



Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 24, 1996

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Home Care Services

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Minerva Burgess, Rachel Greer, Shayla Greer and others requesting the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of V. Round, Brian Gray and Tanina Ehabajiluk and others requesting the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Home Care Services

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen). It complies with the rules and practices of the House (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

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

THAT this plan calls for the complete divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations,

mainly private for-profit companies as well as the implementation of a user-pay system of home care; and

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

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

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

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

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes? The Clerk will read.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* (1335)

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

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of

Health (Mr. McCrae) to consider reversing their plan to privatize home care services.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

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

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Working for Value Task Force

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, I have a statement for the House along with the tabling.

Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to release in the Legislature today the interim report of the Working for Value Task Force.

Our goal as a government is to collectively find ways of adding value to Manitoba products. As I am sure members of the Legislature know, the rural task force which is chaired by my honourable colleague Mr. Jack Penner, the member for Emerson, and his two co-chairs, Mr. Franklin Pitura, the member for Morris, and Mr. Merv Tweed, the member for Turtle Mountain, held public workshops in 26 communities during February and March. During these meetings Manitobans came together to share their ideas, their concerns, their hopes and their aspirations for their communities' futures. This interim report therefore captures the collective views of Manitobans which in turn will provide a valuable tool to guide future economic development in rural Manitoba.

I would like to briefly refer to some of the findings in the preliminary report, all things Manitobans told us they wanted: investment incentives for value-added

opportunities; better access to information and services; more initiatives to promote rural Manitoba's tourism potential; more entrepreneurship and business-related training; access to research and planning. Rural Manitobans also acknowledge that a change in attitude is required, one that is focused on leadership and vision.

I hope that all members of the Legislature will avail themselves of the opportunity to read this interim report. I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Mr. Penner, Mr. Pitura and Mr. Tweed for their tireless efforts and tremendous contribution which will serve to benefit Manitobans for years to come.

I would also like to thank the many Manitobans who participated in the meetings. Their input, ideas and contribution are key to future strengthening, diversifying and adding value to our rural economy.

Appropriately, the Working for Value Task Force made its preliminary report at Rural Forum '96 which was held in Brandon April 18 to 20. Added to that, our focus for Forum '96 was working for value.

* (1340)

Rural Forum '96 attracted about 10,000 Manitobans, over 325 exhibits featuring some of the best of the products and services in the province of Manitoba and 32 food exhibits representing restaurants and food businesses. Over 400 youth participated in this year's forum in business competitions hosted by two of our forum sponsors, Junior Achievement of Manitoba and the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce.

Rural Forum '96 made each one of us look inside ourselves at our own individual strengths, ingenuity and talent. Whether it is musical talent or a flair for business creativity, it is all contributing towards making the Manitoba economy strong, vital and proud.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge the many sponsors and partners who made Rural Forum '96 a tremendous success, and of course, our most important partner, rural Manitobans. Many thanks to them, for without their participation and commitment to strengthening the rural community, we would not be able to recognize and celebrate the many successes already dotting the rural landscape.

If the tremendous turnout by the more than 325 exhibitors at Rural Forum '96 is any indication of success, we are well along the road to achieving the targeted \$1 billion in export growth set out by a Working for Value initiative. Thank you.

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his statement on the Working for Value Task Force that he has supplied.

Members opposite have spent many hours in listening to communities and listening to people across the province, of course sitting in on these meetings and committees without any type of representation from members of this side of the House who have always said that the only way to go out and to listen to the people is to do it in a collective way and to hear what everybody has to say, and to also have the reports and to have the statements heard by members of this side of the House so that we could collectively decide the way that Manitobans and rural Manitobans wanted to go.

Madam Speaker, I do want to highlight the fact that the forum, the success of the forum, as the minister has said, was a success. I had the opportunity of attending some of the meetings. I found it very interesting that some of the discussions that were brought forward also mentioned the fact that education and health care were important to providing the future development in rural Manitoba. Right now, with the cuts that this government is implementing in health, in education and highways, it is not enhancing the availability for rural Manitobans to do what is necessary for economic development.

The government talks about a task force and listening to the people. It is the same way they listened to the people when it came to education. When it came to the hog producers, when they wanted to be listened to, they did not listen. All the decisions were made long before this task force came into play and will continue under this government, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 9—The Public Health Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 9, The Public Health Amendment Act (Loi

modifiant la Loi sur la santé publique), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 10—The Pharmaceutical Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Attorney General (Mrs. Vodrey), that leave be given to introduce Bill 10, The Pharmaceutical Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pharmacies), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

* (1345)

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this afternoon, 31 teachers from Thailand and seven exchange students from Sweden, Italy, Thailand, Germany, Venezuela, Spain and Austria visiting Manitoba under the sponsorship of AFS Interculture Canada. These visitors are under the direction of Mr. Wayne Raff, principal of George McDowell School.

We have seventeen Grades 10, 11 and 12 students from Ebb and Flow School under the direction of Mr. Don Falk. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings).

We have 15 ESL students from Applied Linguistics Centre under the direction of Margaret James. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Home Care Program Privatization—Public Hearings

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

Madam Speaker, for the last 10 days we have unfortunately had a dispute between the government and the home care workers here in Manitoba. Throughout that period, in fact before that period, Manitobans were telling us and telling MLAs on this side and I am sure MLAs on that side that they were opposed to the ideological plans of the government to privatize.

They were opposed to the profit introduction in our home care area that the government had proposed with their Treasury Board document that became public, and that the clients and the workers and the people of Manitoba wanted to have an input into the decisions the government was making. These were very important decisions affecting the lives of many Manitobans, and they wanted a say in those decisions that the government was making. In fact, the seniors this week, we tabled a letter for the minister a couple of days ago wherein they called this a radical change to home care in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the government today whether they would take the high road on this dispute, listen to the clients, listen to the public, listen to the workers, call a moratorium on their privatization plans and call the public hearings that so many clients and workers are calling for here in the province of Manitoba.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, in a sea of irrationality, we witnessed yesterday an island of reason. I believe there is reason for us all to be quite hopeful. The expression by members of the Manitoba Government Employees' Union yesterday of an acknowledgment of the reality within which we all work was refreshing. I believe that that expression made yesterday by the members of the Manitoba Government Employees' Union will continue to be reflected by the good people who work for the government of Manitoba in this province and that we will have home care services restored very soon.

Pending that decision, we would, of course, urge the honourable members opposite to urge their friends in the upper levels of the union movement to sit with members of the government to negotiate the restoration of services for people in Manitoba who need them on an essential basis.

* (1350)

Privatization—Cost Benefits

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I am disappointed that the minister would call the Manitoba seniors organization an irrational organization. I think the Manitoba seniors organization, the disabled organizations, the many speakers who came before this Legislature who are clients are very rational. I think the Minister of Health owes a great apology to those organizations and those people who use those services. I am quite disappointed in his language here today.

Madam Speaker, in the Treasury Board document that the government issued a while ago and was made public a while ago, and in all the documents that we have looked at, Evelyn Shapiro's information on cost-effectiveness, the grids that are contained within the government documents, the cost studies that the government has provided, we can see no numbers to justify the government's ideological decision to proceed.

In fact, this Treasury Board document may be the only Treasury Board document that I have ever seen that does not have numbers in it in terms of the decisions that the government would make. It only has ideology, an extreme ideology in that regard in terms of, the health policy now is divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment organizations.

Can the minister now today in the House table any long-term study on costs and quality that he has, because we have not seen it yet, and why is the government being driven by extreme ideology as contained in the Treasury Board document, rather than costs, numbers and quality of service that Manitobans desire?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, if there is any ideology it rests with the leadership of the Manitoba Government Employees' Union who made it very clear at the very beginning of their strike that this is an ideological matter for them. This, in their view, has nothing to do with the care of the clients of the home care system; they are busy fighting their battle on the basis of an ideological bent towards monopoly which is not something that is felt is the best

way to provide service to those who need it in our province.

The position of the New Democratic Party, as put forward by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), and I quote, is: Go back to the system we had in the first place.

The Manitoba Society of Seniors, those organizations representing disabled Manitobans and other Manitobans with whom I have consulted extensively over the past couple of years, Madam Speaker, it is the consensus amongst all of them that we have an excellent Home Care program but that there are things that need to be improved in that Home Care program.

But the honourable member for Kildonan says, just go back to the way things were. Madam Speaker, the way things were creates some problems for the sustainability of the Home Care program, those problems being an inability to be responsive. How many times has Vera Chernecki, president of the Manitoba Nurses Union, for example, told us that we cannot properly discharge people from our hospitals because the Home Care program is not responsive enough?

Those are the kinds of things we want and need to address, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the letter we tabled with the Minister of Health on Monday asked the government to put its privatization plans on hold and have public hearings and have a moratorium, and it is in writing.

I would like to ask the minister, in light of the fact that his own assistant deputy minister on March 23, 1996, said, and I quote: I would not hang your hat too much on the \$10 million because it is based on a whole lot of uncertainties right at the moment—in light of the fact that the minister has said there are no savings in the ideological decision of the government, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has said there is \$10-million savings, the ADM is saying, I would not hang my hat on the savings, and the government has placed \$10 million in their budget, can the minister today table the Treasury Board documents that have never been released—if they have them—that justifies the decision to divest themselves of all service delivery in nongovernment organizations including home care? Can he give us the numbers and

facts and figures that back up their proposal, rather than the ideology that seems to be driving a very stubborn government that should have the moratorium and put an end to this dispute and let the public speak out on their home care system, Madam Speaker?

Mr. McCrae: I would encourage the honourable Leader of the Opposition to show enough interest in the clients of the Home Care program to participate in the discussions at the Estimates review level in this Chamber perhaps later this afternoon or at any other occasion that honourable members want to schedule a discussion on the Estimates of the Department of Health, and he will see that the commitment of this government to the Home Care program is extremely significant when compared with that of the government when he and his friend Mr. Pawley were in charge.

We have increased funding, Madam Speaker, to the Home Care program by some 111 percent and in addition to that, this year we are adding another \$8 million to the budget for home care. No such commitment was ever shown by honourable members opposite and indeed the honourable member—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, the honourable members ask me questions. Then they want to put an end to my answers. I mean, why do they ask questions if they do not want to hear the answers?

* (1355)

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, Beauchesne Citation 417 is very clear: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate." I would submit to you that the minister has been asked three very specific questions. On three occasions he has refused to answer those questions. I would like to ask you to call him to order and ask him to answer the question or sit down so we can try and get some real discussion and debate on this issue.

Madam Speaker: I would remind all honourable members that common courtesy is required in this

Chamber so that those members wishing to hear the questions and those wishing to pose questions can be heard and, conversely, so that those members responding to questions can be heard.

On the point of order, I am going to say there was not a point of order. Regrettably, I was not able to hear all of the remarks of the minister because of the disruption in the Chamber.

Home Care Program Privatization—Moratorium

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

We have received no documentation, no support, no advice as to why the government is privatizing. Today we find that even an owner of a private home care agency has said, and I quote: The government workers have demonstrated a really strong track record over the years in providing a wonderful service. I would be very sorry to see that home care service as it is currently offered now be dissolved.

Madam Speaker, even the few people who support, I presume, the government's privatization appear to indicate they are not in favour. Can the minister do the right thing, put a moratorium on this, allow the people of Manitoba to discuss it, allow it to come under scrutiny to see the actual documentation? Will they put it under a moratorium today and end the strike?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I believe the honourable member is referring to a news report quoting the owner of a home health care service company. The trouble with the honourable members opposite sometimes is they forget to tell you the rest of the story. If the honourable member would like to table that and maybe share with the rest of us, the story goes on to point out that this particular person the honourable member is quoting also goes on to say, it does not matter whether you are employed by the private sector or the public sector. This person has no doubt that the quality of care would not in any way be affected by any changes like this.

So the honourable member should maybe be a little more forthcoming and forthright with us when he is

referring to the comments of people who take his side of the argument. You cannot be quite so selective. Put the whole story on the record.

* (1400)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, perhaps the minister now, given that he does not understand the article that I read and he perhaps could read it again, will the minister—if the policy is so strong, if he is so convinced his position is right—put a moratorium on his plan, allow the public to discuss it, allow for input from the public, allow us to review the minister's documents, put it on hold, end the strike, stop the line-up and the fill-up of the hospitals and do the right thing? Will he today announce a moratorium?

Mr. McCrae: Well, for about the first time, at least I can congratulate the honourable member for being consistent, because what he is asking here is consistent with his policy of go back to the system we had in the first place. The only trouble with his policy is that it is not consistent with his own report, the Price Waterhouse report commissioned by the NDP, which points out many, many areas where improvement is required in our Home Care program, which, by the way, suggests as the solution to all the problems, the NDP should bring in user fees and the NDP should bring in cuts in service. We reject that.

We recognize, however, that there are problems we need to address, and it is nice to know that there is support in the public service of this province for the people of this province and a recognition that there is a reality that exists. I just wish honourable members in the New Democratic Party would join the rest of us in the '90s and understand that there are realities within which we have to work.

Privatization—Report Tabling Request

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): My supplementary again is to the Minister of Health.

Madam Speaker, I will table the minister's own Treasury Board document, dated December 16, 1995. I would like to ask the minister, will the minister finally explain to this House why it is government policy, divestiture of all service delivery to nongovernment

organizations? Will he provide the tables, the studies, the experts, anybody from the Department of Health or anybody in Manitoba who can justify this ridiculous policy that has forced us into a strike situation, forced workers off and forced clients to suffer at the hands of this government?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I understand why honourable members today are feeling so despondent. The despondency that we see opposite in this House today is a reflection of their acknowledgment that they have over the—I do not know for how long, but certainly today they misread what is going on in our province. Honourable members opposite may begin to join the human race in the '90s very soon. We hope that will happen and then the questions that come forward in this House will be far more constructive and far more relevant to the realities of the '90s.

Victims Assistance Programs Funding Reduction

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice.

Yesterday the minister said, as I think she says every time she has an audience, that this government has made a very strong commitment to victims of crime, just like in the election when the government said victims would get top priority.

My question for the minister is: Given this talk and given more victims than ever under this government, am I reading this year's Estimates at page 99 right where it says under Victims Assistance, a cut of 6 percent, the largest single service cut in her department?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I will say again for the members across the way, yes, this government does have a commitment to victims. We do have a commitment to victims services. We are at the moment undertaking a provincial study to deal with strategies to deal with victims all across this province. We also continue to fund programs to assist victims. We have extended the RCMP program for victims services for another year while we are developing our strategy.

Yes, there is some change in the Victims Assistance line. It does come from a decision in the area of the Criminal Injuries Compensation area.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister explain her cut of \$116,700 to victims assistance in light of this very unique and specific election pledge made during the campaign, which the minister co-chaired, and I quote: The Premier (Mr. Filmon) said victims assistance funding will be increased by two—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. Johns was recognized for a supplementary question, and I believe he asked the supplementary question and is now reading from text.

The honourable member for St. Johns, quickly rephrase your question.

Mr. Mackintosh: How can the minister explain this specific promise? The Premier said victims assistance funding will be increased by \$250,000 in the 1996-97 fiscal year.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, what that refers to is our support for the RCMP program for victims assistance.

I find it amazing to see the member laughing. The commitment made to victims by the government across the way simply did not exist. This government has made that commitment. We have entered into partnerships with organizations such as the RCMP and community groups to provide services to victims.

We provide additional services to victims in the form of our Women's Advocacy Program. We have expanded the Women's Advocacy Program. Members across the way did nothing like that when they had the opportunity—nothing.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister explain, while the money goes to the Victims Assistance committee, not RCMP—that during her tenure in office, victims assistance grants have been slashed by 42 percent in just four fiscal years. Is that a top priority, Madam Speaker?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, absolutely not, and when the member and I have the opportunity to in fact get into a detailed discussion in the Estimates of the Department of Justice, I think he will find that some of those changes come from payouts in the area of Criminal

Injuries Compensation when the payouts have been completed. So in fact he is wrong again, as he always is.

Madam Speaker, this government continues their commitment in the area of support to victims. We have enhanced that commitment in support to victims; we continue it. When we are able to bring forward in the next while our provincial strategy on victims, I believe it will provide very significant and additional support to victims across this province. They are in fact a priority. We continue to bring in legislation as well which puts the victim back into the system.

