



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, 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, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	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.
Vacant	Charleswood	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 7, 1998

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, I would like to present the petition of Paul DeClara, Cathrine R. McLeod, Phillip Mark and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospitals food services.

Women's Resource Centres

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): I beg to present the petition of Christina Romanchuk, Suzanne Threllfell, Kendra Peterson and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Filmon government to consider providing long-term, adequate and stable funding for the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre and other women's resource centres in the province to ensure that the vital services provided by these organizations are continued.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Esther Meleshko, Carol Lablanc, Sharon Ward and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Filmon government to consider providing long-term, adequate and stable funding for the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre and other women's resource centres in the province to ensure that vital services provided by these organizations are continued.

The Brandon University Foundation Act

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Brandon University Foundation praying for the passing of an act

to amend The Brandon University Foundation Act to delete Clause 5(e)(i) and (ii) and add Clause 5(g). The corporation shall have the powers and capacity of a natural person of full capacity.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Women's Resource Centres

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford). 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 the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre provides services which focus on prevention and intervention in domestic abuse for communities within a 100-kilometre radius;

THAT with only partial funding from the provincial government, Family Dispute Services, in the amount of \$37,600 and some funding from the communities it serves, the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre hires three part-time employees and provides telephone, counselling, training and seminar facilities, in addition to education, information and outreach programming; and

THAT Evergreen Women's Resource Centre is also involved in referral services on a crisis-intervention and second-stage outreach level; and

THAT for years, the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre has struggled to provide these vital programs and services with limited funding or commitment from the provincial government; and

THAT during the 1995 provincial election, the Filmon government said, "The safety and security of the individual, our families and our communities is vital to the quality of our life."; and

THAT if the Filmon government is really committed to that statement, it must back it up with funding for the agencies that provide services to make it a reality.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Filmon government to consider providing long-term, adequate and stable funding for the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre and other women's resource centres in the province to ensure that the vital services provided by these organizations are continued.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). 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.

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THAT with only partial funding from the provincial government, Family Dispute Services, in the amount of \$37,600 and some funding from the communities it serves, the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre hires three part-time employees and provides telephone, counselling, training and seminar facilities, in addition to education, information and outreach programming; and

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Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett). 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.

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PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

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

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review 1998-99 for the Department of Labour.

* (1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Home Care Program Privatization—Minister's Comments

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, on December 4 in this House and subsequent to that in the hallway of the Legislature and in the public statements quoted on December 4 and 5, the Minister of Health stated in what was termed a dramatic reversal that the privatized home care contract would be returned to the public sector and it would be returned to the public sector within four months. I would like to ask the Minister of Health whether he was telling the

truth to the people of Manitoba when he made that statement in this House and in the hallway of this Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I know this has been quite a subject of discussion. I know there was a flurry of media activity last December when I repeated the statements that I had made in this House, I believe it was in April or the spring, and at the same time my statements in this House did not muster the attention of the media that they did in December.

Madam Speaker, my comments were simply this: that when we tested our home care program by going to tender, we had five companies that met the quality requirements and only one out of the tender process that resulted in a lower cost than the estimates of what it would cost us to run it in the public system and that that was somewhat disappointing from the expectation of where we started, and that we will complete the review. We had a one-year trial, and that review will be completed. But, you know, it is obvious we did not get the expected savings that were there, and that was proven in the tender process. I said that in this House last April.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the minister is making so many statements, no wonder he is confusing himself and is confusing the public and confusing the clients with contradictory statements one day to the next. On December 4 you stated that we would be out of the privatized home care contract. You did so when we asked questions about Dr. Shapiro's report on the privatized Home Care program. You were given credit for reversing a Filmon government policy as you preened around the hallways with your statement.

I want to table minutes in this Chamber today dated March 27, 1998, wherein the Olsten contract that you had promised to cancel or not extend on April 1, 1998, has been secretly extended for six months.

