Health had access to or had the ability to access is not accessible and is not as simple as one would assume would be the case. That is in a variety of areas, be it from the way that physician billings take place to the numbers and statistics with respect to nurses.

I know the Member opposite, her leader has made significant comments with respect to the hiring of nurses, but that particular data is very difficult to compile, because it is done manually. It was a frustration for me when I was in opposition trying to get data. I would ask the Department of Health, assuming that information was available. Then, when I became Minister, I asked for that same information, assuming that the information was available. It was not available, because much of it is done manually. Partially, it is because of the move towards regionalization, and partially it is because of the deficit that we are facing in information technology across the system.

So I did not see it when I came into office, having access to the briefing books. I do not think it is available. The staff tell me that they do not, and in fact Ms. Hicks, who is chair of that committee, indicates that they do not have that specific information. I have not seen that kind of breakdown, so I do not think it is specifically available. I suppose, if a search was made and a manual check was done across the system, some kind of analysis might be able to be made, but I am not sure to what end that would serve anyone's purposes.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could then explain for me why, in one of their news releases during the campaign, they indicated that

fund had only hired five new nurses under the program. If the information is not available now, it could not have been available then. But in black and white on a news release the NDP have indicated that program hired only five new nurses. Where did that information come from?

Mr. Chomiak: That information came to us during the campaign from sources that we had discussed the matter with.

Mrs. Driedger: So I understand then that the Minister did not confirm that. He just used his sources, which I understand was the MNU who provided him with those figures, and he chose to use those sources. Maybe he could go now and ask the MNU. Maybe they could actually provide him with the accurate information then.

Mr. Chomiak: The Member opposite has the same access to the MNU as I do. The Member opposite can go ask the MNU, and I can ask the MNU. I could ask the Department of Health, when I was in opposition. The Member can ask the Department of Health. I have indicated to the Member that those statistics are not available and were not compiled.

Now, if the Member wants to make a political issue of it, that is fine. We used the information from sources. The Member assumed the information came from the MNU. I do not specifically recall at this point, but it could very well be. I do not specifically recall. The Member seems certain. The Member seems certain of a number of issues with respect to nurses. The Member constantly puts on the record information with respect to nursing numbers, something that I dare say never happened during the course of time when the Member was a member of the government and sat and had access to that information. But, all of a sudden, the Member suggests and attempts to put information on the record with regard to the nursing numbers.

I have indicated to the Member the fact that the chairperson of the committee is here and does not have that specific information. I have outlined the reasons and the rationale for that. The Member has been using MNU figures recently. The Member can continue to utilize MNU figures. The Member could also get the

MNU to explain why they were the ones responsible, according to the Member, for the layoff and the firing of 1000 nurses during the course of the government's tenure.

The Member is not taking any responsibility for that and blames it on the MNU, and then utilizes MNU statistics. So it is interesting. The Member has the same access to that information and can simply pick up the phone and attempt to get that information, if that is what the Member deems necessary or deems in her interest.

I get from the tenor of the Member's question that the fact that she wants the number of hirings from the time of the establishment of the fund in April, '99, in the 11th year of a government until the election time and then is going to differentiate between election time until now. It is interesting that the Member should choose that. There have been a lot of initiatives undertaken by this government since the election with respect not just to nurses but right across the spectrum of health care.

If the Member wishes me to concede the fact that the previous government started the \$7-million fund, I have conceded that fact, conceded that fact on many occasions. In fact, I have commended the former government for finally instituting a plan to deal with the crisis in nursing that had been brewing in this province for years.

It was unfortunate at the time that our warnings were not heeded several years ago. If several years ago members opposite had recognized there was a problem, we would not have the substantial nursing shortages that we have in this jurisdiction today. If members opposite had chosen not to cancel the diploma programs, if members opposite had chosen not to—now I have to be careful here—fire a thousand nurses—because the Member is suggesting that it was the MNU that caused the, what is it, relocation of a thousand nurses—if that had not happened, and if 1400 acute care beds had not been closed, then perhaps we would not be in the position we are in today.

* (17:20)

If the Member wishes to defend those policies, then the Member ought to defend those

policies. I do not blame the Member for defending those policies. I do not think there is a lot to defend, but I welcome the Member's initiatives to do that. If the Member wishes to obtain meaningful information and continue this discourse, I am happy to do that. It is an interesting line of questioning, and the Member can question on it along any lines that she sees fit. I have provided the response with respect to the actual data and the actual information that is available to us. The Member has access to determine the number of hirings through the same sources that she makes the point that we determined those during the election campaign.