Home Care Program Minister of Health's Comments

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, when it comes to many issues, including the home care issue, there is a growing crisis of democracy in this province. We have a government that is afraid to face home care clients and many other Manitobans at a protest on Monday, that ducks out of, in the minister's case, going to the Deer Lodge opening, which is afraid to face the people of Manitoba.

Instead of trying to bring Manitobans together to solve this dispute, I would like to ask why the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) is making such statements as he did on April 17, 1996, saying that the NDP stood for taking people's groceries out of their shopping baskets and throwing them on the ground and hissing and shouting and spitting and slashing tires and breaking windows and bombs. How does the minister think such a ridiculous statement helps settle the home care situation in this province?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Again, Madam Speaker, the honourable member for Thompson is very sensitive and somewhat despondent today. His very, very close links with the leadership of unions which have in the past engaged and been involved in activities which are clearly against the public interest, unkind and profoundly rude in some cases—and it is that sort of stuff that goes on when you get into certain disputes—honourable members opposite consistently find themselves on the side of the leadership of the unions and not on the side of the ordinary people of this province. The purpose of my comments is to attempt to expose these honourable members for what they really are.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a supplementary question to the same minister.

When will the minister realize that we are not going to resolve the home care dispute until the minister stops making inflammatory comments against anyone who disagrees with him, whether it be the New Democratic Party, whether it be home care clients, home care workers, the Manitoba Society of Seniors? When is he going to bring this province together to solve the problem with home care instead of making inflammatory comments on a daily basis in this House?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, rather than engaging in personal attacks, I suggest that we might resolve disputes better at the negotiating table, and it might be useful if the leadership of the Manitoba Government Employees' Union would search inside their hearts and perhaps find it within their hearts to agree to provide services to people who need them on an essential basis. That to me would go a long way to resolving the problems that some of the clients of our home care system have. But honourable members opposite consistently support strike action. I do not support strike action. I support providing services to people who need them.

* (1410)

Minister of Health Replacement

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, if the minister will not withdraw those comments, and the kinds of comments he has been making about many other Manitobans, I would like to ask the Deputy Premier if he will ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to ask for the replacement of the Minister of Health so we can get somebody in that portfolio who can work with Manitobans instead of—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. James Downey (Deputy Premier): Madam Speaker, let me respond by saying that I, first of all, take this opportunity to acknowledge the workers for the people of Manitoba in working on behalf of the government to carry out their responsibilities in a very

responsible manner. It is that kind of commitment that should be acknowledged and thanked, and we do so.

Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate today that the member who has asked the question, the New Democratic Party, has again attacked the workings of the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), a man who has stood to make sure the services have been provided for those people who are in need of the home care services. He is, in fact, making sure that is provided, while members opposite, for their own political purposes, have aggravated and agitated to get a strike against the people of Manitoba in the services that have been provided. It is for their political purposes, and they and the union leader should consider what their future path will be.

Point of Order

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I believe the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), and now the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), are alleging that members on this side would break the law in agitating for a certain vote in a democratic institution under The Labour Relations Act.

I know members opposite do not understand that these decisions are made in a democratic way under The Labour Relations Act, but we on this side follow the law, believe in democracy and it is about time the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Health also respect The Labour Relations Act and other institutions in a free and democratic society. Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the official opposition did not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

Landfill Sites—Winnipeg Requirements

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment.

The Minister of Environment seems to be quite content in terms of standing by to allow BFI to put together another garbage dump in the north end of the city of Winnipeg. Call it what you will, it is a garbage dump, and the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable member for Inkster, to quickly pose his question.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, just over a year ago a report on the public hearings from the CEC recommended, and I quote: That the Manitoba government should provide leadership in the development of an integrated system for solid waste management in and around the capital region.

Can the Minister of Environment give this Chamber any evidence whatsoever that will illustrate that the city of Winnipeg needs to have three garbage dumps?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, the member for Inkster should know that we have spent considerable time over the last couple of years working in the capital regions organization to make sure that the city of Winnipeg and its surrounding authorities are at least attempting to work together on some long-range planning for the area, but there was certainly no broad understanding or agreement on that, and this proposal put forward by BFI has been undertaken to be reviewed for its environmental merits or lack of.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the north end needs a hospital instead of a garbage dump.

My question to the Minister of Environment: Can he tell this House that in fact there is a need in the capital region for the city of Winnipeg for yet another garbage dump?

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, there were two sets of hearings on this proposal, giving the member considerable opportunity to raise issues if he so chose. But, in reviewing the proposal, the Clean Environment Commission indicated that there were a number of jurisdictions—or was told there were a number of jurisdictions that needed service.

Frankly, one of the problems that we have had is that when jurisdictions within the capital region, other than the City of Winnipeg, were looking for services and

offering to pay for those services, they were flat-out told to forget it. So they went ahead and began establishing alternative services for themselves. As a result, we now see this application being brought forward by BFI.

Mr. Lamoureux: Given that, is it not in the City of Winnipeg's and in essence the province's best interest then that the Minister of Environment follow the recommendation put forward by CEC, meet with the City of Winnipeg and BFI, and see if in fact they can come up with a compromise as opposed to seeing a third garbage dump put in the city of Winnipeg?

Mr. Cummings: I am glad to see that the member for Inkster is now onside. I agree that we need to have the City of Winnipeg and BFI sit down and clearly address the issues between them, but frankly you have to have two willing parties and one of them is not willing.

* (1420)

Education System Home Economics Curriculum

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): My question is for the Minister of Education. The gap between what a Tory government says it will do and what it really plans to do is enormous, and most Manitobans now recognize it.

Education plans talked of renewal, of enhancement, but the reality is continuous cuts to the public education system and loss of program opportunities for our children.

Can the Minister of Education confirm that as a result of both her funding cuts and her timetabling disruptions, home economics will be no longer offered in Grades 7 and 8, St. Boniface School Division, Rhineland School Division, Seine River School Division, Pelly Trail School Division, that in Pine Creek School Division it will be cut from Grade 7 to Senior 4, and that in six other divisions, primarily in rural Manitoba, it is under review for elimination next year?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I do not have with me what school divisions have chosen as part of their own timetabling. I will get that information and bring it back to the member or

confirm it for her in Estimates or some other area where we are together.

Ms. Friesen: Would the minister tell the House what her answer has been to the letters she has received on this from, for example, the Ashern School Advisory Council, who wrote to her that the elimination of home economics would hurt our students in a very profound way, or to Gladstone Parent Councils who, like many Manitobans, recognize that our children need the hands-on approach to learning, and underlined for the minister that many of these classes also provide life skills to these children? How can she claim that she does not know this?

Mrs. McIntosh: I thought, in the first question, the member had asked me to confirm what decisions school divisions have made concerning the courses they choose to offer to their students. That confirmation I need to obtain from school divisions.

I know that school divisions in setting their school plans are able now to better reflect the wishes of their constituents, the parents in the community who may say they value, for example, music over another elective. As in many areas, the greater flexibility that has been requested so that schools and communities have the opportunity to have the programs in the school reflect community wishes, decisions have to be made by boards as to how far they wish to go to accommodate the community.

I do not have those final decisions made by those boards here with me today. I will obtain them and provide them to her.

Independent Schools Funding Formula

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Could the minister inform the House of any private schools in Manitoba which have eliminated significant programs this year as a result of her 15 percent increase in funding to those schools?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Again, I do not have decisions that have been made by schools, school boards or individual schools as to those programs they have selected according to their electives.

I do know that most independent schools have shared services agreements with school divisions to provide things such as band, music arts, et cetera, and that many share bus routes, things like that, where independent schools and school divisions work in co-operative relationships with each other to maximize cost-effectiveness for both. Those shared services agreements, obviously, if an independent school is purchasing a shared services agreement on home economics, for example, with a school division, that would be dependent upon whether the school division is offering that particular course.

Madam Speaker, we do know that we have courses that are compulsory, primarily talking specifically about literacy, language arts and mathematics in our schools. Those pertain to all schools, independent and public.

Home Care Program Privatization—Moratorium

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, when a minister establishes an advisory committee, as the minister did on continuing care, you would think that the minister would listen to the recommendations of that committee.

Instead, the minister is pushing ahead with privatization of home care, when his own committee says, rural regionalization transferred to the Winnipeg home care agency and the resulting massive contracting out had the potential to erode the quality of provincial health care.

Will the minister listen to his own committee? Will he listen to the home care workers? Will he listen to the clients and put in place a moratorium so that home care can continue and we can have public hearings on how people want this service delivered, not on the path of the minister's privatization?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, we are listening to the Advisory Committee on Continuing Care. We are listening to Price Waterhouse. We are listening to all the others who have reminded us of some of the problems that exist and reminded us of the danger of exactly what the honourable member referred to. That is why an incremental approach is the approach being taken.

We are talking about 25 percent—putting 25 percent of home care services in Winnipeg—being the subject of competition, no changes in rural Manitoba. Honourable members opposite lead people to believe that what we are talking about is user fees and cuts in services.

No, that is the NDP approach as set out in their report, the Price Waterhouse report which they commissioned, which calls for user fees and calls for cuts in service. We are not doing it that way. Even though that is their way, it is not ours.

Responsibility—Rural Manitoba

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): I would like to ask the minister if he is now backing off on his—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Wowchuk: Is the minister telling us that he is now backing off on his own Treasury Board document that says, regional health authorities will take over all service deliveries in rural areas? Is this what he is saying, because that was not included in the document that he tabled?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): It is an established policy, Madam Speaker, that these services will be the responsibility of the regional health authorities in the future. That is not new. That has been recommended by the Northern and Rural Health Advisory Council, has been stated as government policy for a long time. The only thing that these regional health authorities will have to do is meet or exceed provincial standards.

Home Care Program Privatization—Standards

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, where are the standards that these people will have to meet if you have not tabled any standards? Where are the standards and where is the agency, the public agency that is going to deliver if you are privatizing? The regional health boards will have to privatize the home care service.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): I have to admit, Madam Speaker, I sometimes have trouble

understanding honourable members opposite. Are they seriously telling me that what they think is the best home care system in North America has no standards? Is that what the honourable member is trying to tell me?

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Burrows, with one very short question.

Child and Family Services Children's Advocate Recommendations

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, last year in the Children's Advocate's first annual report there were dozens of recommendations. In his second annual report which is now over a year old, the Children's Advocate observes that very little change appears to have occurred in spite of all the rhetoric from the Minister of Family Services, and that Manitoba's Child and Family Services system needs to be rebuilt to meet the needs of children and families and he hopes that any efforts to redesign these services does not include offloading onto families, including foster families, or at the expense of children in care which appears to be the route outlined by recent policy initiatives in the department.

I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services, what is she doing to rebuild the Child and Family Services system, given the sheer numbers of complaints to the Children's Advocate and the systemic problems identified by the Children's Advocate?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question. It does allow me to indicate that I think the protection of children and the care for children does cross party lines, and I believe all members of the House and all Manitobans want to ensure that children first and foremost are protected and cared for.

I want to indicate again to my honourable friend that it was this government that put in place the Children's Advocate, and it his role to provide constructive criticism on things that are not working in the system. The first step that we have taken this year is to restructure the Department of Family Services in the last couple of weeks that does place all the services for children under one assistant deputy minister. We will be placing more

of a focus on compliance and community development, and there will be things that I will be able to discuss in great detail through the Estimates process with my honourable friend.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Madam Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

A point of order was raised by the government House leader (Mr. Ernst) during Question Period on April 12, 1996, about the preamble to a question by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). In doing so, the government House leader cited portions of Beauchesne Citation 409.(1) and (2) which read: A question "... must be a question, not an expression of an opinion, representation, argumentation, nor debate." "... "The question must be brief. A preamble need not exceed one carefully drawn sentence. ... A supplementary question should need no preamble."

I have reviewed the Hansard of April 12 and find that the preamble of the honourable member for Kildonan was not unduly long in light of Manitoba's Question Period practices. Further, in my opinion, the question did not constitute an argument or debate which would have been contrary to our Question Period guidelines.

Therefore, I rule that the government House leader did not have a point of order.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Flooding—St. Norbert

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, once again I am proud to stand up and say that I am a Manitoban, and I am proud to say that Manitoba has lived up to its motto of Friendly Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, last week I had the opportunity of working with the community in St. Norbert and many volunteers from across the city in holding back the ravaging Red River, and let me say that the volunteers that came out were very much appreciated. It was interesting to see the varying people that came out. We had people on social assistance; we had people from the

banks; we had people from Richardson Greenshields, the stockbrokers; we had some firemen. There were just so many of them that it is hard to list, but most of all the students. The students from the schools—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Laurendeau: Thank you, Madam Speaker. But most of all it was the students from the schools, and it was not just St. Norbert Collegiate and FRC. It was schools from throughout Winnipeg that came out, and a number of the students made the comment to me that it gave them a feeling of being needed. It felt good to just be able to help out. They worked side by side for a common good.

I was proud to be part of this group, and I am proud to say today that all Manitobans should be proud of our youth and all those who go out and help volunteer within society today.

Social Assistance—Policy

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, this is my second instalment in a series of dumb policy ideas which discourage individual initiative.

If you were a high school student with very low income would it make sense to apply for a bursary from your school division? Not in Manitoba. One of my constituents applied for the Margaret Crawford bursary. Since the combined income of her and her spouse for the previous year was only \$6,000, she qualified and was awarded the bursary in the amounts of \$275 and \$250. Guess what happened next? Was she better off for having received the bursary? Did it help her to buy bus fare and school supplies? Did it encourage her to continue working hard at her studies and stay in school so she could obtain a decent job? None of the above. Why? She reported the bursary as income, as she is obliged to do. She was allowed to keep the first instalment, but the second will be deducted dollar for dollar from her social assistance cheque.

Was this a mistake? No. I checked with the assistant deputy minister for Income Security and bursaries are not exempt as income. Revenue Canada, though, exempts the first \$500 of income for bursaries and scholarships,

but The Social Allowances Act in Manitoba does not allow for that. This is a dumb policy which discourages individual initiative. That bursary, which could have been a hand up for that student, was instead an insult.

The Margaret Crawford bursary was established by Margaret Crawford for the purpose of assisting low income students attending vocational schools in Winnipeg No. 1 Division. She would be appalled; I am. So should the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson).

Manitoba Government Employees' Union Strike Vote Rejection

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the members of the Manitoba Government Employees' Union for their decision to reject the union leader's effort to create confrontation.

When you live in a time of change, as we certainly do, it is easy to choose confrontation rather than co-operation—[interjection] Now, I acknowledge my honourable friends on the other side of the House who are not listening today. They have trouble listening, Madam Speaker, but really we do live in a time of change. It is easy to confront rather than co-operate in dealing with the ramifications of that change. Yet the members of the MGEU have recognized the need to work with government to achieve a common goal. As governments at all levels attempt to deal with the fiscal challenges they face, it is more important than ever there be a willingness to negotiate reasonable and level-headed solutions to problems.

Madam Speaker, the MGEU members have sent a clear message to their union leaders and to the members opposite that they understand the challenge this government must deal with and that they wish to do so in a co-operative and consultative manner.

Manitoba government workers have shown us the true understanding of today's fiscal environment, and they are to be congratulated. They have set the example for all groups and sectors that are facing change. While it must be frustrating for the members to be represented by leaders out of touch, they should take heart with the actions yesterday.

I thank the members of the MGEU who placed a vote of confidence with this government. We look forward to continuing to work together to achieve our common goal. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1440)

Regional Health Boards—Appointments

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, when the government announced their concept of regionalization in health, we raised many concerns. We were concerned that the regional health boards would end up doing the cutting in rural areas that we know is going to come under this government when we see the cuts they are proposing to health care. We were also concerned that the public was not well enough informed about the appointments to regional boards. I, in fact, asked the minister to delay that process because many people were not aware that they could run for boards or what the job would entail, but the government made their appointments.