How does the minister justify saying one thing on December 4, that the experiment would be over in four months, and then secretly we find out that he has in fact broken his word to the clients and people of Manitoba by extending this privatized contract and extending the

foolhardy plan of the Filmon government to privatize home care here in Manitoba?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I cannot help the way or when the media chooses to report a comment or the matter—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health, to complete his response.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, again, we as a government made a decision to test the quality and the cost of our home care system. That was much debated in this Legislature. We went through a process, and as a result of that, we had a tendering process that produced only one provider of care who could do it for less than the estimated cost. That process provided for a year and an evaluation.

We are also now in the process of turning over home care to the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority. There are periods of transition, so two things are happening. We are doing the evaluation, and we are in the process of transition. Is the member suggesting that we should end that contract today exactly when we may not be in a position to provide that care to others? Surely to goodness, patient care and the care of home care people must come first. If we have to complete the evaluation and continue to move forward, and there is a transition, is that really such a big problem? I think not.

* (1340)

Mr. Doer: Yesterday in the Estimates of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) we learned that no evaluation has gone to cabinet, no evaluation has gone to Treasury Board. The Premier has confirmed that he has looked at no numbers from the Department of Health that contradict his original statement of the so-called savings of \$10 million in the new privatized home care proposal, totally contradicts what his Minister of Health said to the public. Does this Premier think it is fair to the clients, the disabled people, the aged people, other clients in home care that fought this government on the privatized home care system—does the Premier think it is fair for his Minister of Health to state that they would be out of the privatized home care contract on April 1,

1998, when secretly he assigned a contract to extend that privatized home care contract? Does the Premier think it is fair for the Minister of Health to say one thing to the public, one thing to the clients and do something secretly that is quite contrary to what he said to the people of this province?

Mr. Praznik: I have not signed a contract, Madam Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition attempts to imply.

Point of Order

Mr. Doer: On a point of order, I just tabled minutes in the House that said the contract has been extended for six months. That is clearly a fact on the record. That is what home care staff have been stated. For once, can you ask this Minister of Health to answer the questions? Maybe he would have a chance of telling the truth for a change, Madam Speaker.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): On its very face, the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition is a dispute over facts and not a point of order under any circumstances.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Leader of the official opposition, the honourable Leader did not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I come back to this whole process because I think the fundamental issue here is getting the best service in an economical way for the patients of Manitoba. [interjection] Well, the contract, if it has been extended, it has been extended because we have a transition period. [interjection] I am not challenging the statement of the Leader of the Opposition. My point is simply this—and I am not trying to avoid that—we are in a transition. We are just completing the transfer of our home care staff to the Winnipeg long term community facility. The evaluation will be completed. I think if you go back to my statements of the spring of last year when the contract was awarded, what surprised me about the December press release was I was repeating what I had said in the spring but nobody covered. When you go through a process and you have expectation of savings

and you put it to the test, the real test of a tender, and as a result you do not get those expected savings, yes, it is disappointing, and out of the tender it indicated that our own Home Care program was fairly economical. I have always said that; I have never denied that.

* (1345)

Home Care Program Privatization—Minister's Comments

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier. In any other jurisdiction in this country, if a minister was caught misstating the facts like this Minister of Health has and where the truth has not come out, there would be no choice but to ask for the minister's resignation in a matter of this.

If the Premier is not prepared to accept that, can the Premier explain to me why—and we know the minister was not telling us the truth, that Sue Hicks, the associate deputy minister, said the contract—and I am quoting her from March 10—with the American firm ends this month and will not be renewed. It simply could not provide the services for less money than the government can.

Madam Speaker, we are tired of this deception. When is the Premier going to take action? This is wrong.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I think what is becoming very clear here is what—you know, and I appreciate the New Democrat's sensitivity on this issue. We had quite a debate in this Legislature. [interjection] If the member would just listen, because what is apparent here is we are in a transition. If we have to extend a contract for a number of months to assure service, why would we not do that? Are the members opposite suggesting to us that on a particular day we should deny service to people? That is just simply unfair to the clients who are on home care, and we will not endanger their care.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Kildonan, with a supplementary question.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, this goes deeper than simply the deception of the minister and the government.

Madam Speaker: Question, please.