Mrs. Driedger: I would just point out to the Minister of Health that the document in front of me, which is his own news release from the election, is where I got the information from. I will read it: The Manitoba Nurses' Union has confirmed that only five nurses have relocated to Manitoba as a result of the \$7-million initiative.

It is interesting that he would say that, after he just tells me that it is impossible to really say because nobody has kept accurate records, but yet the NDP, during the election, chose to use something so interesting.

In looking at the \$7-million fund, the Minister has indicated that there is \$2.7 million remaining, is that what he has indicated? Then he talked about a top-up, and then he also mentioned \$3 million as, I am assuming, extra money that has been put into recruitment and retention. I wonder if the Minister could just go over for me a little bit more in terms of the finances of this and whether or not this fund will be replenished as it runs out.

Mr. Chomiak: The Member has to appreciate that I pay careful attention to the questions the Member poses. The Member talked about hiring in her initial question. Then the Member read back to me from my press release "relocation." There is a difference between relocation and hiring. So if the Member could be clearer in specifically what she is referring to, I think the session—well the Member is showing me the document, but the word the Member chose was "hire" in her initial question, and then she reads back to me "relocation."

The stats she asked for were specific hirings, so it makes it very difficult to respond, and the

Member then claims that I am being convoluted in my answers, because I pay very careful attention—

An Honourable Member: It is right in your own documents, both words.

Mr. Chomiak: Well, the Member says both words, but if the Member is posing a question on one issue and then gives another question on a separate issue, it makes it very difficult to respond because those are two separate issues. But that is not what the Member provided me. The Member started with a hiring issue and then quoted back a relocation issue. Unless the Member does not understand, there is a difference between relocation and there is a difference between hiring, and if the Member does not understand that then we are going to have a longer discussion in that regard.

I am not trying to be difficult. I am trying to provide the Member with the information she is requesting, but I am only suggesting to the Member that I do pay careful attention to the words used, and I try to reflect and respond based on the question posed by the Member. And the Member posed two separate questions about two separate issues. The Member may clarify her position, which is fine, but the Member has to recognize that her initial question dealt with hirings, and then she came back with a reference toward relocation. Then she talked about information from the MNU. I note that I said that the press release, according to what the Member said, said confirmed by the MNU.

So, just for purposes of functioning in this committee, I am just suggesting to the Member that we are prepared obviously to answer the questions but that the Member should clarify specifically what she is intending to inquire about so that we can move this along and provide the information that the Member requires.

Mrs. Driedger: Perhaps then the Minister could clarify his own news release because I am quoting from it in both places. Page 1 of the NDP news release: This spring the Tories created a \$7-million fund for recruitment from outside Manitoba but managed to hire only five new nurses under the program. His own document. Page 2 of his own document: The

Manitoba Nurses' Union has confirmed that only five nurses have relocated to Manitoba as a result of the \$7-million initiative.

Perhaps the Minister could clarify for me his own documents because page 2 is a further clarification of his page 1, according to his own news release. So perhaps he could clarify his news release for the record.

Mr. Chomiak: I do not know why the Member is so defensive. I am only trying to clarify from the Member what the Member asked. If the Member reviews Hansard, the Member will see she asked me about hirings. She then quoted me talking about relocation. That is two separate issues. Now the Member is saying in our press release—and I do not carry all of the election press releases here. If the Member wanted to provide me with it—it might have been better if the Member would have provided me with it and not quoted from different parts, so that we would not get confused along these lines.

But the Member now says that we say hiring on one page and relocation on another. I would like to see a copy of that release so that I could see what it actually says because that is not clear from the way the Member posed her questions, the relocation fund, relocated nurses. The issue of hiring is a separate issue. Hiring and relocation are two different things. If they happen to coincide in the press release, that is fine, but the Member ought to clarify and be clear in her mind what she is asking, otherwise it is very difficult to respond.

Mrs. Driedger: Perhaps the Minister, if we could deal with the first part of that—

An Honourable Member: Why do you not table it? If you are reading from a document, you have to table it anyway.

Mrs. Driedger: I would certainly be prepared to get a clean copy of this and table it for the Minister, but perhaps he could clarify for me his first statement from this NDP document: This spring, the Tories created a \$7-million fund for recruitment from outside Manitoba but managed to hire only five new nurses under the program.