Since they are doing this, we have to ensure that all regions of the area have representation, and I want to speak specifically about the Parkland Region. The minister is well aware of the concerns of the people in that area, that there is not representation from two communities, namely, Winnipegosis and Grandview. In fact, in Winnipegosis there was a meeting on March 19, where my colleague the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) represented me when I was unable to attend, where over 300 people came out to raise their concerns about the lack of representation on this board. I want to encourage the minister to use his authority; he has the ability to appoint two people to the board. I would ask that he would recognize that there are two communities, Winnipegosis and Gilbert Plains, that need representation. They both have hospitals.

I would also ask that the minister consider the third position that has to be appointed, and it is the board that has the opportunity to appoint, that we are looking for representation from the aboriginal community. There is a very large aboriginal community. We also have to recognize, the minister has to recognize, that there have not been enough women appointed on these boards. So I would urge the minister to listen to the people of the region, look at the many petitions that were presented and ensure that there is representation from all areas on these

boards, as they will have to make decisions on health care in the region.

Anniversary—Menno Simons

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I hope you will indulge me by allowing me to put a few sentences on the record in one of my first languages, Dutch. I would be happy to translate these sentences.

Dutch spoken.

Madam Speaker, I just stated that 1996 is the anniversary year of the birth of a great Christian reformer, Menno Simons. Menno Simons was born in 1496 in the small town of Witmarsum, which is located in the Dutch province of Friesland. The ideas of my compatriot Menno Simons had a profoundly positive effect not only upon the scattered Anabaptist followers he organized and led after 1536, but upon all Christians.

His major work, *Dat Fundament des Christelyken Leer—The Foundation of Christian Teaching*—is still very significant for our world, and although Mennonites were at first persecuted by both the Crown and church in Holland, their spirituality and peace-loving principles were soon recognized, and they contributed enormously to the golden age of Holland in the 17th Century.

Madam Speaker, I do not have time to chronicle the many, many positive contributions that hard-working Mennonites have also made in the last 100 years in Manitoba, and Manitoba was not always appreciative. I mention only the regressive 1916 school act that drove 5,000 Mennonites away from this province into Mexico and Paraguay.

There is a higher percentage of Mennonites living here in Manitoba than in any other jurisdiction in the world. To us, that is a source of great pride and bodes well for Manitoba's future. On the anniversary year, I salute the spiritual descendants of Menno Simons who live not only in Altona, Steinbach, Gretna, Winkler, Morden and East and North Kildonan, but all over this province, this country, this world.

Over 75 years ago, the Mennonite Central Committee was formed to feed the hungry in Russia. MCC has become one of the most efficient and effective church-

connected service and aid agencies in the world. It deserves our total support. In fact, I urge all honourable members to participate in the MCC relief sale and auction to be held at The Forks on June 15 and 16. Serving God by helping others is the Mennonite way. The light Menno Simons kindled for us 500 years ago shines now as bright as ever. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I wonder if I might have leave to introduce a motion respecting the rules.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for the government House leader to introduce a motion respecting the rules? [agreed]

Mr. Ernst: I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that the rules of the House be amended as follows:

THAT paragraph (b) of sub-rule 74.(16) be repealed and the following substituted:

“(b) notwithstanding sub-rule (12), one Member may demand that a formal vote be taken and where such a demand is made the Chairperson of the committee, or a section thereof, shall defer the vote on the motion until the next sitting of the Committee of Supply in the Chamber, and”

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, on a matter of House business. It almost slipped my mind. I believe there is a will of the House to adjourn at 4:30 today because of the visit of His Royal Highness.

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of the House to adjourn at 4:30 p.m. today in honour of the visit of His Royal Highness? [agreed]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of

Justice (Mrs. Vodrey), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

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

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 1.(b)(1) on page 34 of the Estimates book. The honourable minister was going to complete her response. Would she like to continue today?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Chairman, perhaps we could just proceed with the round of today's questionings.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Chair, I understand we are in the policy area, and I have a question on the boundaries issue.

Mrs. McIntosh: Just for clarification, I believe we are still in Executive Support for the minister's office, but we have been wandering a little bit.

* (1500)

Ms. Barrett: Well, I will ask my question and if it is too far afield, then we can deal with it later on in the Estimates.

As the minister knows, I represent a constituency, a portion of which has a particular concern about the

recommendation on boundary changes and both the original Norrie commission and the second Norrie commission and that is the Brooklands School, the Brooklands area that currently resides within the St. James-Assiniboia School Division and under both the original and revised boundary map would go into the new southwest division. The residents were overwhelmingly in favour of remaining with the—I am sorry, they would go into the northwest quadrant. Excuse me. The residents were overwhelmingly in favour of remaining in the St. James School Division whether that was in a southwest quadrant or some other configuration. We held public meetings and a survey, and it was a very clear indication.

I am wondering if the minister has any response on that particular issue, if she is prepared to make any changes or what the current situation is on the Brooklands School, Brooklands area problem.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the member raises concerns which have been brought to my attention. The member was good enough to accompany the people from that area, which is in her constituency, to my office at one point to discuss these concerns.

They are currently under study, the two major ones being, as pointed out, the tax effects for that area and the new governance, meaning perhaps a new approach to the way in which schooling is delivered.

Both of those are areas of concern that, having been identified to us, are part of our discussions and will be taken into consideration as we come to conclusions on the Norrie commission.

I am not able at this point to indicate what the exact outcome will be, because that has not yet been determined. I have indicated that I expect to have information on the government's intention with regard to the Norrie recommendations this spring. But the exact date I am still not able to provide, simply because the area is so complex and requires so much examination.

Ms. Barrett: I am glad the minister talked about the taxes. That was another major anomaly in the original report. I am not sure what the minister means by new governance. Is that in response to my concern about the location of the school?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, it is. If the governance of that particular area is altered, if it is a new governing body, then obviously there would be some adjustments to the way in which education is delivered to reflect that new governance. That is the subject of concern expressed by people from that particular area in terms of, will we then have to be like Winnipeg 1 or will we be able to stay like St. James or will we have to be like Fort Garry or will we have to be like Charleswood?

Those kinds of questions are questions that are based upon a new, amalgamated board that might make decisions that would be different from decisions currently made by the board that governs them.

Ms. Barrett: The residents of Brooklands were very concerned about being in a situation that was comfortable for them and wanted to remain in the St. James area. However, the ultimate, basic concern that they have is that they remain within the school division that encompasses what is now the St. James School Division. That is the concern, and I am assuming, I am hoping that when the minister talks about governance that she is talking about which division that community will reside in.

Mrs. McIntosh: We are talking about the same thing and maybe just describing it a little differently.

The Brooklands people, in indicating that they do not wish to lose their current, connections maybe is not the right word, had expressed concern that in the large amalgamation recommended by Norrie that the influence that they might experience could be predominantly one of the other divisions other than St. James. depending upon who becomes elected to the new board and who then would be governing.

So I think we are talking about the same thing. You have indicated they wish to remain wherever St. James goes. They contend that, as well, but they then ask the additional question, what guarantee do we have that we will still have that influence? So it is just an expansion on the primary concern.

Ms. Barrett: I would suggest, carrying along with that influence concern, that it is not just the residents of Brooklands that have shared that concern. This is a concern shared by many, many of the schools and parents

comment that the real future of innovation is in identifying and disseminating best practice, not focusing on structural arrangements?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I indicate that I agree with the member on both counts on the points that he has made. I think that he has philosophically touched a very important point that cannot be ignored, must be looked at and must be utilized where possible. I am trying to recall the statistics off the top of my head and I cannot recall them exactly. It is not directly tied to what the member said, but it kind of is a little piece of information that validates the point that he made, and that is that a certain percentage of our economy has been agricultural for a long time, a very high percentage, closer to the 50 than the zero percent. That economy has been agricultural in the 40 percentile, somewhere in there, for generations and generations, and predictions for the future show that coming down to a one digit percentage in terms of an agricultural economy.

Everything is becoming the dissemination of information and that type of thing, which I believe the member is aware of the trend and probably has some sense of the statistical data there. That has tremendous implications for everything that people do as they prepare for life.

* (1620)

But the dissemination of best practices to me has to include the reality of that kind of change in the world, and if we can get cross-fertilization via best curricula materials, if we can look at utilizing our best teachers in such a way that they can disseminate information readily to more than just one location. I am thinking of an interesting example in Miami, Manitoba, which is another little town that you sometimes go past on your way to Cartwright, a very small community. They have a student there receiving calculus as a course in that school taught by a teacher through interactive TV in another community. Ordinarily that student would not be able to avail himself of that course, being the only one in that small school wanting to take that course, and I think that is a reality that is now not only possible but beginning to happen.

Costs are factors, and we have to be aware of costs, but if we have access to technology that we can begin to work

with and we can try to work through various agencies to bring costs down, to lobby for educational rates which we are beginning to see happen, we are beginning to see companies and other areas acknowledging there should be educational rates for some of these technologies. I do agree with the member.

I feel that Norrie, in coming forward with his conclusions, also made some commentary on flows of people in and out of communities, and he had compiled some data showing population drifts away from certain small communities into other ones. That information was valuable because I think we all know as the people drift out so does the money, so does the vitality of the town. Part of what boundaries could and should be all about is trying to help stem that flow and keep communities vibrant.

One of the ways to do it, of course, is have the presence of a school. I do not want to get into a big, long philosophical discussion. That is not true, I do want to get into a big, long philosophical discussion, but I realize it is probably not proper. I am always intrigued and I used to have this debate often with some of my own constituents when we were having to close some school buildings in my constituency, and they would say you are closing our school, and I would come back and say, no, we are not closing your school, we are closing the building in which your school is housed.

To me a school has always been the thing that it was at the beginning of time, that interaction of learning between a master and an apprentice, and I still think that that is what a school is. When I say keep a school in a town, the building is important. I am not negating it in a small town where there is only one building that houses the school. The thing that is really important is the school itself which is that environment of learning. We want to keep that alive.

My deputy has passed me a note here, and I think it addresses what the department is doing in regard to your specific question, and it covers off some of the distance ed stuff, too. Provincial wide professional development strategy, the secretariat which is trying to blur the department, so to speak, and co-ordinate the services rather than have a social worker from Family Services dealing with a child, and then have someone from Education dealing with the child, and 15 people deal with

this child until the child is so confused. We need to try to get rid of some of this overlapping that traditionally has occurred as governments grow and grow.

We are striving now to try to see that we are seeing the child as a whole, that maybe we have got various government departments working with that child, but that child is not chopped up into four different compartments; the child is a whole human being.

First Year via Distance Education (FYDE) program: We hope to get university programs into local areas. These are some of the ways of reaching out, but they are all focused on one central thing, which is try to empower communities so that they can be independent, so that they can access services of learning without having to move away and leave their home and their base and their community in which they live and lose their lifestyle.

Mr. Sale: Briefly, Mr. Chairperson, my frustration with the minister's answer is that I do not see anymore the kind of thorough attempt to identify and share best practices. I see, again, structural arrangements. We are going to deliver first to university or we are going to have distance ed here, there and everywhere and the calculus example, it is a good example except that the calculus was being taught out of Souris, I believe, in 1986-87; it is hardly a new example. But when I was in the Northwest Territories in 1989-90-91, they were using Manitoba's online calculus instruction to teach kids in very remote communities up in Baffin Island. It is a good program. I am not saying it is not good, but it is not new.

The program that everyone that I have talked to spoke highly of and apparently just is not done anymore, or at least if it is done, it must be on a very low scale, is to identify the best teachers, the best programs, to free them up from their classes, to give them five months or six months or three months or whatever to package, to travel, to promote, to do that linking, networking, interacting thing rather than again focusing on what the minister was really describing to me, which are, I do not mean this pejoratively, but institutional arrangements, the structures for doing things. They are important, but it is the content that is the real issue.

* (1630)

More and more our world makes structures less relevant. We do not need to be hampered by boundaries

in order to deliver the wonderful programs that individual teachers have developed in various schools across the province and to make those known and shared. Boundaries are irrelevant to that issue.

So as long as we spend time focusing on the structures, we do not spend that time trying to identify the really skilled and gifted people who are making a big difference in kids' lives all over Manitoba. That is my frustration with the minister's answers on this question. I thank her for continuing to try and respond.

Mrs. McIntosh: I realize I have had the time pointed out to me, so I will just give a very brief response and maybe come back when we begin again with a fuller response, because what you are saying is not out of line with what we are thinking and saying, as well.

We are doing that, for example, with division exams. In terms of using master teachers and training the trainer kind of thing, we have done a fair bit of work in terms of the training the trainer type of methodology. We are sharing the division exams on a databank, sharing them with others.

I think, when we take a look at our master teachers—teachers have always been involved in curriculum preparation—we are now constantly selecting master teachers to be on curricula development along with masters in the area of curricula. For example, we may say that we are going to do some curriculum preparation in biology, and this is slightly different from the way it used to be done, although there are similarities, but we will look for the master biologist and the master teacher to put together for that development and that sharing.

An Honourable Member: But that is what we have always done.

Mrs. McIntosh: Well, no it is not really what we have always done. Before, we would accept people who were presented to us by an outside group. We did not go out and search out the masters. We were given names of people from another organization and we would utilize those names. Sometimes those names were people who were available and wanting to do the work, not necessarily who might have been considered the true masters of biology, for example, or of pedagogy

Ms. Barrett: A comment and then a request: I think that, in effect, by not asking the commission to give at least a brief rationale for response to the request for change that came through, other than that they were not convinced, which is a fairly general rationale, the government misses an opportunity and has not availed itself of the thought processes that the commission went through when it decided to make two or three small changes and decided not to make hundreds of other changes. I think you have missed the possibility of some information, the benefit of their considerations, and the rationale for that. That is my comment.

My request is that the minister—and I apologize to the minister that I did not bring with me my notes from the meeting that we had, but my distinct recollection is that the minister said to the group, I understand your concerns, you have made a very valid point, and I will be sure to share your concerns with the commission.

Now the minister has said that she transferred them. My sense was, and again it is not anything that can be quantified, I had the distinct impression, and I may have been misinterpreting it that the minister would act in this regard as more than a conduit, and would share with the commission your concerns with that. Now the minister said it would have been inappropriate.

Since the commission has made its second report and the government is responsible now for making the decisions, I am asking that the minister go back to the commission and say in this regard, and I would be willing to be prepared to say any of the others, if it takes a while longer to do it, get the information, but at the very least to go back and ask the commission for the rationale for not making that change in boundary for the Brooklands School and the tax implications. I would like to ask the minister to make that commitment.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, just for clarification, because I maybe did not phrase my initial response in a clear enough fashion. When I indicated that the Norrie commission had said that they had not been persuaded to change their original decisions, that no one had convinced them that they should change, by that what they were indicating was that their original rationale, the rationale they had presented in their original decision, they felt, still was the prevailing rationale. So it is not that there was an absence of rationale, rather that their rationale

was still the same as in the original decision and that they had not been convinced that their original rationale was not the best rationale.

So, essentially, they came back saying, we believe the conclusions we came to in the first instance in this area were the right conclusions for the same reasons that we originally made them, and we have not been convinced that any of the positions presented to us had higher credibility than those which we originally made. So it was not an absence of rationale. It was rather that they were standing by the original rationale.

I indicate, as well, the passing on of concerns to the Norrie commission, that I had several divisions come to me during the course of the study to express their own perspective and their own identified needs. Each time that occurred, particularly when it was specifically asked of me as in the situation you have described with Brooklands where they said, we really want to make sure that Norrie knows that we are worried about these things, I did pass on to the commission those expressed concerns without asking the commission to examine my thinking as minister, but rather these citizens of Manitoba have come to me with a concern. They are very worried about this and this, and they want to make sure that you know of their concerns so that you can consider it in your deliberations. As minister, I am passing this to you for your consideration.

I did not put them forward as an advocate, per se, but rather to ensure that their concerns were, in fact, put before the commission for consideration, and I hope that was in keeping with what the people were expecting me to do. I felt that was being of service to ensure that as minister I drew to the Norrie commission's attention particular concerns without giving direction because that I felt would have been inappropriate.

* (1530)

You had asked a question, your main question actually here, about whether we would go back now and ask the Norrie commission to go through some of these concerns. I think at this stage the people who need to go through those concerns are no longer the members of the Norrie commission but rather the members of government because those concerns have now been put on our table

for us to decide. So what is important at this stage is how government will react to all this information.