Mr. Chomiak: My question for the Premier—

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable government House leader, on a point of order.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I think, on a point of order, that the honourable member should choose his words a little better than that. He knows words like that are not appropriate in a parliamentary discussion.

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

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, a perusal of Beuchesne shows that the word “deception” does not appear as being unparliamentary, and I can assure the government House leader that the member chose the word very, very carefully to describe the situation we see here.

Mr. McCrae: On the same point of order, the honourable member has argued that Beuchesne Citation—I refer you to Beuchesne Citation 491. Context is very important when we are looking at these lists; 491 says “The Speaker has consistently ruled that language used in the House should be temperate and worthy of the place in which it is spoken. No language is, by virtue of any list, acceptable or unacceptable. A word which is parliamentary in one context may cause disorder in another context, and therefore be unparliamentary.”

I raised the point of order in the context that the words were intended, and they were not intended in a very parliamentary way.

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

Mr. Ashton: Since you are entertaining supplementary advice from the government House leader, I would point out that, for the information of the government House leader, the member could have used terms such as “not telling the truth, phoney, subterfuge.”

There is a whole list of parliamentary expressions, Madam Speaker. There is no reflection of "deception" anywhere on the list. The closest one gets is "deceive."

It is clear that our Health critic used a word that is very appropriate to the statements made by the minister—"deception"—and that is not only parliamentary, it is an accurate description of his conduct in this House.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable government House leader, I have checked both Beauséjour and our provincial listing of what words have been ruled parliamentary and unparliamentary, and the word "deceive" has been ruled both unparliamentary in Beauséjour and also in Manitoba by former Speaker Rocan.

But I would caution all honourable members. There has been an awful lot of latitude allowed in the last couple of weeks with phrases such as "to tell the truth, will he tell the truth, will she tell the truth," which have indeed been ruled unparliamentary in Manitoba from 1988 and onward. We all know that the tone and the usage of some words does indeed cause a disruption, and that is the premise and the basis on which words can and are ruled unparliamentary.

I would request that all honourable members pick and choose their words most carefully.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Kildonan, to pose his question now.

*(1350)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, I would like the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to explain to the people of Manitoba why he allowed his Health minister to say one thing and his government did something entirely the opposite, and why in a letter—and I will table this letter—from the vice-president of Olsten services, Vice-President Anne Becker writes: we believe we will continue to serve Manitoba clients past the May expiration date—which was before this matter became public, which shows it was done secretly.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, if in the course of the transition to the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority and the evaluation of the contract—and I think it is safe to say when you have a tendering process that does not produce the desired results—and my comments to the media in this House going back to April or May of last year when we awarded the contract, I said very clearly the results were disappointing. The expected results were not achieved, and that pointed very strongly in the direction of continuing on with our public home care system. But in returning that quadrant or those quadrants of Winnipeg back to that system, there has to be a transition and combine on top of that the fact that home care is being transferred to the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority, it makes sense under the circumstances. Our staff who deal with that recognize that there had to be a transition in order to ensure service.

Madam Speaker, if I am being criticized here today because I am ensuring service for people during this period, then I will accept that criticism.

Minister of Health Resignation Request

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Kildonan, with a final supplementary question.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I will try again to the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

Will the Premier, in light of the contradictory statements of his Minister of Health, the change in policy, the fact that Manitobans had to go through a home care strike to get you to listen, will he not do the right thing—and I am sorry to have to ask this, but in light of this complete debacle and the fact that Olsten knew ahead of us—ask for the Minister of Health's resignation as a result of this debacle, Madam Speaker?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, let us just analyze the relevant facts here. We went through a process. It did not produce the desired results. We completed the year as we intended. It is evident where the direction is going. I think only common sense applies. We are returning to our public home care system. There is a period of transition, and the real debacle here would be if we did not ensure a

continuity of service during this period to our home care clients; then that would be criticism, if people were not getting the service. So surely to goodness common sense must prevail and service will be provided. I think it was a good exercise. We have learned a lot of things through it, and we are back on course, and if there has to be—[interjection] There is. The member says there are people's lives. Absolutely, and I want to ensure that they have service during this particular period.