The Minister has said that was impossible information to get, and yet the NDP chose to use

that information in the news release without verifying with anybody where that information came from, whether it was accurate.

I wonder if the Minister would like to provide some more clarification around a fairly significant statement made in an election when he talked about the fund hiring only five new nurses.

* (17:30)

Mr. Chomiak: You know, Mr. Chairperson, the Member has contradicted herself again and rolled in and mixed and matched different comments. I think if the Member wants to ask a question, if the Member is reading from a document, I think the rules of this House indicate the Member should table that document. Those are the rules. I think that is one of the reasons that the Member is confused.

Now let me just trace this. I am not trying to be difficult, but I see the Member attempting to try to make some kind of a political point. Maybe she will make a political point, and maybe she can go away thinking that she has made a political point. That is fine. But let me clarify: The Member asked about hiring in the Department of Health from the period at the time of the commencement of the fund until the election. I indicated that we did not have that data.

The Member then said, quoted from me in that release, saying: The NDP said, according to confirmation by the MNU, five are relocated. I went back to the Member and said relocation and hiring are two different things. Then the Member, in her subsequent, subsequent question, indicated it was not confirmed, and somehow indicated that the fact that we had that information during the election campaign and I am saying I do not have that information now from the Department of Health is somehow a contradiction. That is the difficulty we get in when the Member does not provide the information of the document she is reading from, and the reason for the rule is that members choose to refer to specific sentences and specific paragraphs and do not refer to the actual document.

Now I have just done two-and-a-half hours of Estimates with the Member for Morris (Mr.

Pitura) and with the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach). We have had an interesting discourse and an interesting discussion. We have agreed to disagree on some issues. We have gone back and forth on a variety of issues. We have discussed a number of issues. There was some valid and interesting suggestions that I took as notice from members opposite.

But now we are getting into this situation where I find it difficult, because the Member is contradictory in her questions and chooses not to table the entire document. So it makes it very difficult to respond. So, forgetting all of that, why do we not just start all over again and let the Member ask the questions the Member wants to ask under the circumstances.

Mrs. Driedger: As I indicated to the Minister, when I have a clean copy, I am very willing to table this.

An Honourable Member: Why do you not put it aside for now and we will go back to it next time?

Mrs. Driedger: And I would be quite prepared to continue the discussion actually at a later date when we can get into this in more detail.

I would like to ask the Minister, in terms of tabling, he has made a commitment to me to table a number of documents himself. I am wondering where those number of documents are, because there were a number of questions that have been asked, and he indicated that he would provide them.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I will be tabling those documents in due course. I want the opportunity to review those documents prior to tabling.

I just want to advise the Member that I am still waiting for documents that I asked for from Don Orchard, Jim McCrae, Darren Praznik and Eric Stefanson. I am literally still waiting for documentation of information to be tabled. That being the case, I do not intend to do that; I intend to table and provide the information the Member asked for, and I will provide that information. Some of it is prepared; some of it is still being prepared. I want to have an opportunity to review it prior to tabling.

Mrs. Driedger: While the Minister is reviewing the information that he is going to table, I know he indicated to me that he would be prepared to provide information about Mr. Hikel's contract. I am wondering when he is providing me with that information if he could add to it the total amounts spent to date on Mr. Hikel's travel arrangements, his air travel, what has been spent on air travel, whether he is flying economy or first class, any land travel expenses, cell phone expenses, phone expenses, meal expenses, rent or hotel expenses, as the Minister has not provided me with that information yet as to whether he is living in an apartment or in a hotel, and any other expenses that Mr. Hikel might have charged to the Department of Health.

I am wondering if the Minister would provide all of that information along with the information he has agreed to table in regard to Mr. Hikel as well as his resume.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I will be prepared to table the information that is provided as usual practice in this Chamber. I might even go further. I wonder if it might be feasible—I could table the information with respect to the former deputy minister of information that would fly in regularly from Toronto, that was hired by the previous minister for two years, as well as the ADM from that department. It might be useful to do some comparisons in that regard, but I will undertake to follow past practice in that regard and determine the usual procedures.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could indicate and provide evidence for me. He keeps saying that we oppose the diploma program. I am wondering if he could provide evidence, actual evidence to prove that particular statement that he continues to make, if he could provide evidence where he says we oppose the \$3 million he is spending for increasing nursing education, and if he could provide evidence—he is talking about us opposing his commitment to setting up a working group to examine working conditions. I am wondering if the Minister would be prepared to provide evidence to me of those claims that he is making.