We have not just the Norrie commission report but other items for examination, including the material that the Norrie commission itself received. To go back to the commission at this point on Brooklands would mean that we should also go back on those other areas that have expressed similar intensity of concern, perhaps a different issue but with the same depth of feeling that some other areas have experienced, and I believe that at this stage we would be taking Norrie for the third time over ground that he has already covered, and having asked him to do the thoughtful second look—he has done that and given us what he concluded—we now have to as government do our own examination and come to our own conclusions and make the decision.

I will assure the member though that the points that Brooklands raised to the commission I am fully aware of, and those are things that government will examine when we do our decision making.

Ms. Barrett: I am heartened by the minister's statement that she is aware of the concerns. I just think that not knowing what some of the other hundreds of concerns are, I cannot speak to them.

I just will make this final point. I do not want to belabour the point, but I do think that the tax implications in the first and second Norrie commission report are so startling that if I had received this report, I think I would have wanted to find out from the commission why they felt that the issues you spoke about, the parameters of the study—one of the words you used was equity, and I would hope that the minister and the government will look at all of the decisions that Norrie made by omission and by commission, because there are hundreds of decisions Norrie made between the first report and the second report by omission and very few by commission.

I hope that the government will look at all of those, and speaking quite parochially, most particularly the equity and community-of-interest—which is another principle—issues for the Brooklands' residents as they make their final decision.

Again, I would be interested myself in knowing why the commission felt that this tax implication was

furthering the principle of equity. So I am just asking the minister. I am putting it on the record, and I am sure the minister will take a very serious look at these issues. That is the conclusion of my concerns about this area.

Mrs. McIntosh: I thank the member very much. I have had some fairly extensive dialogue with Mr. Norrie and the commission members about the overall thinking that they put forward, but I note her concerns and the sincerity with which she puts them forward and thank her for her comments, and we will keep them in mind when we are doing our own discussions.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I have a question about the boundary review. In last year's Estimates I asked some questions in regard to the situation at Seven Oaks School Division, inequity of representation in the wards there as a result of the board of revision not operating while the Norrie report was going on. Now, since those Estimates, they have had another election and the inequity has continued. You have 17,000 people in one ward being represented by three trustees and 15,000 people in another ward being represented by five trustees. Although trustees, of course, work for the benefit of the entire division, there are certain directions that that board might tend to take because of the balance of representation there.

So now that the Norrie commission is finished, what is the situation with the board of revisions, and what will happen in the three years time till the next civic election? Will this inequity continue once again or can something be done?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the member raises a valid point. The Board of Reference, as it is called, I know what you are talking about and people refer to this as a lot of things. Technically it is called the Board of Reference, but the Board of Reference will be reconstituted. The decision to sort of pause the work of the Board of Reference until a decision was made on boundaries was made at the time this whole process was begun, and you will see very shortly that the Board of Reference will be reconstituted in conjunction with an announcement of decisions on what we are going to do with the Norrie report.

So sometime this spring then, you should see that Board of Reference reconstituted and the backlog of

situations such as you described dealt with as swiftly as possible.

Mr. Kowalski: You know, in my community, I have been approached by a number of people that wanted to present to the minister according to the act. I think it requires 25 people to request the minister to look at the electoral quotient, and I persuaded them to hold off because it would be a waste of money and effort if there is going to be a change in the Seven Oaks School Division as a result of the Norrie report.

Now, what I am looking for is, before the next civic election, are we going to see changes or should these people come forward to the minister and correct this inequity now?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the Board of Reference will definitely be reconstituted well before the next civic election, and it should be reconstituted sometime this spring. I do not have a definite date because I do not know the exact date at which our final conclusions will be made but, as soon as we come to a decision on the boundaries as recommended by the Norrie commission, as soon as we make our determination as to how we intend to officially respond to his report, the Board of Reference will be reconstituted so that they can begin again making adjustments as requested by the people, if they deem they are feasible requests, to vary boundaries in one way or another.

Mr. Kowalski: I have just one last question. I want to make sure I understand correctly. First of all, the government will move on the Norrie report before it puts forward the Board of Reference.

Is my understanding correct, because I do not want to put the Board of Reference through all the work of changing the representation only to find out a year later that we no longer have a Seven Oaks School Board.

Is my understanding correct that first the government will move on its decisions out of the Norrie report, and then the Board of Reference will be reconstituted?

* (1540)

Mrs. McIntosh: The indication of what we intend to do with Norrie and the reconstitution of the Board of

Reference should occur more or less simultaneously, and maybe this might help. If we make changes to boundaries because of the Norrie commission, then the Board of Reference will maybe have need to vary those boundaries slightly, and they will need to be in place.

If we make no changes because of the Norrie report, then the Board of Reference will still have some issues they need to deal with because people over the last year or so maybe have decided they would like to see some adjustments. As well, the Board of Reference will have other items with which it will deal that do not connect directly to what government decides to do about the Norrie commission, and they will be wanting to proceed on some of those requests, as well.

I do not know if that clarifies the issue for you. Okay, good. Thanks.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Chair, I regret that I was not here earlier for the Education Estimates, so I am maybe lacking some of the context, and I hope the minister will forgive me. I am trying to reflect as much as possible in my questions—and I do not have that many of them—the kind of direct and practical questions that northerners ask.

As I travelled around, I think their biggest concern seemed to be that—well, they felt it was a made-in-the-south solution, and they were a little bit puzzled about the rationale. I guess their biggest concern was how do we keep the local autonomy solid. I am thinking of places like Snow Lake that have operated independently for many, many years, and I presume Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake, as well, certainly, a smaller town like Snow Lake. I have talked to several of the trustees, and if they could ask you the question, the question would be how do we safeguard that autonomy, that independence, that sensitivity we have always had right at the grassroots level if we were to be part of a larger amalgamated district.

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

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, it is a good question the member has asked. We talk about communities of interest. We have received presentations, and the member is, I am sure, aware of the specific concerns put forward by Leaf Rapids and places like that.

Again, I do not want to be in a position to defend or condemn the Norrie report. The Norrie report has given us a blueprint that the commission believed would be right for Manitoba. It is our job now as government to examine those recommendations to see if we agree with them or not, and as we go through that process which we have been going through now for about three months ourselves, some of the questions that we ask ourselves are those very questions that you have just put forward at the table.

I think at this point the things that Norrie recommended are now on our table as one of a series of pieces of information, albeit a fairly major study, and I could maybe just indicate to you that the commission attempted to look at a whole wide variety of goals and objectives, and the issues themselves become a balance of taxation, the communities of interest, the local autonomy, the question that you just raised and administrative issues including things such as schools of choice and transportation and so on.

We will need as government to look at all of those recommendations Norrie made, many of which we have already accepted. I believe we have accepted some 21 of those recommendations already. Those recommendations do not have anything to do with where lines are drawn, but schools of choice, those types of things; we have already indicated that we accept. Where the lines are drawn is of great concern to all constituencies and we are aware of those more remote locations where geographical distances are more vast than in more populated sections. We will be considering their concerns as we make our deliberations as government.

Mr. Jennissen: Madam Minister, I would like to just reflect what one trustee said to me in Snow Lake. She was a lady and she said she had been involved with the school board for many, many years, and Snow Lake has an honourable tradition of having many women school board members.

But she said in the amalgamation process if the headquarters—I guess you could call it—where the superintendent resides would be, let us say, Flin Flon or The Pas, that would be a distance of either 200 or 220 kilometres. It would be virtually impossible for her to travel alone that kind of a distance, specifically in the winter when the roads are bad. It is dangerous. That

would be a four- or five-hour drive at the best of times and basically would disenfranchise those people, and that was a major concern they had, apart from the fact they would lose enormous blocks of time.

I wonder if you would respond to that, as well.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, this issue has been raised in several of the rural divisions, the matter of distance and the ease or lack of ease with which trustees could attend meetings, for example. While I think Mr. Norrie indicated he felt that a lot could be done with technology, the point I think that people are making and the one that you have just made is that is not always going to be what people wish to occur. The concerns that have been expressed about winter driving over long distances have been presented from several divisions.

I could appreciate that in the North where, notwithstanding what the winter has been like in Winnipeg this year, normally the winters up North are longer and roads usually not as passable as they might be in the more southern parts of the province, and we are aware of those concerns. As I indicated before, we have those in our discussion packages, so to speak, on this particular issue.

Mr. Jennissen: Well, given then that we are running into problems with geographic distances, also lack of local autonomy and sensitivity, if we were to go ahead with the amalgamation, and if added to that there seems to be no likelihood of saving any money, what then would be the rationale for proceeding in the North with amalgamation?

Mrs. McIntosh: Those are the kinds of questions that we, too, are asking, and that is not to discount anything that the Norrie commission has put forward, because we also know that we have divisions like Frontier that work quite successfully, in my opinion, and we have divisions such as the Francophone division where the geographical configuration is unique, and it is a little different from the way the geography of most divisions occur.

So we examine all the pieces of information on the table before us with an open mind. We have said, though, that our goals of improved quality and delivery, et cetera, of education and either the cost-savings or prevention of escalation of costs will be two things that

we would like to see addressed. We have never been afraid of change. I think that is fairly obvious to almost any observer. However, change for the sake of change is not something that we believe in. Change has to be for a purpose.

* (1550)

Some of the recommendations that Norrie has made blended very well with some of the things that we are doing in New Directions, and I again refer to schools of choice, for an example. Many of those things could affect arriving at our desired goals and outcomes by permeating rather than eliminating boundaries in certain instances. So we are asking ourselves those kinds of questions.

I guess I can indicate in the North, Norrie indicated that Churchill may benefit more directly, for example, by joining Frontier School Division rather than his recommended Northern Lights division. He indicated in his conclusions that he felt it was important for smaller units to be linked together with larger units in order to access the benefits of the educational support professional development move into personnel type issues.

That was his indication after he reviewed supplementary information. I know that Leaf Rapids, for example, as I indicated earlier, had some very distinct perspectives on this issue, but Norrie maintains that there are possible advantages of amalgamation such as those that I just outlined that were indicated in his second report.

He indicates the pooling of the best educational practice and resources and possible efficiencies and broadening the tax base in sparsely populated areas would be positive benefits of the type of amalgamation he recommends, and indeed they would be. The question then becomes, there are indeed possible benefits. Are they greater than the possible disadvantages? Which outweighs the other?

So while I recognize and appreciate the concerns that have been brought forward about disadvantages, I also indicate there could be some advantages. Our task now is the very difficult decision of trying to determine which outweighs the other. We are being very careful in our analysis on those sensitive issues.

Mr. Jennissen: I thank the minister for that comment, and it is true that it, on the surface, makes a lot of sense to do professional development in a larger chunk or unit. In fact, we did this in 1990. I was the chairperson of the northern Manitoba professional development committee, and we did it without amalgamation. We can do it even without amalgamation.

I guess the sentiment in the North appears to be, why fix it if it ain't broke? I am happy that the minister said that change for the sake of change tends to be quite useless and why fix things if they are not broke. I think the North is rather adamant that we have another good look at things. They have worked fairly well for us, and we do not want to jump into something that is going to jeopardize a system we think has been working very well. That is not to say that some minor things do not need fixing or changing. You mentioned Churchill, for example, joining Frontier. I think that is by and large a positive move.

There are also systems out there that have worked extremely well, I mean at the forefront of education, and I think they are very tense now about possible changes associated with amalgamation that could, in fact, be negative. Their biggest overriding concern is if you cannot save money with it, why are we doing it? With that, Madam Minister, I would like to turn it over to one or the other of my learned colleagues.

Mrs. McIntosh: I thank the member for Flin Flon for his comments. I appreciate the reflection on his constituency's concerns and thank him for bringing them forward for my attention.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): I want to say at the outset I am encouraged by the minister's thoughtful responses in terms of the struggle that they are going through inside the department to try and sort out costs and benefits in the areas of boundary issues.

Reflecting back on the time that I spent in the department in the mid- and late-'80s, these issues were very much on the table at that time, as well. The work that we did during the time when the Honourable Mr. Derkach was minister did not indicate to us that there was much to be saved, in rural Manitoba, in particular, and I want to first ask the minister just to perhaps reflect again on the virtues of providing incentives to get the behaviour

that we want rather than forcing amalgamation on rural divisions.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

I refer particularly to an experiment that was undertaken in the Beautiful Plains area where Beautiful Plains acted as the host for a co-operative buildings and maintenance project in which remote-sensing equipment was installed in schools to monitor school security, heating plants, et cetera, over periods when schools were closed, provided good security, reduced costs, and, in fact, I believe it was, if I was not mistaken, the deputy minister will probably remind me, I think it was Johnson Controls that sponsored that one and indicated that savings would exceed, in fact, guaranteed that savings would exceed the costs of the equipment that was installed.

My question to the minister is whether she could give some indication of the approach of the department, whether it would be an incentive-based approach to such shared services where divisions were allowed to retain at least some reasonable proportion of the savings that they developed by virtue of innovative busing or building maintenance or shared services agreements of various kinds. Would she consider that approach rather than forcing an amalgamation?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, a little diversion at first. We had talked yesterday a little bit about the information coming in from school divisions and so on where they say we are assuming that there will be costs or cost savings depending upon certain assumptions. Those have been very interesting and very helpful, and the variable factor there, of course, would be whether or not the assumptions will, in fact, become reality.

So any possible savings could be based again on those kinds of assumptions, but we are very receptive to the idea of trying to have incentives for school divisions where they can come together and effect cost savings to try to ensure that they benefit in some direct way for having been diligent enough to achieve cost savings. Now, exactly how, I am not able to say at this point, but the concept the member raises is one that we are receptive to.

I have been impressed lately by the degree of cooperation we are starting to see with divisions. There

always have been some divisions that have worked together to do certain things, and the member, I think, is probably aware of South Winnipeg Tech School, which is one of my favourite examples because it is one he can touch, where three school divisions have come together to do something jointly for the benefit of all at one-third the cost for each one.

Those types of things have been happening over the years in Manitoba, but of late there has been renewed vigour, shall we say, in this approach, and I think probably for a couple of reasons. One, school boards are very intent on trying to save costs because the funding is tight. We are all very aware of the 2 percent reduction and rising costs and those kinds of things, so school divisions are being super diligent in looking for cost-effectiveness. I think, as well, because someone has said this to me, they are hoping that, if they can show that they can achieve a certain measure of cost savings, the intent of the commission to be more cost-effective and have improved delivery and so on can be shown to occur without amalgamation.

So I take your question as more than a question and rather a suggestion in it, as well, which has merit in it.

* (1600)

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for that response. I will confess to a little frustration that this proposal was put forward in 1988 in a draft education finance review. Though it was never published, in fact, much of it became the basis of the new funding system, which was announced in 1989-90 or '90-91, I am not sure of the actual year, but in that, in one of the sections on promoting effectiveness and efficiency, it was strongly suggested that we look for an incentive framework.

It is now seven or eight years later, and I know my colleagues or former colleagues in the department are very capable of designing the technical details of such a program. I hope the minister will move in that direction because it has always been my view at least that it is better to provide support for the behaviours you want than to try and punish the behaviours you do not want. In the long run we get a lot further that way.

I would ask the minister if she could comment also on what I think is a broad trend, both in urban and rural

Manitoba, and that is a growing sense of—I am not sure what adjectives would be most appropriate, but anomie, isolation, disempowerment, the feelings on the part of communities, that they can only impact on their community's quality of life with almost superhuman efforts. I refer, for example, to a small community in western Manitoba, in the Birtle Valley, that has made enormous efforts using the Internet in a very creative way, advertising in eastern and western press, having a committee called Birtle into the Future.

Against all the kinds of trends of communities of under a thousand in Manitoba, where there are no major natural resources other than the agricultural community, this community has attracted a few new businesses, small businesses. There are no houses for sale in town right now. They have an excellent quality of life in lots of ways in that small community, but it takes herculean efforts on their part to keep it that way.

My sense is that governments in their headlong pursuit of cost cutting sometimes find themselves doing things which undercut the very base that enables communities to be contributors to the economy that the government is so concerned about. I tell the minister that I was at a rally this fall, this winter rather, in Birtle in which they are very concerned about the proposed cuts to rural hospitals, as are most small towns in rural Manitoba. They said, just very straight out, we are not talking about health care here. We are talking about the survival of our town, because if we do not have a decent—it does not have to be big and it does not have to be huge high tech, but it has to be decent—acute care facility, we simply will not keep older people in this town who begin to have health problems, and we certainly will not attract new people to it.