Cervical Cancer Screening Program Implementation

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, we saw it with home care when the Minister of Health said he would make it happen, and we saw it with Betaseron when the Minister of Health would say he would make it happen, and it did not, and now we are seeing the very self-same thing with the cervical screening and central registry program.

I would like to ask this Minister of Health: is he more interested in a good headline than the health of Manitoba women? I want to ask him how many Manitoba women must die before this government gets its act together and establishes the cervical screening and central registry program that he promised us 10 months ago. When will he keep his word?

* (1355)

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): First of all, on home care, that is on track. We continue to put more money in home care and expand our services in the public sector, as members have argued for. That is moving. On Betaseron, we approved the project. We have been working with the MS clinic. I understand in some provinces it took seven or eight months, if I recall, to get their program running, and in others it was somewhat shorter. We have spoken to those provinces to find out how you can bring the process on faster, and the MS clinic is now gearing up. It is very much in their hands as they do the work, as should happen. So that is on track to be in place.

Madam Speaker, with respect to this issue that arose in the Free Press today with respect to cervical cancer, I can tell the member that the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation who deals with

this particular matter advises me that the pap smears are available; doctors are aware they are available. Manitoba women have access to the testing that they need. The question is getting in place a tracking system across the province that will enable, have people come in regularly, and that requires an information system that the New Democrats have opposed.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Could I ask for the co-operation of all members to stop debating across the aisles. A member is standing and wanting to be recognized to pose a question.

The honourable member for Osborne, with her supplementary question.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the same minister: since the Associate Deputy Minister of Health said that it could take another year or so to get this central tracking program working, I would like to ask the minister if he will tell Manitoba women today exactly and specifically when he will open a cervical cancer registry and screening program. When? It has been promised for two years or more.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to emphasize that the necessary tests for Manitoba women are available. Their physicians are aware of that, so there is nothing stopping any Manitoba woman from getting the test that she requires on a regular basis. The results do come back to the physicians. They read them and they make their decisions.

The tracking system, much like breast screening, would give the ability to put a reminder in place on a regular basis, and I agree that is very important. Part of the infrastructure that has to be built for that rests around our whole health care information system, and the last time—I remember every time this matter comes up, the New Democrats oppose it.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Osborne, with a final supplementary question.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since the tracking system saves lives and since 20 Manitoba women die of cervical cancer a year, will the minister

answer the question and tell us when this tracking program will be in service? When?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to table a letter today from Dr. Brent Schachter discussing this particular matter, and I think the point is referenced to the necessary infrastructure being in place. The key element is a health information system which we are in the process of building.

What I find so frustrating about it—and I wish we had it in place today, but it takes a great deal to build. But every time the matter comes up, members opposite tell us we should not be building it. They oppose it, and ultimately it is that information technology that will save lives in Manitoba. I would appreciate their support on that issue.

* (1400)

Manitoba Telephone System Privatization—Stock Option Plan

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, yesterday the Finance minister stated that Mr. Sam Schellenberg was one of the government appointees to the board of MTS. Will the minister now acknowledge that Mr. Schellenberg, one of his appointees, was the chair of the compensation committee which put forward the stock option plan which was unanimously approved by that board and made his brother a millionaire?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, again, without accepting most of the comments from the member for Crescentwood, the issue of a stock option plan was approved by the shareholders of MTS back in May of 1997, ultimately by the approximately 70,000 shareholders of MTS, with a mandate that they could have a stock option plan with as many as 3.5 million shares allocated. It was referred to the human resources and compensation committee of the board of directors to work out the details and to bring back a specific recommendation. I believe that committee has four individuals on it. Mr. Sam Schellenberg, Jocelyn Côté-O'Hara, Arnold Morberg and Mr. Arthur Sawchuk are the members of that committee. Ultimately it went to the board of directors and was ratified by the board of directors. Obviously,

like any private sector entity, the board of directors will be held accountable for all of their decisions by the shareholders when they participate in the next annual meeting.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, the minister's version is so far from reality that it really verges on misleading the House in a serious way.