Mr. Chomiak: Well, you know, Mr. Chairperson, I sat in this Chamber for nine years and heard the Government every time we voted

against the Budget, shouting down to us You voted against this; you voted against that. If memory serves me correctly, members opposite voted against our budget. Am I correct on that? That implies they did not agree with our spending priorities and our spending commitments. Now members opposite voted against the Budget, but that is not the extent. Now I have asked the Member opposite—*[interjection]*

The Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Mitchelson) will have her opportunity to question me, to provide any advice or suggestion that she might want. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition is the one that when we announced our five-point nursing program said: Well, we did that; we did all of that. That is what we are doing. Well, we did that and all that you have done is done everything that we have done, but we oppose the diploma program, from their actions, that is certainly the case.

You know, Mr. Chairperson, I will not comment about members of the Opposition addressing the BN students who were at the front of the Legislature with respect to the Opposition to the BN program. I have offered members opposite the opportunity, and I said to the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) all you have to say is four or five words: We support the diploma program. That would remove all doubt. But the Member has constantly refused to do that and has indicated that she is not going to do that, obviously from her actions. For me to prove that she is not opposed to the diploma program or that the Opposition who voted against it and have used every opportunity whatsoever to be critical of the program and to put up obstacles, it is pretty evident from us.

Indeed, Mr. Chairperson, one only has to look at who cancelled the diploma program. Who cancelled the diploma program? It was members opposite when they were government who cancelled the diploma program. They cancelled the diploma program when they were government. Then, when we instituted a diploma program, who is out at the mark criticizing the program, appearing in front of crowds to criticize the program, none other than members opposite. Then all during the course of this Legislature for the past several months, at every

opportunity, there has been nary a word in favour of the diploma program and, I might say, in fact, the contrary. It is unfortunate. They voted against the Budget. They are critical at every juncture.

* (17:40)

I have said to the Member for Charleswood and I say to the Leader of the Opposition, you know, stand up with us and just have to say those four words: We support the diploma program. That would remove all doubt, and yet the Member is asking me to provide evidence as to their support or non-support of a program. I would think, Mr. Chairperson, that one need only look at their comments, one need only look at their statements, indeed one need only look at their actions with respect to the diploma program. I will go a step further.

I have in front of me part of the effort that was launched by the former government, I think at a cost of \$700,000, to convince Manitobans that everything was fine in health care. We remember that. There were some pretty glossy publications that went out, some pretty glossy publications. I looked through that program to see where was the mention of a diploma program. It was not there. There was no intention to do that

Then, when we announced our program, all we heard from members opposite was criticism and naysaying, Mr. Chairperson. So I think the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) or the Leader of the Opposition or the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) could quickly remedy this issue, and we could go on to other issues, if they would only stand up and state their support and come with us to support the diploma program to deal with the nursing shortage, but that is not the case. That is not the case. Indeed the record of members opposite in office with respect to nurses is not one that I think is illustrative at all of support for nurses or support for their working conditions or their situation. I know, if I were to mention the firing of a thousand nurses, I will get the response, and I will try to avoid that because I will get the response that they really did not do it; it was really the MNU that did it or someone else that did it. So I am going to avoid that issue.

Clearly, Mr. Chairperson, the issues raised by members opposite, the support given, the fact that they voted against the Budget and these initiatives are all illustrative. That is their right as an opposition. Their right as an opposition is to oppose, and it is clear that they are opposing the diploma program. I do recall an interview with the Leader of the Opposition with respect to our five-point nursing plan. I do note that there was not a reference to the diploma nursing program in the course of the Member's comments, but I do remember the Member indicating that all the other initiatives were started by the previous government.

I do not think that was entirely accurate. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition, in one of her speeches in the Chamber with respect to the nurses' program, indicated—with the exception of the diploma program, interesting—that was all the other things the other government had done. I think it is not accurate factually. I think that some of the initiatives clearly were started by the other government. I have always stated that, and I stated that at my press conference. I state that at all of my press conferences, on every issue.

When I opened the palliative care at St. Boniface, I gave recognition to the previous government starting the program. When I announced midwifery, much to the chagrin of members opposite, I commended the previous ministers for their support of midwifery and, in my comments, indicated that it was done by the previous government.