When we take school division headquarters and jobs out of struggling communities, we have to take into account a bigger economic picture than just the Department of Education's bottom line. The communities have a bottom line, too. I am sure the minister is aware of that, but I would be interested in her response as to whether that forms an active part of the decision making or whether the decision making is largely focussed only on the Estimates and needs of the Department of Education.

Mrs. McIntosh: I agree with the member in this respect, that small towns to be vital must have certain things in

them. I disagree in another sense in terms of the generic part of the question that the rural communities are having difficulty being successful.

It may be true for some, but we have just had our Rural Development Forum. I do not know if the member had an opportunity to be free for that or not, but some of the exciting things going on in rural Manitoba towns are just incredible. My parents were born and raised in Cartwright, Manitoba, a little, small community that has only some few hundred people. Cartwright, to me, has been the same from the time I was a little girl till now, just a lovely, tiny, little prairie town. Yet it, as well, now has a window and door factory and trailer factory. We see pasta plants coming up in various places where wheat is grown and a whole wide variety of things, very exciting things, and a lot of them having been done through inspiration or assistance and support of some kind provided by the provincial government.

I agree with the comments that the communities must have certain things in them to be vital. I believe that rural Manitobans are revitalizing and invigorating themselves in splendid ways right across the province. Having said that, just so that I have my perspective on that on the record, as well, I do indicate that I appreciate what he is saying. You lose a school board office or you lose a community school, you change the town. I think that is very true. We are working to attempt to improve the opportunities for those kinds of things to exist and remain existing in towns through a number of vehicles.

In terms of allowing communities, whether or not they have buildings, to have meaningful interaction, we have advisory councils. We have set up regional consortia. In our DET Council, we have localized community college governments. We have included communities in school plans and are working towards the interactive television network in the decentralization initiative and so on.

If I could just backtrack for a moment to the topic we were discussing before your most recent question. The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) had also made the point, if it is not going to save us any money, why do it in relation to a boundaries review? I concur that one of the things that we had hoped we might be able to see is also the study of boundaries that would be either cost savings or some vehicles that would stop the escalation of costs. I appreciate that. I really appreciate it because we do not

have a lot of money, but I do not want the whole boundaries review thing to turn into a cost exercise, because I think the major intent of it was to look at how we can best service the children of Manitoba. We certainly would prefer to do it at lesser costs, but I think that, if we talk more about a best benefit to children approach, we probably would include a wise use of money in that, but I always get a little nervous when we get off that as our focus.

* (1610)

I am not saying that the member was off that as focus, not at all, because costs are a component. I just really wanted to indicate that as we examine each of the components of the review, one of which is cost, that I want to keep refocusing back on best benefit to children. I do not mean to imply by that at any stretch of the imagination that that is not the first interest of the members opposite either. I just think for anybody reviewing the record that they should know that we are keeping that as our first focus.

I do not know if I answered your question completely or well but, if you wanted to add another, I will do my best.

Mr. Sale: I have one final question. I appreciate the discussion. The minister I think responded fairly to the various issues that I raised. My concern was simply, if I can just summarize it, and I do not need further response, that when you make decisions about health or education in a rural context, you are not simply making decisions about health and education, you are making decisions about the viability of the communities involved.

I hope that when that discussion is going on that that is a very lively understanding on the part of government and that they recognize that sometimes the requirement to have a vibrant community may take precedence over the requirement to save small amounts of dollars. If the issue is truly educational improvement then I do not think those communities will fight changes if they can see the improvement. But if we are simply saving a few dollars or even a modest amount of money at the cost of community viability, then I think they have every right to fight that. So that was my point. I think the minister did reflect at least in part on that.

I wanted to just conclude with another sort of broad observation, and that is that even in the time that I worked in the department, and the minister will remember that she and I were school trustees at about the same time in the '70s, we were beginning to see—

Mrs. McIntosh: We were very young.

Mr. Sale: When we were very young, yes. The minister said, when we were very young. We are I think about of an age. This is true.

We were beginning to see the trend then but it has accelerated enormously even since the beginning of the 1990s, and that is that increasingly educational quality and educational delivery are transparent to the structural arrangements for education. We began to think about distance delivery in its origins in the late '60s and early '70s. We think now it is possible on the Internet. We think what is possible in terms of computer technology that allows divisions to maximize efficiency of bus routes, for example, building maintenance.

Increasingly, best practice is the issue and not the structural arrangements around best practice. So it seems to me that the department, if it wants to enhance education, and I take it that it does and always has and I hope always will want to enhance education, should focus on identifying and making really readily available best practice, being, in effect, the discoverer of lighthouses, and then the sharing of the map to those lighthouses, so that we become much more flexible in how we learn from each other.

We promote that kind of learning which in many ways seems to be better done, I hesitate to say this, but it is better done in some ways in some of the emerging industry sectors who, for example, a company like Hewlett Packard that made a decision 10 years ago to go to open standards, so that they shared all their trade secrets, in effect. They shared their code and said, write programs for us. They became the kind of promoters of openness and sharing because they believed it was in their corporate best interests. The record shows that it probably was, in that company's case.

Could the minister comment on steps that her department is taking to identify and make accessible really widely best practice. Would she agree with my

and teachers throughout the city. Concern about the fact that the four quadrants, as recommended by Norrie, has enormous potential for losing the positives of the ability of local communities to retain their flavour.

That is broader than just Brooklands, but again, just to reiterate that, for Brooklands they want to have local influence, but I would suggest that they want to have local influence within the St. James context, and would, I am sure, probably like to see a smaller school division than the quadrant that is being proposed. But if that quadrant is what actually happens, they want to be south of that line, not north of that line. I think the minister and I are in understanding of that.

I would like to ask the minister, if I may, what rationale was given to her, if she has asked the question of the Norrie commission, why they did not make this very small, in the context of all the other changes, change as was overwhelmingly recommended by the residents in that community.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Norrie did not offer any definitive rationale for why he chose to retain Brooklands in the configuration that he had originally proposed. He rather indicated that no one had been able to convince him as to why he should change his mind on that. I should say, where the commission should change its mind because it is not Mr. Norrie alone, but it was more that no one had been able to show him, to his satisfaction, why he should change his mind on that particular issue.

* (1510)

Ms. Barrett: The minister stated that there was no definitive rationale offered by the commission. Was a rationale requested of the commission by the minister for this decision?

Mrs. McIntosh: We had several goals that we asked the commission to satisfy as they did their work.

We had those goals of further educational excellence, facilitating effective and efficient program delivery and development in the public school system facilitating the goals of education for the province and ensuring that education reflects principles such as equity, openness, responsiveness, choice, accountability, those types of goals, ensuring flexibility in student movement between

and among divisions and fostering partnerships with communities, parents, governments, labour, business, industry, and that there be ability for local people to influence and feel that their views counted with the governing structure.

The Norrie commission felt, with the larger division that they had recommended for the Brooklands area, that those goals would be met and stayed with that decision after the second round. Although I know that the people from Brooklands had made presentation to him and they had made presentation to me, which I had forwarded to the commission for their information and consideration, I believe the information presented to me was similar to what the commission got from other sources.

The commission, aside from a very few minor adjustments in parts of the province, stayed by its original position feeling that they had met those tests.

Ms. Barrett: When the minister stated that she had forwarded the concerns expressed by the residents of Brooklands, did she forward those verbally to the commission, or did she forward the papers that were presented?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I did not discuss in depth with Mr. Norrie or the commission other than to give to him, as information material that I had received, recommendations or suggestions on the boundary conclusions that they would come to, for two reasons.

I did not want to be in any way politically interfering with their work. Their work was to be independent of government, and therefore I was careful not to in any way give direction or attempt to steer their own decision making. Any information that I did receive or reports that were given to me directly I did forward or pass on the concerns in a manner such as this. I have received concerns from this particular community. They state such and such. I am presenting you with this information, so that you will know this concern exists and ask you to examine it as information that is put before the commission. Beyond that, I was very careful not to intrude.

In terms of the final position paper that came to us at Christmas time, they indicated the variations that they had made from their original report and provided

rationale for those and then indicated that the rest of their report they were going to leave unchanged. There were literally hundreds of small areas and decisions that presenters had asked them to examine. They did not provide rationale for each of those decisions because there were hundreds of them. They did give us their final conclusions, and of course we as government have all of the submissions that were presented to the commission, plus others, and we have gone through those at this point.

Ms. Barrett: A comment: I would suggest to the minister that when she said there were hundreds of, quote, small areas of decisions and changes requested, that in this particular case—leaving aside even the request to remain in the St. James area—the tax implications for the residents of Brooklands is not a small area.

It impacts on a fairly small number of people, but it is an enormously out-of-line kind of decision, and I would suggest, I just want to put on the record, that this is not a small area, and I do not think the minister meant that—so if you want to respond, but I have a question, too.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I recognize the member is still asking her question. I will make this brief comment, and then if she could be permitted to resume her question.

I just indicate that by a small area I meant small geographical area as opposed to a big geographical area. I was not talking about the issue but rather the geographical size, so, sorry to interrupt, but thank you.

Ms. Barrett: Thank you, and I appreciate the clarification on that.

The minister basically has said that with the exception of the rationale for the few fairly minor changes that were undertaken, were agreed to by the second Norrie commission, basically the rationale for not dealing with the other changes that were suggested was that the commission had not been convinced that these changes were acceptable.

I am wondering if the minister has given any thought to asking the commission for the rationale for saying that, for example, Brooklands should remain in northwest rather than southwest. I know there are hundreds of these, but it seems to me that the minister is losing some

valuable information if she does not get the background on why the decisions were made not to amend these, the first recommendations.

* (1520)

Mrs. McIntosh: I thank the member for her question. As we continue to move towards our own conclusions, any questions that we felt were unanswered or new points that were brought to our attention or things such as decisions on whether the balance between taxation and communities' interests and programming, et cetera, are meeting our tests as government, those decisions will now have to be made by us.

Mr. Norrie and the members of the commission are on notice, so to speak, and are most willing to be available to answer any questions that we may have if we go through these issue by issue and are having difficulty with our own conclusions. They are certainly available for detailed questions on any particular aspect of their report.

What we are doing right now is in the process of doing our own process now. For the year or longer that the Norrie commission was operating, we made every effort, as I said, not to interfere, to take a hands-off approach. That final report now being in our hands, it is time for us to go through our own process of examination and discovery and conclusion, and that is what we have been doing now for the last three months. We are nearing the end of our deliberations, but we have not yet arrived at our final conclusion because of the magnitude of the task.

Certainly there may well be a point when we feel we need to contact the commission again to seek clarification on a particular point. What was your reasoning here? Why did you do this? Why did you do that? It may just be that the facts as presented by Norrie and our own examination of them will lead us to conclusions that do not require us to have to reconnect with the Norrie commission. It may be that we so strongly agree or so strongly disagree, there is no fuzziness, that we do not need to connect on a particular issue. Where there is an area that appears to be unclear, or a rationale that we are not able to apply his perspective or his measurements against, then we may well wish to contact him, and they are available on the commission for that.

involving the teaching of biology. It is a slightly different, similar but different approach.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister might wish to finish her answer when we resume again tomorrow.

The time being 4:30 p.m., it has been agreed that the committee would rise at 4:30. Committee rise.

HEALTH

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Would the Committee of Supply come to order please? This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Health. We are on item 1.(b)(1), and the item before the committee is the motion of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Mr. Chairperson, I stand today with some serious concern, because I think that although I am extremely pleased with what we have seen with the vote yesterday—and it is extremely heartwarming to see that the rank and file of the Manitoba Government Employees' Union saw in their wisdom to co-operate with this government and to take the responsible position that they want to work—I am extremely troubled by what I have seen in this Chamber and what I see here now.

When we look around this is a motion that was introduced by the honourable member the Health critic for the NDP, and we have very little opportunity to hear their support and their debate on this issue. They know how important this issue is as far as this government is concerned, and I am encouraged by the support that this Health minister has received from this side of the House. I think that the support is well earned because this Health minister has demonstrated to this House, and to all Manitobans, that the people who are most affected and the most vulnerable in society today have our attention and have our concern. I believe that demonstration is obvious and apparent in the home care situation that we are facing and the challenges that we are facing here today.

* (1450)

This government, in dealing with some 17,000 Manitobans who receive home care services today, have

put these people first because over the long term of home care, I think, it is incumbent upon any government serving the province, as we are in Manitoba, to ensure that the home care service is sustainable and will be there for the people who will need it in years to come. If we look ahead by looking back over the last 10 years and look forward into the next 10 years, we will be in very serious trouble, because I think that the home care benefits that are available to those people who need it most will be in jeopardy if this government does not take a position and take the opportunity to improve on that today by creating the opportunity for competition rather than relying on government to do all the things that the private industry is capable of doing.

It is interesting to see that what we are experiencing with the members—and I do not blame the home care workers for the position that they are taking, because these are loving and caring individuals. They are the ones who go out and meet the people who need their services the most, and they have made a commitment to these people. I do not even know at this point, after what I have experienced in this Chamber over the last week or 10 days with the official opposition and the position that they have taken—and this is just an example today, Mr. Chairperson. After they have introduced the motion there is nobody here from the official opposition to speak to this. So I question whether or not—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): On a point of order. Mr. Chairperson, if you check the rules you will find that the comments that were made by the member that now has the floor, that it is improper for that member to reference the fact that there are or are not members in the House at this current time. I ask you to ask him to withdraw those remarks.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I was listening to the member's comments. He was not referring to the presence or absence of any member. He was asking what their position was in a terminology that you might have misunderstood. So the honourable member did not have a point of order.

Mr. McAlpine: Mr. Chairperson, I can appreciate the concern for the member for Transcona, because there

does not appear to be the numbers that represent the official opposition during Question Period.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Now the honourable member is stepping over the line. The honourable member should not be referring to whether or not there are members present within the Chamber. Prior to that, the member would not have been making the same type of statement, so I would ask the honourable member to choose his words carefully.

Mr. McAlpine: I appreciate the counselling that the Chairperson offers today, and I do not mean any disrespect for the honourable members across the way.

* * *

Mr. McAlpine: I only want to make a point to Mr. Chairperson that during Question Period the emphasis on home care seems to be a high level as far as the official opposition is concerned, but when it comes time to really debate this and when the cameras have left and the media have left, it seems that the honourable members are not here to debate the issues that we were talking about and place the same interest and concern that they show when there are people here like the media or the cameras and out of view of the public, and that concerns me. It really is a concern when we look at the aspect of these loving and caring home care workers who have chosen to go out on strike, I question whether or not how many of them actually do, who are on the picket lines and would maybe prefer to be at work and to be giving the service to the people who are the most vulnerable.

I even go so far as to say I do not even know whether we can blame the union leaders, because how do we know whether the members of the official opposition are not even encouraging the union bosses, as we have referred to, to continue to keep these people away from striking?

It is not a question of breaking the law; it is a question of putting ideas in the minds of people who have influence over these vulnerable home care workers; these people who want to serve their clients in a loving and caring way. I have difficulty with that, and I say to the members across the way that they should be encouraging the support to those home care workers to allow them the opportunity to serve the clients instead of taking the

position of showing, in this Chamber, in full view of the cameras and in full view of the media—to give a statement that is untrue, and I would encourage the honourable members across the way to support us in what we are doing in trying to allow these people to go to work. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am very pleased to speak again on this motion, because I believe that it is very important to make it clear that we do not support the motion which has been put forward by the member for Kildonan, and in fact we would see the situation completely differently, as do many other Manitobans.

I would like to begin by saying today, though, that some things have changed since yesterday. Since yesterday we have found out now that our public service in Manitoba has made a very clear decision that they are not in favour of striking themselves, and I want to make it clear to the MGEU we are very grateful for their commitment to the people of Manitoba.

I want to make it clear that it is very well recognized, by Manitobans and by government on this side, the efforts and the work that they do and many of us in health areas, in the justice areas, and in all areas. I think that that is quite important, because when we look at any effort of any ministry to provide services, we certainly are dependent on the people who are working within those services.