Madam Speaker: Question.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the minister confirm that in fact Mr. Schellenberg is the chair of the committee that was in existence before there ever was an annual shareholders meeting, before that first meeting took place in May of last year, that that committee brought forward a recommendation for a stock option plan. That plan was approved by the board of directors and only subsequently went to the shareholders, that in fact his appointee to the board chaired the committee that made his brother eligible for that enrich—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I find the member for Crescentwood's comments particularly offensive based on his track record of bringing misinformation and the kinds of allegations that he makes about members—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Beauchesne Citation 417 is very clear that "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate." The member for Crescentwood asked a very specific question about the minister's role and the minister's appointments role in a stock option plan that could make his brother a millionaire. He has no reason not only not to answer the question but to take those kinds of personal shots at the member. He is the one who should be responding to this very serious question that is being asked by a lot of Manitobans right now.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, the honourable member is right to raise Citation 417 about provoking debate. All you have to do is review the questions that are asked by honourable members of the New Democratic Party, the base nature of those questions, to know why debate sometimes gets provoked around here. The point of order ought to apply not to the answer given by the minister but to the questions being raised by the honourable member for Crescentwood.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, indeed he did have a point of order, but I would also caution all members posing questions that we have rules that are also not adhered to always regularly, and that is: there should be no postamble, no preamble on a supplementary question. A specific one-sentence question is sufficient.

* * *

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

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, responding very directly to the question, I already responded to the member that the committee that brought forward the recommendations on the compensation package for directors and for senior officers were the four individuals' names that I read, and I do believe that Mr. Schellenberg is the chair of that committee, and I am certainly prepared to undertake to confirm that. His name appears first on the list, and I do believe that he is the chair along with the other members of the committee being, as I have already said, Jocelyn Côté-O'Hara, Arnold Morberg and Arthur Sawchuk. All four are very reputable people who contribute in many fashions here in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Finance tell this House when he became aware that the committee headed by one of his appointees, Mr. Schellenberg, was in fact deciding on compensation for officers and directors and including, of course, his brother, the chair of the board? When he became aware of that, what did he do, what steps did he take—

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

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, as I said yesterday, I, like many Manitobans and I am sure members opposite, became aware that there was going to be a stock option plan after the annual shareholders' meeting last year, in May of 1997. In terms of the details of the allocation, which were released last week as part of the notification of the annual meeting coming up at the end of April, that recommendation came from the committee that I have already outlined, the human resources committee with the four individuals whom I have named to the board of directors. I was made aware of the specific allocations within the last two weeks.

French Language Services Report Tabling Request

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, I will try and change the tone of Question Period. I will ask my question en français.

Ma question is pour le Ministre responsable des services en français. Maintenant que le Gouvernement a reçu le Rapport Chartier, est-ce que le ministre peut dire quand il prévoit déposer le Rapport Chartier dans cette Chambre afin que nous puissions tous voir les recommandations suggérées?

[Translation]

My question is for the Minister responsible for French Language Services. Now that the government has received the Chartier report, can the minister tell us when he expects to table this report in the House so that we can all see the recommendations suggested?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister responsible for French Language Services): Madame la présidente, c'est très difficile pour moi de répondre en français parce que mon français, ce n'est pas bien.

[Translation]

Madam Speaker, it is very difficult for me to respond in French because my French is not good.

[English]

Madam Speaker, I would hope to be able to do that in the not too distant future. We are still in the process of

reviewing his recommendations and speaking with colleagues about them, and I would like to, at the time that we table that report, be able to provide our response to it as well.

Report Recommendations

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Je remercie le ministre pour sa réponse. Est-ce que le ministre pourrait nous indiquer à cette assemblée s'il a l'intention de mettre en vigueur toutes les recommandations du rapport?

[Translation]

I thank the minister for his answer. Can the minister indicate to this Assembly whether he intends to implement all the recommendations of the report?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister responsible for French Language Services): Madam Speaker, that is part of the process that we are now undergoing as we share it with departments and deputy ministers to ascertain our response to each request. I have had the opportunity along with colleagues to have a presentation on the report, and the general thrust of it is one that is, I think, very positive and can improve the delivery of services in the province.