But, when it comes to nursing, members opposite are very, very sensitive on that issue, and clearly are defensive with respect to their comments. I have seen no evidence whatsoever. The Member likes to refer back to campaign documents and news releases during the campaign and has been referring to them. I look forward to getting a copy so we can discuss the issue the Member raised earlier. I, too, have reviewed comments and advice of members opposite during the course of the campaign and saw no reference whatsoever to diploma nursing. In the August 1999 mail-out, just prior to the election, the blue-and-white mail-out that went to all Manitobans and talked about all the things that were done, there was not a reference to expanding nursing education. There was a

commitment to work with other health professionals to expand opportunities.

We said in the campaign specifically a number of initiatives we wish to undertake. We have delivered in nine months on most of our initiatives, and we are continuing to embark on other initiatives—*[interjection]* Well, the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) says "rhetoric." I would say \$12 million into a hallway medicine initiative that has been recognized nationally is a lot more than rhetoric. *[interjection]* The Member raises one of my favourite issues, transport to the United States. That is a very interesting issue with respect to—the Member for Emerson ought to know that when we announced our initiative to move cancer patients from Winnipeg because of the crisis situation, his leader—at that time she was the health critic—was supportive of that initiative. She was supportive of the initiative, unlike the diploma nursing. She was supportive of the initiative to send patients to the United States for cancer treatment.

Now, if members opposite want to discuss that issue, I would be happy. I am just bursting, actually, but it is a little bit off topic from what the Member asked. I do not want to be off topic, but I am bursting to talk about that particular issue, because I have a lot to say about that particular issue. It would be very interesting to have a discussion in that regard, and I look forward to having an opportunity to discuss the cancer initiative and the initiative to move patients to the United States because of the waiting lists and the extreme situation the people found themselves in. I would be happy to do that.

The Member for Emerson might say what he wants about two-tiered health care, but members opposite had the opportunity to do the same thing. The Member opposite had the opportunity to do the same thing.

But I digress. The Member asked about evidence, whether or not the Member opposite is in favour of the diploma nursing program. I would think the Member opposite would know what her position is. The Member opposite could very easily clear up the uncertainty and could very easily clear up the situation, as I indicated

earlier, by simply indicating whether or not the Member opposite is in favour of the diploma program. I suggest that statements, activities, comments and the fact the Member has voted against this budget, voted against the budget clearly indicates the Member's position with respect to the diploma nursing program. I add further to that, Mr. Chairperson, the fact that it was members opposite who cancelled the diploma programs, and that is one of the reasons that we are in such serious difficulty in Manitoba with respect to nursing shortages.

The members opposite entered into a program, entered into a five-year BN program with the University of Manitoba to educate and train BN nurses, and that was the only pot basically to deal with the RN situation. They cancelled the flow of diploma nurses. We are in a serious, serious nursing shortage in this province, and we would be in a lot better shape in this province had we educated a lot more nurses over the past three years. Unfortunately, we are not in that situation today, and we are faced with the prospect of having to play catch-up and having to put in place a nurses program that deals with diploma nurses and deals with nurses across the entire spectrum of the province. Our nurses program is comprehensive, probably the most comprehensive program to deal with nursing that has probably been undertaken in this province.

* (17:50)

As members opposite may not be aware, under our program, we are intending to do a number of initiatives. Not only are we intending to recruit nurses, enhance the recruitment of nurses from offshore, although we are attempting to do that, that clearly is not a long-term or necessarily the final solution in this regard. Personally, although we are undertaking this initiative, I do not count on the recruitment issue as being the one that will solve problems. Indeed that is why we changed the emphasis of the recruitment and retention plan away from solely relying on recruitment to one of retaining nurses. As part of that initiative, and as I indicated to the Member previously, we put in effect a fund to provide education resources to nurses to provide them with an opportunity to be re-educated and upgraded in their communities.

We provided that at the insistence of nurses whom we talked to, and as I indicated, in our discussions with the nurses, that was suggested as the No. 1 or No. 2 respectively, together with diploma nurses, as the chief thing that we could do, the chief activity that we could do to help nurses in Manitoba. In addition, as I indicated to the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) during our discussion, we also put in place a working group of three nurses, one from Winnipeg, one from Marquette and one from Brandon, who actually would provide for us a review of working conditions and provide for us a quick response and some initiatives to deal with working conditions that nurses face on a daily basis throughout the province. We launched that initiative. We named nurses to that group, and they are working on that initiative in order to provide us with advice as to how to improve the situation with respect to nurses in the province.