* (1500)

As I said, that was very important news, and now we are looking at home care workers who have made a different decision. Those home care workers went on strike on Tuesday, April 16, and that has been a great problem and concern for the people of Manitoba, and particularly for those very vulnerable Manitobans. There are approximately 17,000 Manitobans who receive home care services, and about 7,500 Manitobans receive services from home care attendants. That is a lot of people who have now not had a service available to them because of a dispute, which I believe a lot of people simply do not have the facts for.

I would like to begin my remarks by stressing first of all my support for the Minister of Health and in the plan

that he has put forward. I also support his approach, both his personal approach and his thoughtful approach to the difficulties. He has a very difficult job, as Ministers of Health across all of this country have at this time. I do not care what province you visit. When any of us have been on business or visiting with our families in other provinces across this country, when you turn on the radio or the TV, one of the first things that you hear are the difficulties in continuing to provide a health care system for people wherever they live.

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

In Manitoba, I am impressed by the fact that our approach has been a thoughtful one, and it has been an approach which, I believe, has been a balanced one. It has been the result of some very thoughtful planning and has not had to be a knee-jerk reaction that has occurred right away, but in fact has been an approach which we have been looking at for the eight years that we have been in government.

Mr. Chair, I think it is very important to say that the way that our approach is focused and centred is that it is health outcomes first, the client first. That is what is the litmus test for every decision that has been made by this government. We want to make sure that the health outcome is a guaranteed good one, will be of benefit to the person in Manitoba and that the client is the first person in the picture—not a union, not a dispute, not a work disruption. We believe that that is important. That has to be the most important thing. It has to centre our thinking, and it has to centre our thinking because money is an issue in all areas.

So we have to make some very difficult decisions, but some of those decisions have really led to some real benefits for people in Manitoba, and they have been very clear about it, because one of those decisions has been to move people from the very high-cost institutions in our province into their homes to have home care, and the benefit of home care has been that the individual has become more comfortable.

Many people are quite worried when they are in hospital. They are frightened by the technology. When they can be in their own homes, with the things they love and the people that they love, they are often much more relaxed and recover much more quickly. They are also

much more emotionally settled. Any one of us who has spent time in the hospital and then has had the opportunity to go home and recover, it makes a big difference to be within your own home.

So I think that as we look at the provision of home care, that is the basis of it. The basis of the provision of home care has been to put the client first, to meet the client's needs and to make sure that the health outcome at the end, the speedy recovery of the client, is in fact looked after.

I also would like to say, too, that we have an aging population in Manitoba, so we have to look at home care not only for people who have had some surgical intervention or medical intervention at an early part in their lives, but how are we assisting people in our aging population who want to remain in their own homes and, for them, very importantly, to be at home in their own community?

Well, the way this government has done it, Mr. Chair, is very concrete. First of all, we have increased the dollars that we spent. In 1988, there was approximately \$38 million spent, with now a dollar amount in the range of \$91 million. That is a concrete commitment. Nobody can argue with that. Nobody can suggest that this government has not put their money where their mouth is in relation to client outcomes, in relation to health outcomes and in relation to making sure that people come first. But in dealing with the dollar amount, we have had to look at how some of these services are provided, and at the moment it is provided by a monopoly.

What this government's plan is, is to take 25 percent of the services in the city of Winnipeg and put them up for tender to allow for some competition. Competition, in this case, is only for 25 percent of the services in the city of Winnipeg. It does not affect rural Manitoba.

I think it is important to make that point, because people in Manitoba have been phoning all of our offices as MLAs and they have been saying, gee, we do not understand what is happening, because they have been getting information that is just plain wrong. They have been getting information that is inaccurate. They have been getting information, maybe the information from the Price Waterhouse report that the NDP commissioned that talked about user fees, that talked about their plan. So

we have to do the work of making sure the people of Manitoba know about our plan.

Mr. Chair, I think it is very important to make it clear that in this plan, first of all, there is no cost to the home care client; there is not a user fee. No matter how hard members across the way might want to indicate to Manitobans that that was their plan, therefore maybe they think we should do it too, we have rejected it. This is not a program which is in fact costly. In fact, there will be no change in the services provided. Government will continue to monitor the needs of the clients, and we will make sure that they are being met. That is the first issue, the health outcome and the client centre. We want to make sure that the high standards are also maintained.

But what happened? Did those facts get out? It seems to me, there is a lot of misinformation. What happened was, Home Care workers went on strike; they went on strike April 16. Now, the problem here is that they have now left a whole group of vulnerable Manitobans, those people very vulnerable emotionally who, in fact, need the support of these individuals in their own homes. They have been left. Have they thought about those people? Have they thought about how those people are, the restrictions in their homes, the restrictions to their lifestyles, simply because some matter of competition is going to be introduced into a program that puts the client first and deals with the person's health outcome? I think not. I think that that has not been considered, and I am extremely concerned about that.

However, I am very pleased to have had a little bit of time today, Mr. Chair, to put on the record again for the people of Manitoba what the plan of this government is, that this government's plan is to move, for 25 percent of the care in the city of Winnipeg, from a monopoly situation to a situation of competition, that the service will be in fact continued, that it will not have a cost to the people of Manitoba, that this government has not followed what the NDP's plan was, to introduce user fees.

I would like to just say in closing, I offer my full support to the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), to the government of Manitoba, because these are plans which I believe are in the interests of the health of the people of Manitoba. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): The honourable member for Pembina. [interjection] Excuse me. The honourable member for Thompson, on a point of order?

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I am just asking to be recognized to speak.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): I am sorry, I had recognized the member for Pembina.

Mr. Ashton: There is usually a rotation.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Excuse me, I had recognized the member for Pembina, and I think the record would show that.

Mr. Ashton: If you do not want—you say, why we are not speaking, and then I ask for leave to speak and you will not—[interjection]

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): I believe the Chair had recognized the honourable member for Pembina. I think we should proceed in that fashion. Thank you.

* (1510)

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to be able to rise in the House and speak on the motion that was put forward by the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). I want to make it abundantly clear that I do not in any way support that motion. I believe that our Minister of Health is doing an excellent job in providing health care for our province. I believe that the motion as put forward by the member for Kildonan is out of order and certainly I want to speak against that motion.

But, before I do that, I want to recognize the fact that the people working in the health care, and especially those whom I know of within the Pembina constituency, are doing an excellent job in looking after the needs of their clients. I want to recognize them for the faithful work that they are doing on a daily basis, and so I just want to make mention of it that I support the work that they are doing. They are doing a good job, and I want to encourage them to keep on doing the work that they are involved in. On the other hand, Mr. Chairman, I also want to recognize the fact that the work that our Minister

of Health (Mr. McCrae) is involved in is a most difficult job. He has some very, very difficult decisions to make within this province, and, as a government, we support the work that he is doing.

I think the concern and a big part of the problem that the members opposite have is the whole area of change. Certainly, we are living in an age and an era of change. If I look in my community, if I look within the province, those businesses, those organizations that today are successful, that are doing well, are the ones that looked at the whole attitude of change in a very positive light. They were prepared to make the changes that needed to be made within their own organizations. Yes, they stepped out. They took risks. They were challenged for the positions that they were taking, and yet had they not done this, had they not gone out and made some of the changes that they did, certainly they would not be where they are today.

So, Mr. Chairman, I look at it in the same light with the whole area of home care within our province. We need to have a home care system that is sustainable, one that is financially responsible. When I take that and look at the number of people that we are involved with in home care within our province, and at this time there are 17,000 Manitobans who receive home care, and the statistics have it that this number will only increase, therefore we need to be responsible as a government. Certainly, our Minister of Health has taken that approach of being responsible and showing that he is working ahead and looking into the future and wanting to have a home care that is sustainable within this province.

So I support our Minister of Health in the approach that he is taking in looking at the area of home care for this province. With that I just want to say that we are looking at this moment, he is looking at, privatizing 25 percent of the urban area. Certainly this is a start, something that is being looked at. The other thing that I would like to mention at this time is that the rural areas are not being affected. So I just wanted to tell the constituents of Pembina that certainly at this point in time the care that they are receiving is something that we are grateful for and that they, along with others, appreciate the services that are being given to them.

The other thing that I would like to mention about the whole area of home care within our province is that we

have heard on a continuous basis, almost daily basis, from the Minister of Health that he wants to, and it is our intention in the area of home care, put the clients, the recipients of the home care that they are receiving, first. Certainly, as a government, our prime motivation is to be able to improve the home care that, on a continual basis, our clients are receiving.

As I just mentioned, the whole area of change. With the possibility or the prospect of change as we look at on a continuous basis, with it brings the opportunity to improve what we are doing. While on the one hand we are very pleased with the level of home care that we are receiving, we believe that there are areas that we could improve in. I would just like at this point in time to give another example of areas where I believe improvements could take place in as far as efficiency is concerned.

My mother lives in an elderly housing unit within my constituency and has been watching the usage of home care within the building that she lives on an ongoing basis. She and many others have looked at some areas of efficiency that could be improved on. I believe that as we challenge each other and with the area of privatizing, I believe that we are also challenging those who are working within the system today to look at ways of improving the system, of improving the delivery of the services that they give. I believe that with this challenge we are going to be able to keep a home care that is sustainable.

Certainly, Mr. Acting Chairman, it is my wish and is my hope that we will be able to do that. Certainly, as all of us are aging, someday we will possibly be recipients of home care. So we would like to have a home care that is going to be able to look after our needs. This is the reason, I believe, that we are introducing change, that we are looking at the aspect of change within this province. We are looking at it for the sake of No. 1 being sustainable, something that in the long term is going to be able to meet the needs of our people. We are looking at the area of fiscal responsibility, one that is going to be affordable for us as a province; and, certainly, as one of the previous speakers mentioned, we are on an ongoing basis and we have been since 1988 devoting more and more dollars toward home care. In fact in 1988, \$38 million was spent on home care and that has to date moved to \$91 million.

When we see that progression taking place, I guess, it is also concern where are we moving within the next 10 years. I certainly believe it is imperative for us as a government to give those in the ensuing years, giving them a home care system that is one that they will be proud of. On the other hand, when I look at the whole area of fiscal responsibility, I also believe that as we as a government and as a province are looking at running within a balanced budget. We want to be able to give our children, the future generation, something that they can maintain and something that they can work with. I believe that it is tremendously important that we give the kind of a home care system to future generations, one that they can be proud of as having been handed to them and one which for them will be affordable.

And so with that, I just wanted to thank you again for the opportunity to be able to speak to the whole issue of home care, speaking against the motion as was put forward by the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and with that supporting our Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and thanking him for the good job that he is doing. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Chairman, I will defer to the opposition if the member wishes to put some remarks on the record.

* (1520)

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Chairperson, I want to thank the member for Roblin-Russell for deferring and allowing us to have some opportunity to speak on this motion as well. I want to commend my colleague the member for Kildonan for bringing this motion forward because certainly people of Manitoba have become very frustrated with what is happening under the guidance of this government and what is happening to health care services, tremendous cuts taking place, tremendous changes taking place. I think what is happening is not in the best interest of Manitobans.

There have been many people who have put recommendations forward on home care and told the minister that he is not making the best decision, but the minister chooses to go forward without being able to bring forward any evidence that the changes he is making

is going to improve health care. There are no reports; there are no numbers. Any of the studies that we have seen have indicated that in fact this is not going to be a cost-saving measure. There is going to be a deterioration, and, when we look at the reports out of the minister's own advisory committee, his own advisory committee says that rural regionalization, transfer to a home care agency and the resulting massive contracting out of services will have the potential to erode the quality of provincial-wide programs.

So, Mr. Chairman, this is not a good move. The government is moving along their own ideological path to move toward privatization. They are not going to save money in the system. In fact, if we look at other provinces, there are increased costs in the system. In the city, the result is going to be that although we hear them say that it is only 25 percent that they are contracting out, it is the start, and under that area we are going to see friends of the government make a tremendous amount of money because we know that under the private system, for example under We Care, We Care bills the government somewhere in the range of \$10, \$10.75 an hour; and workers are only paid somewhere between \$6 and \$6.50 an hour. They do not have benefits; they do not get travel time. There are no regulations that will control how the home care will be delivered, and it will result in the private companies making a tremendous amount of money.

So the members will say, what is wrong with making money? There is nothing wrong with making money, but you should not be making money in health care. Health care should be delivered in a nonprofit way to ensure that everybody is treated equally, to ensure that we are not moving towards a two-tier system, and we know that under the private, for-profit home care delivery there is not the continuity there. We talked of some workers who work in the private home care delivery, and I believe this was for We Care, where they have to sit by their phone and wait for a call, but, while they are waiting, they are not getting any pay. So certainly there is a reduction in the amount of pay for the people who are going to be delivering and working closer to the people, and profit for a few companies who are friends of this government.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, I want to refer to rural Manitoba because we have heard members across the way saying that this is not going to affect rural Manitoba.

Home care workers in rural Manitoba have gotten letters saying that they will not be affected when, in fact, that is not true. When you look at the government's own document, the cabinet document, Strategic Redirection of Home Care, it says that the rural health authorities will take over all service deliveries in rural areas, including home care delivery by April 1997.

So, in fact, there is going to be a change and there is going to be contracting out in rural Manitoba. The Minister of Health says, well, it is going to be the decision of the rural health boards. Well, the rural health boards are going to have to make many drastic decisions, because we know that there is going to be very serious cuts in health care. Millions of dollars will be cut in rural Manitoba; we believe somewhere in the range of \$34 million. The rural health boards will have to be making those decisions for the minister, so then the minister can kind of wash his hands and say, I did not make the cuts, the rural health boards did.

The minister will obviously be able to say, oh, I did not make the changes to home care, the rural health boards did. But if there is no government agency to deliver home care then they are going to have to contract out, they are going to privatize and we will see a reduction in the quality of care. I am not sure if you are familiar with rural Manitoba and how home care is delivered there, but I know many people who have home care services and they develop a real bond between the worker that delivers the service and the client.

When you go to a private system, if you follow the model that we have seen under the services that are now being delivered, there is no continuity. The bond that is built up between client and nurse or worker is going to be broken and that is very unfair.

The government often—

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Excuse me, for one moment, please. The Chair recognizes the member from Sturgeon Creek on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. McAlpine: The honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) is putting information on the

record that is inaccurate. She is saying that the government are not going to be involved in the home care, that everything is going to be privatized. I would ask her that she put proper information on the record not to mislead the public or this Chamber, that the government is not going to be involved. So I would ask you to bring her to order on that.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): The Member from Swan River, on the point of order?

Ms. Wowchuk: No, Sir, I am waiting to continue my comments.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): The Chair does not find that there is a point of order on this issue. There is a dispute on the facts, but I thank the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek for his concern on the issue.

* * *

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Would the member from Swan River please proceed.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Mr Chairperson, and I can understand the member from Sturgeon Creek being so sensitive on this issue when he says that there is not going to be complete privatization of home care. Granted they are talking about 25 percent of home care being privatized right now. They are also saying that there is not going to be any privatization in rural Manitoba and that is misleading the public, because the government's own document says that all services delivered in rural Manitoba, including home care, by 1997, will come under this. It is in the government's own document.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Unfortunately, we know that home care workers are being sent letters saying that they are not going to be affected. Sure they are not going to be affected for this year, but we know that that is the agenda of this government and this government is not acting in—the member across the way says that I should stick to the truth and I am putting facts on the table that are coming out of the government's own document that says that there is going to be privatization of home care in rural Manitoba.

The advisory committee has also said that if the government moves in this direction there is going to be a problem. Those members across the way, who represent people in rural Manitoba, should recognize that Dr. Evelyn Shapiro, who is a renowned person when it comes to having facts about home care, says that the delivery of home care in rural Manitoba is very effective right now; that we should not be changing things. She has said that.

It is a very effective system, but this government has gotten an idea in their head. They are on this agenda that they are going to destroy what we have because ideologically they believe this is what they should be doing. It may be in the interest of their friends, but it is certainly not in the best interest of Manitoba people. What they are doing just makes no sense at all. We have a very good system of home care. Granted, there are ways that it can be improved. Any system can be improved.