Mr. Gaudry: Ma dernière question: est-ce que le ministre peut indiquer si le Gouvernement a déjà établi un échéancier de mise en oeuvre des recommandations? Si oui, quel est-il? Sinon, quand prévoit-il de le faire?

[Translation]

My last question: can the minister indicate whether the government has established a deadline yet for implementation of the recommendations? If so, what is it? If not, when does it expect to do so?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, that is part of what we are ascertaining now with departments because obviously, if we do set some deadlines, I would like to be able to be assured by those departments that they are in fact achievable.

Minister Responsible for MTS Conflict of Interest

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, yesterday we saw the Premier in Question Period repeatedly deny the role of this Premier and this Minister of Finance in setting up the situation in which the Minister of Finance's brother—the Minister of Finance who was responsible for MTS—has the potential to gain over a million dollars because of direct actions by the government appointees. I want to ask the Minister of Finance whether he does not see a direct conflict of interest being the minister responsible for MTS when his brother, who was not only appointed by this government and this minister but this is the minister supposedly responsible for the government's special share of the golden share on the board—does the minister not understand the conflict of interest that is involved?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the short answer is no, there is absolutely no conflict of interest whatsoever. By having the golden share—one of the reasons for having the golden share is because at the time of privatization Manitoba Telephone System owes the Province of Manitoba in excess of \$426 million. Certainly my responsibility, along with my colleagues, is to ensure that money is repaid to the citizens of Manitoba, the taxpayers of Manitoba, and part of that is the company performing in an efficient, profitable fashion. Today I can tell members of this House that debt that was at \$426 million on January 7, 1997, today is down to \$239 million. So MTS has made significant progress in terms of eliminating that debt. At the same time, we have the lowest residential rates of any telephone company in all of Canada and that is, from my point of view, excellent performance from our telephone company compared to telecommunication companies across the rest of Canada.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, we are seeing the golden share refers to Tom Stefanson's shares—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Thompson that he is posing a supplementary question and no preamble or postamble is required. Would the honourable member please pose his question now.

Mr. Ashton: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will ask the Minister of Finance again: does this Minister of Finance not recognize the conflict of interest of being the minister responsible for MTS, the minister responsible for the government's share in MTS, the minister responsible for appointing his brother as a director of MTS? Does he not understand that is a conflict of interest when his brother now is going to be gaining a million dollars at the expense of the people of Manitoba?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the member for Thompson is the one who obviously does not understand the whole issue of conflict of interest. The board of directors of MTS, some 11 members of which my brother is one, are responsible to some 70,000 shareholders, many of them, thousands, tens of thousands of them individual Manitobans who have invested in MTS. They have an annual general meeting at least once a year, and at that annual meeting the board of directors is held accountable for all of their actions and all of their decisions, and the 11 current board members will be held accountable when the next annual meeting is held here in Manitoba within the next several weeks.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson, with a final supplementary question.

Mr. Ashton: On a supplementary, I want to ask the Minister of Finance: is he denying his role and responsibility both as minister responsible for MTS and as the minister responsible for appointments to MTS, including the appointment of his brother? Is he now, Madam Speaker, denying that responsibility? And if he will accept responsibility, will he understand that it is a conflict of interest for his brother now to be getting a million dollars out of the people of Manitoba?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, there is absolutely no conflict of interest whatsoever, and I remind the member for Thompson of who our four appointees out of the 11 directors are. Our four appointees are one Mr. Robert Chipman, I think a name familiar to members in this House; Miss Ashleigh Everett, Donald Penny, Sam Schellenberg, all four of them Manitobans, well known I think to most people in this Chamber, well known to most Manitobans for the significant contribution they make not only in business, in

community activities, in all kinds of events here in our province; four very dedicated Manitobans who are dedicated in the best interests of our province, in the best interests of our citizens, along with all 11 board members. So those are the four board members that we have appointed as a government to the board of directors of MTS.