In addition, we, of course, and this is the salient issue addressed in the Member's question, we announced the diploma nursing program as an opportunity to provide for another stream of training for RN nurses so that all of our initiatives were not tied up in one educational institution alone, but that the initiatives were provided for in another institution and to provide for another stream. The fact that there has been 1500 applications to the diploma nursing program, I think, is indicative of the interest and the effect that that program has had and will have on nurses and on the public in general.

In addition, with respect to our five-point plan, we are also undertaking activities with respect to nursing advisory council, and there will be more to come in that regard. We are also undertaking to deal with the training of Canadian but foreign-trained nurses. That is a very significant area, both in the area of nurses, nurse's aides and physicians, as I indicated for the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) when we had our extensive and, I thought, very useful discussion. **The utilization of foreign-trained but Canadian personnel has been something that has been grappled with by various governments for some period of time. We are specifically trying to deal with the issue by providing assistance and training to foreign-trained Canadian nurses, nurse's aides and doctors in order to provide them with an opportunity of practising their**

profession in the country of their choice. So the comprehensive five-point nursing plan that we announced covered a whole variety of areas, covered a whole variety of programs.

The Member opposite asked me to provide evidence of her opposition—or, to put it correctly, she wanted to ask me to provide evidence of her being opposed to the diploma nursing program. I think during the course of my discussion here, and I have gone longer than I would like to. *[interjection]*

Well, I actually took my lead from the Member. I told the Member for Russell previously that one does fall into this habit. The longer one is in this institution, one does tend to speak for longer, and I was inspired by the Member for Russell. We would have these 40-minute discourses back and forth for the past two and a half hours, but I found it very useful. We had a very useful discussion about rural issues. We moved it along, and there are a number of issues that the Member for Russell brought to my attention that I am going to follow up on, that I think are obviously important and worth following up on.

We had an interesting exchange of ideas and concepts in a whole bunch of areas in a very non-partisan way, as did my discussion with the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) that I am going to do a follow-up on with respect to another very important issue that he had raised and also the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) had raised with me and that we are going to try to do a follow-up on.

So I guess I am suggesting in my comments I almost prefer to do that and to sort of move it along. But to conclude my comments in this regard is to continue. If the Member is not opposed to the diploma nursing program, even though the evidence suggests that quite clearly—*[interjection]*

The Member asks what evidence, from her seat. I guess I will have to repeat it again, just to make it clear. Every opportunity for criticism of the program has been availed to. The comments of the former Health critic and now Interim Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Mitchelson) with respect to the diploma nursing program—

[interjection]—the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) recalls those comments as well, as do I think a lot of members of this House, as do the, I do not know, 100-or-so people that were in front of the Legislature that day dealing with the issue recall that, as well as the comments of the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

I think this is very salient, the fact that members opposite voted against this initiative in the Budget, voted against an increase of \$135 million in health care, voted against expanded palliative care, voted against a cardiac program, voted against a physician recruitment and retention plan, voted against a cardiac program, voted against a physician recruitment and retention plan, voted against our five-point nursing plan, voted against our hallway medicine initiative, voted against the first time in Manitoba a PACT program to provide mental health services, voted against that, voted against all of those initiatives in the budget.

So the Member has a lot of explaining to do, and I do not think it is incumbent upon me, as the Minister of Health, to defend the Member's position. The Member has taken a position. The Member has taken a position which is obvious to me, and it is the Member's right to oppose our diploma program. That is your right. But, Mr. Chairperson, the Member should not require for me to defend her position. I am sure she is well able to defend her own position with respect to the opposition to the diploma nursing plan. I am sure that the Member opposite will have ample opportunity at many occasions as we proceed over the next months and years to defend her opposition to that plan. That is what we do.

There are many occasions when I was the critic and the Minister would say to me: You opposed this program and that program. I would stand up and say: I do not oppose that program. In fact, I am in favour of that program, but I oppose this, this and this. There were many occasions when previous ministers said that to me. I would stand up in my place and say: No, we are in favour of this, this and this, but we oppose this, this and this.

I am providing the Member with an opportunity to say that, and the Member has not availed herself of that opportunity and has asked

me to somehow defend her position. The Member can defend her own position. It is very clear—

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 6 p.m., Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, July 6, 2000

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