The members across the way said that we are afraid of change, that we do not like the word "change." But we can have positive change, not backward change. We have a good system. It can be improved, but it does not have to be destroyed. What you are doing, what your government is doing, is destroying a very good system in order that a few people can make profit. This is not caring about better service for clients.

* (1530)

But if the minister was sincere about listening, he would listen to the workers, he would listen to the clients. He has the opportunity to take action, to put in place a moratorium, take the opportunity for public hearings and listen to the people and end what is going on right now.

It is in the minister's hands. He can do it, and I thank the member for Kildonan for bringing this motion forward.

Mr. Derkach: I rise to put my remarks on the record with regard to the motion that was put forward by the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), and I would like to express immediately how regretful it is that the member for Kildonan would even engage in this kind of action or attempted action as it relates to the provision of health care services in this province. If you look at us in Manitoba and you compare the way that health care

services are provided, including the home care services that are provided to the residences of this province, to other jurisdictions, whether they are to the west or to the east of us, certainly we can be proud of the fact we have not closed hospitals in this province, whereas in both Saskatchewan and Ontario we have seen massive closures both in rural and urban areas within those jurisdictions.

When you look at the kinds of services that are being delivered today in our province, we can be proud of the fact that in Manitoba today health care services range near the top if compared to the other jurisdictions. I live in a community that is next to the Saskatchewan border, and I can tell you that there are many people who live just inside the Saskatchewan border who are coming to Manitoba to receive their health care services because of the decline of those services in that province.

So, Mr. Chairman, I want to congratulate our Minister of Health for the position that he has taken. I have to tell you, he has been a man of his word. He has talked about the need for change and that change is inevitable. We have a choice. We can either participate in the change to ensure that we take advantage of what changes are occurring in this world, and that we can emerge from this changing world as winners, or we can stand on the sidelines and not participate and then come out as losers and in the end affect negatively the services that are delivered to the residents of this province.

Our approach and our Minister of Health's approach is to ensure that we are leading in those changes and that when the changes that are occurring so quickly around the globe settle down that indeed we will be recognized as a province that has led in the changes and is prepared to deal with the world as it may exist then.

I want to talk a little bit about the home care workers in my own jurisdiction. Now, the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) in her questions today referenced the people who work in the home care system in her area. I would have to tell the member from Swan River that as a rural community, I have talked in my own constituency to people who work in the home care area who have expressed very adamantly to me on many occasions that they have no desire to participate in any strike action as it relates to home care. Their desire is to continue to provide the services that they have been providing over

time, that they deal with the people who need their services, that they understand the economic circumstances that this society is going through, and they understand the need for change and they are not opposed to it as long as those services to our people who need those services are not impacted in a negative way.

The Minister of Health or myself or anyone in this House does not want to see services to our people who need those services affected in a negative way. We all have parents; we all have people who are related to us who need those services. I do not know any member in this House who wants to see those services decline. So the Minister of Health is only attempting to ensure that the best possible services are delivered to our patients when they need them, regardless of what time of the day it is or what time of the week it is. We have seen some deficiencies in the way the system has been set up and we have to address those, and that is exactly what the Minister of Health, my colleague, is doing in the changing and in the attempt to modernize and to reconstruct and to reform the home care system.

Mr. Chairman, it is interesting that even though 25 percent of the services that are provided by home care workers are going to be affected by this move, members of the opposition have ballooned this into some kind of a situation that is going to impact so negatively on people in this province that they will be without service. It is the scare tactics that are affecting the people who need the services most.

My own parent, who understands where we are coming from, has questioned whether or not the stories that are coming from the health care workers, who have received them from, I would say, the union leadership, are in fact true. I had to explain that clearly none of that was true and that indeed the services in rural Manitoba are going to remain as they are today. But, we cannot forever say that we will not look at improving the efficiencies and the effectiveness of that service. If anybody in this House is thinking that that is what will happen, they should give their heads a shake.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to extend to the workers in my constituency a tremendous thank you for the continued services that they are providing to the residents and to the clients within my jurisdiction, because they have seen the light. They have recognized the truth, and

they understand where this government is going rather than following a line which is leading them in the wrong direction. They have recognized that there is a need to improve, to change, to become more effective in the way services are delivered. I extend that same kind of approach to the people who work in my own department.

I have to tell you that I am very proud of the people who work in my department. For the last six months, I have seen people who work in my department work from early in the morning till late at night preparing for the rural forum that we just put on. It is a monumental task to put it on. No one has ever come back to us and said, look, I need time off because I am overworked. No one has come back to us and said, look, I am not prepared to do this because this is beyond the call of duty as a civil servant. I have to tell you that I have extreme pride in the quality of people that we have working within our department and the way that they have approached their tasks, and they understand that to make this province strong, they have to be a part of making it strong rather than being part of the problem. So I take my hat off to every one of the people who work in my department as civil servants who have worked so tirelessly.

I have to tell you, during winter cities, the Winter Cities Conference was put on on a weekend, a time when people have time off. I am just talking in relation to the services that are being provided, not only in health care but as they extend throughout the Civil Service. I have to tell you that these people did not ask for time off during the weekend, but they brought their spouses out who joined them in the work and services that they were providing. So I think we should be proud of the people who provide the home care services, and I think we should be thankful that we have a Minister of Health who has the vision and indeed has the capacity to be able to deliver on a vision that is going to, in the end, provide better services for the people who need them in this province and put this province at a leading edge when it comes to health care.

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (River Heights): Good afternoon, Mr. Chairperson, I rise today to take this occasion once more to commend our honourable Minister of Health for his forethought, his strength of character, his perspicacity and his—

An Honourable Member: Perspicacity.

* (1540)

Mr. Radcliffe: Perspicacity, that is right. I might even add acuity. [interjection] I would not want to be so deprecating as to have to indicate the meaning of this nomenclature to my honourable colleagues from—[interjection] Yes, indeed. [interjection] Well, there it is.

I note the motion presented to this committee from the honourable member for Kildonan cites that the honourable minister has failed to provide any research or recommendations, yet I believe it was this very honourable member who actually tabled documents today outlining the detailed plans, the forethought, the exactitude, the lengths to which our honourable minister had gone, the comprehensive overview that our Minister of Health had researched in order to present this plan to his colleagues at the Treasury Board. I believe, therefore, with the greatest of respect to my honourable friend from Kildonan, my honourable colleague from Kildonan, if I could call him that, that charge in this resolution is utterly futile and groundless.

It is, I would say in a word, feckless. [interjection] Absolutely. The honourable Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) says, not one jot or tittle of validity. The next allegation—[interjection] There we go, yes, indeed. There has been much discussion in this Chamber about the term “profit.” In fact, I might allude to a little play on words and say, in fact we should not be listening to the words of our honourable colleagues on the other side of the House with regard to their spurious allegations of profit, but rather turn to our honourable Minister of Health and say, a prophet is not without honour—or is not respected in his own land. I think that more truly represents the proper sentiments that should be voiced in this Chamber.

The second charge that the honourable member for Kildonan has raised, if I can call him that, is that our honourable Minister of Health has failed to respond to the concerns of the clients.

Mr. Chairman, I can say from personal observation and involvement that I have had the occasion to attend with our honourable Minister of Health on innumerable evenings, on his own time, where he has gone out as a volunteer, as a concerned and compassionate volunteer, to receive petitions, to receive advice, to receive

lamentations from people who are concerned. He has been on the front steps of this building on many, many different occasions, when a lesser person might feel that they were in jeopardy of their own security, but not so of our Minister of Health.

I can say to this honourable committee today that the patience and the forbearance and the tact and the discretion of our Minister of Health has been something which I think every member of this Legislative Assembly ought to be proud, that we have a public servant who is willing to go the extra mile to allay the concerns that have been needlessly and, one would almost speculate, recklessly raised by some members of our society in an element of our society who perhaps do not have the forethought and the long range of vision which our Minister of Health has on this very issue.

Therefore, I would again challenge the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), when he says that our Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) is to be censured for his failure to respond to concerns of clients because from personal testimony I can counter and say that I have been there. I have helped the Minister of Health to walk some of these miles. I do not bear the whole burden that our Minister of Health does on this issue, but I can tell this honourable Assembly today that I admire and respect our Minister of Health because of his tireless efforts at responding to the concerns of the clients, of the stakeholders, of the members of the public and yes indeed, Mr. Chairman, even those union bosses, those union bosses who have turned out at some of our meetings to whip up the passions of some of the poor, misguided members of the public who have been attending to seek some sort of advice and direction which they have received from our Minister of Health. [interjection]

The honourable member for Inkster is inquiring as to how this honourable member will vote, and I can tell this Assembly today, Mr. Chairman, that I will vote in support of the long range vision, the plan, the overall master plan that our Minister of Health has laid out for home care.

The last allegation that I have perceived and discerned in this resolution prompted by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak)—I would suggest with the greatest of respect to our honourable member for

Kildonan that he may have had the best of intentions of presenting this motion, but it does not conform to the facts. His last allegation, which he so futilely presents in this resolution is, he alleges that the Minister of Health has failed to lay out a long-term strategy for community health reform. Well, again I would regrettably challenge the rectitude, or I would challenge the assiduity, I would challenge the academia, I would challenge the overview of our member, our respected member, honourable member for Kildonan when he would so recklessly raise these groundless allegations to our honourable Minister of Health.

We can see that the Minister of Health has looked at the changing market, the changing field of needs, the changing interests that have been presented by increased technology, increased demand. Tomorrow is going to be an exciting day in the health care department, in the health care that is being provided by our honourable Minister of Health, so it is with honour, it is with great vigour and enthusiasm that I commend to the members of this Assembly today the forethought, the patience, the skill of our Minister of Health in introducing these changes in the application of home care in our province.

Mr. Chairman, we have seen that since 1988 there has been an increase of 2,000 clients who are receiving home care in our province. Now, we are looking at the fields of home support services, we are looking at personal care services, we are looking at nursing services. Our Minister of Health has discerned that all these services must be integrated with an early release program from all our hospitals. We realize and our Minister of Health has realized that there has to be integration, and I would look to the honourable member for Inkster to say there must be harmonization.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, on the opportunity to present these few humble remarks in favour and support of our most honourable Minister of Health in these reforms.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Radcliffe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to present these few humble remarks in favour and support of our most honourable Minister of Health in these reforms, and I thank you very much.

* (1550)

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): I am pleased to rise again in support of our Minister of Health who has had the courage to bring in change, reform, which is needed to health care. Our Minister of Health is the same as many ministers of Health across the country whatever political stripe. Ministers of Health are recognizing that we cannot continue to do things the same way. Regretfully, members opposite want to do things just like they were done 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago. We cannot do it that way anymore.

Change, of course, means fear for many people. Some people simply cannot handle any sort of change, and when they become fearful they begin putting out misinformation. One of the things that has happened since we have gone to this different direction is the misinformation that has been put out by various people.

Now, one of the things that I think is most evident in the debate that we have heard here in this Chamber and certainly in some of the newspaper articles and some of the people that I have spoken to, that the one thing that has been forgotten in this debate is the patient. If the patient were really first and foremost, why is there not any essential services agreement in place? I think it is absolutely terrible that MGEU has turned its back on home care clients. Even the union admits that the clients are in jeopardy.

Why is there no essential services agreement in place? We are asking, at the very least, that the union provides essential services to 20 percent of all home care recipients in Manitoba. These are the vulnerable people in our society and, regrettably, the union has turned its back on them. The union has said that it will provide essential services only to those patients who are terminally ill, only to those with six months or less to live.

An Honourable Member: Shame on them for that.

Mrs. Render: Some members have said, shame. Members opposite have said quite often that we have made cuts to home care. How can they say that when our budget has gone from \$38 million to \$91 million? That, Mr. Chairman, is not a cut. They have problems with their math and that is why they are on the other side of the

House, because problems with math put this province into debt. We are trying to make sure that we live within government means, which means again that we have to do things differently. We have tried to work with our union to do things differently. We have not been totally successful in that way. We have got the more flexible services by contracting out.

Members opposite have said quite often, why have you not talked to us about this, give us some evidence that this works? Members opposite seem to have a very short memory. What about the Seven Oaks project of a year ago? Seven Oaks project, if my memory is correct, they contracted that out to I think it was the We Care and, again if my memory is correct, that was a project that worked exceedingly well. The patients who were discharged, who had this service, felt that it was excellent.

NDPs seem to have a problem with any service that is provided by a private company. [interjection] Well, the member opposite says, I am flying by the seat of my pants. [interjection] Yes, better take your foot out of your mouth on that one. I was very pleased to stand up a couple of days ago and make reference to the fact that many a year ago I was with the Victorian Order of Nurses, which is a private organization, and that was the organization which here in Manitoba set up the first home health program. It was a very flexible and adaptable program, but, as I said that day, regretfully, sometimes once we move things into government things become a little less flexible and sometimes we become a little overburdened with how government reacts.

We need to home-care patients. Hospitals like to be able to discharge on other than a Monday-to-Friday basis. To be able to accommodate a weekend discharge, we have had to go to a private service so that we can accommodate our home care patients. To accommodate 24-hour service, again we have had to go to the private sector to get this. A private sector is adding the flexibility that we need for this very vitally needed service.

We already know about keeping patients in the hospital in an expensive hospital bed at \$800, \$900 a day, whatever that figure happens to be. Many of these patients do not need to be in an acute care hospital. We need to be moving them to a more appropriate place,

whether it is a community care, whether it is a personal care home or whether it is back to their own home. In many instances, it is back to their own home that they wish to go, and we have to be able to provide service to the patient. That, Mr. Chairman, seems to be what so many people have forgotten. Government is here to provide a service, government is not here to provide jobs. We hire people to provide the service, and the No. 1 thing is to make sure that we are providing a service. We have more flexibility.

Now the member opposite keeps chattering away here, and I would hope that, perhaps, maybe one of the members opposite might stand up and answer this question. We have offered to work with the union to have them put in a bid. Now the home care attendants, the union is in an excellent position to put in a bid. These are the people that are delivering the service right now. I do not understand why they would not put together a bid. In fact, do the home care attendants even know that, perhaps, their union has rejected that? I am wondering whether they have even been advised that they have an opportunity to put a bid on this service.

I must remember when I go out of this building to ask any home care attendant that I meet if they have been told that they can put together a bid, or is the union just doing things for themselves to make a point?

Now one of the things that has really disturbed me in this whole process, as I say, is the misinformation that has been put on record. There have been many, many people who have said that the whole service is going to be privatized. Mr. Chairman, that is incorrect. No more than 25 percent of the services in Winnipeg will be up for tender.

Regretfully, too, some people are saying that there is going to be a charge to home care. Untrue again, Mr. Chairman. No cost to home care clients. No changes in the services provided. Government will continue to monitor the needs of clients and ensure that those needs are met, and standards will be maintained and continue to be enforced. Also, there is no change in the service delivery in either the rural or the northern areas.

Mr. Chairman, this side of the House is trying to ensure that we have home care not just for today, not just for tomorrow and not just for when we need it, which for some of us may be in a short 20 or 25 years.

An Honourable Member: Or more. Do not rush it.

* (1600)

Mrs. Render: Or more. But for our children and for our grandchildren. There are many services out there, many in the private sector which are providing excellent services, and some of them—I just want to reiterate again that one of them, which most of you are familiar with, is the Victorian Order of Nurses, and the province has been using this service for many, many years.

One of the programs that I forgot to mention was the intravenous therapy program, and the department has funded the St. Boniface Hospital for the co-ordination and delivery of this particular program, and the VON in this instance was the successful bidder to provide the community nursing service to this program.

Are the members opposite going to say that just because the VON is a private organization and that there was some competition introduced into this process that that automatically means a lesser quality of service? The members opposite seem to have a real fear of competition.

Mrs. Render: There is nothing wrong with competition if it ensures quality and better quality, but the members opposite seem to think that the only time a good service is delivered is if it is delivered by government. Well, that is just a slap in the face to the VON who have been in this province for well over 90 years.