I have already indicated my responsibilities are to protect the debt, and I believe the debt is being well secured and repaid at a reasonable rate. It is also that there is the regulatory process to protect the consumers, and MTS whether it is private or public has to go through the CRTC. We saw evidence of that recently where they asked for a rate increase that was quite a bit larger than was ultimately granted and today, as a result, we have the lowest residential rates of any telephone company in all of Canada.

Manitoba Telecom Services Service Centre Closures

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, when this government announced the privatization of MTS, they told Manitobans that there would be no job losses, but they did not tell Manitobans that privatization would mean friends of government would have the opportunity to become millionaires. Well, what they said is not true because we do have job losses. In Swan River, the service centre is being closed and services are being reduced. Four jobs are being eliminated.

I would like to ask the Premier: how can this Premier accept the fact that services are being reduced, jobs are being lost, at the same time that his friends and brother of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) are becoming millionaires? How does he accept this?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I urge the member opposite not to misrepresent statements that have been made in the past in this House and outside. I took great pains during the debate to point out that, under public ownership, MTS had been downsizing by some 1,700 employees. In the previous five years, the corporation had downsized prior to privatization, a process that is underway and has been underway in every single telephone company in

Canada, including in Saskatchewan under public ownership. Downsizing had to take place in order to be competitive or they would lose their entire existence. I said that no layoffs would take place under private ownership that would not take place under public ownership, and that is precisely what is happening everywhere in Canada.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Swan River, with a supplementary question.

Ms. Wowchuk: Saskatchewan is not closing down service centres.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Swan River, with a supplementary question.

Ms. Wowchuk: How can this government accept MTS service centres being closed in rural Manitoba and the removal of central office technicians who play a very important role in delivering technological services to rural Manitobans? Do they not care about rural Manitobans? Are they more interested in having their friends become millionaires?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, what the member I guess fails to recognize is that in fact services are still continuing to be provided right across our province. As has been pointed out to her, the kind of process that MTS goes through today, whether it is under private or public ownership, is exactly the same through the review of the CRTC. We saw evidence of that when the NDP were making a big deal about the last rate application, which was I believe in excess of some \$3. CRTC granted a rate increase ultimately of some 84 cents here in the province of Manitoba.

As a result, today, as I have said on a couple of occasions today, we continue to have the lowest residential rates in all of Canada of the telcos. When you look at even under public ownership how MTS dealt with their whole issue of downsizing, at least they were able to keep the impact on individuals down to a minimum in terms of layoffs by having voluntary separation incentive plans and other initiatives to deal with employees in a very responsible fashion.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Swan River, with a supplementary question.

Ms. Wowchuk: I would like to ask the minister how he could put forward such garbage when we know—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, that is not a question that is worthy of a response, but it shows the level of debate and rhetoric to which the New Democrats have sunk.

* (1420)

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Wellington.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. It was my understanding I heard a question from the honourable member for Swan River. It may not have been—[interjection] Order, please. I distinctly heard a question from the honourable member for Swan River. It may not have been the question she wanted to pose, but I suggest—[interjection] Order, please. [interjection] I will recognize the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) after I have completed making a ruling on the concern raised by the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

I have received confirmation from my table officers, whom I rely on exclusively, that indeed they were also of the opinion that a question had been asked. However, if the honourable member for Thompson wishes to raise a point of order as to whether a question was indeed asked, I will take it under advisement, check Hansard and report back to the Chamber.

Prior to recognizing the honourable member for Thompson, I would, however, remind all honourable members that we have Question Period guidelines, and they are very clearly outlined and a question must (d) consist of a single question. Then there is other information as well, and this was the member's third question or second and final supplementary question.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I was trying to suggest that we usually do allow for some ability to bring these matters back to a reasonable course. I think it was pretty clear to anyone on this side that the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) was halfway through her question—[interjection] Well, if the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) can stop giving instructions on the operation of this House from his seat, I was just going to suggest the appropriate thing, rather than creating a big procedure wrangle out of that, would be to have the member be able to ask her question in its fullest and ask that we then try and bring this back to order.