We have many other services here in Winnipeg that are providing good home care services; Central Health Services, the Ten Ten Sinclair, Luther Home. Now here is Luther Home. I have got friends who have been involved with this particular facility, and the department provides funding to Luther Home which is to help co-ordinate and provide personal care services for eight young, disabled residents of the Luther Home apartment complex.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mrs. Render: Well, I am sorry that my time has run out. I just again wish to support our Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) who has had the courage to look at a different way of delivering service.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): It is a privilege to be able to stand up and speak against the motion moved by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), and I would like to start out by saying that our Minister of Health is very conscientious, very responsible in his approach to health care and by his actions that he is demonstrating now will ensure that health care will be with us in this province for many years to come for our children and for our grandchildren.

The last time I spoke I ran out of time in terms of talking about the budgetary dollars that are spent on home care on an annual basis, and I would just like to go over some of the summary points that I was going to make in that regard. In 1988-89 our cost per patient in home care was \$1,667. In 1995-96 this cost per patient is now at \$3,160 or an 89 percent increase in costs. Now, if we take that 89 percent increase and we project it over the next eight years of this program, we would come up with a cost per patient of roughly—round numbers—\$6,000. If the number of patients over the next eight years were to double, then that cost in terms of the Provincial Treasury would be \$310 million.

Another very interesting point is that since 1988, when we started out with 23,403 patients, we have moved up to 26,129 patients now or an increase of 2,726 patients over the eight years, and we have added \$43.5 million to the budget at the same time. If you take a look at the number of dollars spent per patient added to home care, we are talking of a value of something in the neighbourhood of \$15,980.

If anybody was to say, well, why do you have to change the system, why do you have to go and take a look at the competition in the system, I say why not? Why not? We have a system that is a very good system, but it needs to be tailored, needs to be refined, and it needs to be adjusted to meet the future needs of everybody living in this province. If we do not start doing it now and taking a look at how home care is delivered in Manitoba, down the road we may be at a point where we will have to actually cut home care services because the dollars are not there to fund it. So the idea is to work now to see what will happen with the competition in the system, to monitor it, evaluate it and see if indeed home care in this province could be delivered with a very high level of

quality to the patients and service to the patients and, at the same time, being the most cost effective in terms of the taxpayers' dollars.

The thing I would like to spend a bit of time on now is in terms of what the government is saying and what is being said are two different things when we come down to what home care workers are being told is happening and what patients are being told is happening and what actually government is planning on doing. I would just like to reiterate, Mr. Chairman, first off, that no more than 25 percent of the services in Winnipeg will be up for tender for contracting out, no more than 25 percent. Secondly, there will be no costs to the clients. All the costs will be covered by government. Thirdly, there will be no change in the services provided. All the services that are presently being provided to home care patients in Winnipeg and in rural Manitoba will continue. Fourthly, the government will continue to monitor the needs of clients and ensure that those needs are being met. So again, in terms of the contracting out of the services for home care delivery within Winnipeg for the 25 percent of the services, they will be monitored and evaluated, and there will be no change—and I reiterate this again—no change in rural or northern service delivery. That is a very important point, and that is the story that is not getting out in rural Manitoba, that there is going to be no change to service in rural Manitoba.

Now the other thing is that when the government did have discussions with the MGEU, the offer that was put on the table was that this initiative would be for one year only. How can you not accept that? It is going to be in place for one year. You evaluate it, you see whether you want to go ahead with it another year. There would be an employee and client evaluation of the entire initiative. So you would have discussion with the clients, have discussion with the employees to see if indeed the service was being carried out that was intended.

Then the third point, and my honourable colleague from St. Vital (Mrs. Render) reiterated this earlier, is that if the service is there, there is nothing preventing the MGEU from bidding on contracting those services. You get the best of both worlds if they were to do this, because not only—the fearmongering that is going on is that they are going to have a reduction in wages. Well, if they bid on the contract, they can set their wages that they want to get out of the program and then determine what

their costs will be, what they have to charge for the service. It is a win-win situation if the MGEU were to put a bid on the contract because, not only would we have quality service to clients, we would have it at a cost-effective method. It would still be government employees working as a unit together and sharing in this whole process.

The other thing I was mentioning the other day—and I would just like to quote, Mr. Chairman, our honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) who was talking and making a presentation on the Budget Debate. I think what he had to say is very profound in today's society, and I think that it was worthwhile repeating his words. He says, the people of Manitoba now understand, the people of Canada now understand what uncontrolled spending has meant to the affairs that worry all of us. What has, perhaps, been most forcefully brought to the attention of all Canadians is the fact that it is not just the mean old Tories that have had to do this, that it is Liberal governments, that it is New Democratic Party governments. It is governments from all sides of the political spectrum that have come to exactly the same conclusion, that we have to address the fiscal problems that our province and that our nation face.

That is a reality today, that we have to face those fiscal problems that are facing us today in this age throughout Manitoba and throughout Canada, and so it behooves us that in this type of a process, if you are looking at health care delivery, we would take a look at alternate means, alternate methods of delivering health care in Manitoba. Home care is no exception to this fact; it has to be studied.

* (1610)

I would just like to mention that the member for Swan River was speaking earlier, and she has now twigged her ears, she has said that there is no guarantee that if we introduce this program in Manitoba there will be an increase in quality of program. I ask her back, can you guarantee me that there will be an increase in the quality of care given if it stays as it is?

There are no guarantees in this world that, indeed, something will be better than it is until you try it. You have to try it to find out if it works. We want to increase

the level of service to clients in Manitoba. We want to make sure that the quality of service is there, the quality of care is there, and at the same time being the most efficient to the taxpayer of Manitoba.

With those few words, Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the time.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we get started though, may I advise the committee that again we seem to be leading on towards baiting each other during this debate and it is not adding to the decorum. I would ask the honourable members to be posing their remarks through the Chair rather than to each other.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Thank you for the opportunity to speak, and I just hope your advice was not predicated on what you think I might say. Frankly, the concern that I have and one of the reasons that I want to rise again today to speak to this motion is that in 10 minutes, I suppose, one does not have the best opportunity yesterday to expound on some of the other aspects, some of the more personal aspects of a disagreement that we see between the delivery of home care services in this province and our government and our minister.

I certainly want to put it on the record that the opposition, who have from time to time attempted to vilify and categorize the Minister of Health as anything other than a very caring, very dedicated and a very efficient individual, are far from the mark and probably do themselves a disservice as much as they do him. One of the things that concerns me whenever there is an ongoing disagreement between government and any sector of public service is that there begins to become entrenched positions that are based not on facts, but which are based on fear, innuendo and misrepresentation of the situation as it is.

That is, and can be one of the more troubling aspects of any type of an employer-employee relationship and one which I know, from time to time, we all take the opportunity to expound and in fact to vilify, I suppose, the motives on either side of the House or on either side of this disagreement.

If there is anybody out there other than my grandchildren who may choose to read Hansard, I want to

make sure that it is on the record that in my view this is a disagreement and a dispute that need never have occurred, that in fact there is every good reason to do what we are doing. There is also every good reason to make sure that those who are impacted by the issue are able to think their way through why a government would possibly want to make these types of changes and why the Minister of Health would want to make these changes. The fact is it has to be put in the larger context. The very fact that there is more money going into home care in this province should be the first step in assuring the public and the workers that this is not necessarily an issue that needs to be a complete break between the two parties.

There are a number of people who I have more than a passing acquaintance with who work in the system not only as home care workers but also as co-ordinators. Certainly, I think that everyone would agree that there are improved ways of doing business. The day comes, whether it is my own business or whether it is my own responsibilities as an MLA, when the day comes that we say that we have done everything or that there is no further change that can be made, is the day that we are no longer valuable to the constituents that we serve. The fact is we have to continually challenge ourselves to make sure that we are providing the most efficient and most progressive opportunities for delivery of health care closer to the home than we have ever done in the life of health care system at any time.

I go back to the previous Minister of Health, the member for Pembina, and him striking an arrangement with some of the physically handicapped groups for self-managed care. I would like to put on the record that I have been a proponent and a supporter of that concept for many years before I knew what the catch word might be to describe it.

The fact is government-organized managers and those who might choose to provide free advice should never believe that there is not a better way of delivering a service and, in fact, those who are receiving the service can have a good deal of input on how capably that service is delivered, not only with co-operation but with comment. When I look at the opportunities out there that we are being forced to deal with, and I suppose a problem in the eyes of many people and those who are progressive, they will refer very often to a problem as

nothing more than an opportunity that they have not yet figured out, and that is probably what we are faced with in health care in many respects. We know that we cannot deliver health care through the system that we have traditionally become accustomed to.

Those of us who are in the range of 40 to 65 years of age, or at least 40 to 60 years of age, probably historians in the future will look back and say that we lived in the golden years of social justice and welfare state in this country and probably reflect very kindly or very unkindly on how we emerged from the last three decades from which we have held an extremely high level of employment, extremely high standard of living, with opportunities that have been unparalleled in many respects.

What has that got to do with home care and the delivery of home care? It has everything to do with it, because as we now have to deal with the deck that we have been burdened with, and as we now have to go forward with a better delivery system—and we have to provide better; it cannot be of a lesser standard—but we have to provide a better system for dealing with those who need help in their homes. We cannot continue to do it in the high-cost facilities of our hospitals or even in our extended care homes because, in fact, today's senior, I think, far too often is given the opportunity or has taken the opportunity to go into a senior care home when they might rather have had the care delivered closer to home. So, when we look at our budget, our budget demonstrates that that is the direction we want to take the delivery of care in this province.

I want to make it clear that in my mind there is an abuse that is occurring today. That is an abuse of—first of all, we could probably classify it as an abuse of the facts or an abuse of perception. In reality, certainly in rural Manitoba, there are a large number of the caregivers who are being scared out of their wits in some respects by comments that are being made about what could happen, what is down the road, that they better make a stand now or they are never going to have an opportunity to have a permanent job in the health care delivery system again. All those sorts of questions are being raised.

I will tell you, the only question that was brought to me by a recipient of home care was, No. 1, that they wanted that to continue, but that they wanted me to clearly state

to them that the amount it was going to cost them would be limited. Now where did they get that idea that it was going to start costing them anything? Because there was a real concentrated effort out there to put misinformation in the hands of the caregivers, which inevitably ends up in the homes, in the kitchens, in the washrooms of their clients, when they are talking to them as they are providing them with some of the care that they need.

It puts them in a very awkward situation. Not only is it an abuse of the seniors or those who are vulnerable and need this service because they are being frightened, but, frankly, and I want it clearly on the record, that I believe that we all have a better responsibility to not abuse the workers out there who find themselves not getting all of the facts.

All of the facts are clearly on the record, and I would suggest to the members and all the members of the public who might to have an opportunity to hear or read this that, if they determine the facts and look at the long-range plan, this will allow us to deliver services in a much more caring and a much more broad-based manner, and it need not to have degenerated to where it is today.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I, too, would like to speak to the resolution that has currently been put forward by the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). I think that, in the timing of change we are going through now, the ideological arguments that are being put forward in the House and in direct opposition to the Minister of Health, I guess, reflect the time of the period that we are in, in the sense where we have one group of individuals putting forth a status quo, hold-the-line type of attitude. On this side of the House, as government, we are looking at every alternative that we can possibly come up with to, not only in my mind, make home care a better situation for the people that need it, the people that are now suffering because of the strike action taken by the union.

* (1620)

I would like to put a few comments on the record on their behalf. I have had the opportunity to speak to several of my constituents that were being serviced by the home care staff. There is, I guess, a real feeling of disappointment. They certainly agree that the care that they have been given has been top-notch, and I do not think that there is anybody in this House that would

dispute that. I think that the people are a special breed of people. They are kind, they are caring, they are considerate, and I think that they go far beyond probably what is required of them in their job to create an environment for the people who are most vulnerable, to enjoy the part of their life with the things that they cannot do for themselves.

Certainly, I want to go on the record as commending the home care employees. I admire what they do. I have family that is involved with what they are doing, and the comments back that I get from them are very positive, and it seems to always be positive.

I think the real issue that I see coming forward is the fact of competition. I do not know whether we can ever have competition in this world, be it no matter where we are or what we are in—be it sports, be it business, be it in any facet of the world—we have competition, and competition tends to, I think, bring out the best qualities in all people. I think it is very important that we do not rule out this attitude of— it seems like the members opposite have such a fear of competition that they will do anything and everything within their power to deny competition.

As I have in the past, Mr. Chairperson, I would like to suggest that, in checking, perhaps, the resumes of most of the members opposite, they have been in positions before their employment as members of opposition where there has been no competition, where there has been no real desire to do a better job or to be more qualified or to be more competent simply because that has not been a requirement. I think today's world, and certainly on this side of the House, anything that can be injected into any system that creates a better system, a more equal system, a more competitive system in the sense of economics, has to be considered, and I commend the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) for his stance that he has taken. I certainly understand his position. I think it is a very trying time for the minister. Certainly, he is dealing with a lot of heart issues, and when you deal with heart issues, you have to keep the perspective as to what is best.

Members from the opposite time after time get up and speak about personal experiences that they have had with this system. I accept everything that they say in the sense that we can all find individuals that we know personally that are experiencing exactly what is happening today in

the home care world. But that does not mean that we have to say that we accept it as it is and that there is no change necessary, because I think we all agree in a world that has changed so rapidly in the last five years, that we have to change and adapt and adjust to also meet the needs and the requirements, and also the financial implications that come with today's economic situation. I think we are all aware of the cutbacks that have been done at the federal level, and I think that, as responsible government, we have to deal with those cutbacks, not constantly or necessarily all the time complain about the cutbacks that are taking place, but what we can do to make it better and take advantage of the situation.

One of the things that I have learned in my short time in government, and it was brought to my attention by the honourable member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), was that whenever—it actually was a definition of the word crisis. The Japanese have a term that they use to explain what a crisis is and that word is opportunity. I think whenever we have a crisis, instead of looking at it from the negative side which the members opposite tend to do on most issues in this House, we have to look at it as an opportunity.

We are under the strain of all economic belt-tightening that is going on around the world, not just in the province or not just in our communities but throughout Canada, and again I suggest through North America. We have to deal with those issues head on and many times decisions that are made are not popular. Perhaps I would even suggest the odd time we have made a mistake, and when we do, I think, that we are willing to stand up and admit that.

I think when we admit that we have made a mistake, I think this brings me back to the point that the suggestion to introduce this competitiveness into 25 percent of the industry is the first step in the seeking-answers position. It is not something that we have thrust upon the entire group of people and we are saying, let us take a look at it. Why would we put our heads in the sand and ignore something when we have an opportunity to put things out there, to let people see how they work and to see if it might work for us to our benefit?

I know again that the members opposite, as I sit day in and day out, that the status quo would be very satisfactory to them. But unfortunately as government

you have to make tough decisions and you have to make decisions, period, and I think that is what we are doing as a government. I think that the minister, as I travelled with him, and I can certainly say he has been in my riding several times, spoke to several groups of people, large numbers, and has listened to them. When he comes out to meet with the people of my constituency, he does not do the speaking, he does the listening. I think that is a real positive aspect, and I think that is probably one of the main criteria that makes a good Minister of Health, is one that has to listen to what the people that he is serving have to say.

I think what they have said on several occasions is that, you know, we have some concerns but we also trust your decisions because you are in the best position to make those decisions. I think as a government he has stood strong and stood tall in making those decisions and I know it is, certainly again, easy. I always think of my life before politics in the competitive world. I can remember a story that my father used to tell me when I was just a small boy about competitiveness, and a gentleman came into our place of business which we were the only business in the community dealing in that specific aspect, so therefore we had a monopoly. [interjection]

Yes, yes, we did, to the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers). I would like to suggest that it was perceived as a monopoly in our community, and people would come in and say to my father, it must be

very nice to be the only business in the town. I can remember my father to this day saying, if you are willing to take the risk, I am willing to put up the facility and the property right beside my place to compete with me, because he knew that competition would build his business stronger and more efficiently, quicker than no competition.

That is something that has been ingrained in me from Day One, that the competition and the suggestion that, if they see somebody else doing something better, people are going to bring their level up to that level, or they are, unfortunately, going to pass by the way. I think that in that aspect that is probably one of the real benefits of introducing some competition into our health home care system. Competition is not something to be afraid of. It is something you can clutch and grasp and improve yourself to meet those—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 4:30 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): As previously agreed, the hour being 4:30 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 24, 1996

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