Madam Speaker: The honourable government House leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, by his point of order, the honourable member for Thompson is simply asking for more latitude for his colleague from Swan River than he would ever allow you to give to us. Now there is a question of fairness about all of this, and the honourable member is simply asking you to stretch the rules too far.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) does not have a point of order; it was really a request to have the honourable member rephrase her question.

* * *

Madam Speaker: To resolve the issue, I will ask: is there unanimous consent of the House to permit the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) to quickly repeat her question? I would also remind—

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: No? Leave has been denied.

Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the official opposition, on a point of order.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Prior to the points of order that were exchanged in this House, you recognized the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), even though the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) was standing up; therefore, you still recognized that there was time for Question Period, which we then allowed to go to the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). You therefore should not have cut off Question Period. Clearly the points of order are not to be subtracted from Question Period. If you are to read Hansard, Madam Speaker, if you were to look at your original allowance of a question, even though it was a different member that stood up than what you had recognized, you would find that the member for Swan River does in fact have time, and you should allow her to continue asking the question.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I think under normal circumstances the point being raised by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) might be meritorious; however, there has been a fair amount of disorder in this House today. My understanding of the rules is that the clock stops when there is a point of order raised, but it does not stop while honourable members sitting from their seats create disorder in the House and you have to wait for that disorder to subside, and I suggest that accounts for the passage of the time about which the honourable Leader of the Opposition is now complaining.

First the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) wants special rules for the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk); now the Leader of the Opposition wants special rules for his whole caucus. Madam Speaker, there is an equality in this House for all honourable members, and the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) ought to recognize that.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Ashton: On the same point of order, Madam Speaker. The government House leader had the nerve to stand up and talk about equality of rules in this House. It strikes us as being very strange that any time MTS is raised in this House, the equality only applies to one side of this House.

Madam Speaker, clearly we had a situation at the end of Question Period where there was some disorder and, I might add, a lot of it came from the Premier (Mr. Filmon), who seemed to be addressing instructions to the Chair rather vocally. The appropriate thing, however, would be to go back to Question Period—you had already recognized there was time left in Question Period—and allow one of our members to continue questions. That is our right as an opposition, a right that we are not going to have taken away by the government.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

* (1430)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would also ask for co-operation from both House leaders to speak to the point of order raised and not deviate to other matters. [interjection] I indicated all House leaders, by the way.

On the point of order raised by the honourable Leader of the official opposition, indeed I did recognize mistakenly the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), as opposed to the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen).

* * *

Madam Speaker: I have been advised there was approximately 30 seconds remaining. So the honourable member for Wolseley will be recognized for a very short question. [interjection]

The honourable member for Swan River, with a new question.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Madam Speaker. When this government announced the privatization of MTS, they promised us that there would be no job losses and there would be no reduction of service. They did not promise that their friends would become millionaires. When is this government going to start to stand up for rural Manitobans and keep their promises and ensure that we do have the services that are needed for growth in rural Manitoba, not friends of government becoming millionaires?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, this government has been standing up for rural Manitobans throughout its 10

years of office. I might say that that applies to things like Grow Bonds, that applies to things like REDI, that applies to Louisiana-Pacific going into her constituency, that applies to things like Maple Leaf Foods coming to this province, and to the tremendous expansion that is taking place in the value-added and diversification of agriculture, something she would know absolutely nothing about.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: Order, please. We have now moved to members' statements. Could I please ask those members still wishing to debate to do so either in the loge or outside the Chamber.

Science Resource Centres

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): Madam Speaker, our government continues with its commitment to providing a strong, responsive education system, a system that serves the best interests of our children. The current communications and information revolution has so shrunk our world that every economic market is in some sense a global market. It is not surprising then that education is seen more and more as a key to unlocking the door to prosperity. To assist students in the constituency of LaVerendrye in unlocking that door, Lorette Collegiate has been awarded \$40,000 from the Department of Education and Training. In total, our government is providing \$680,000 in support for technology and science resource centres to 17 schools across the province for the '98-99 school year. These funds will help the school better prepare students in adapting to a workplace very different from my day. Every centre consists of a renovated classroom with a computer hub of personal computers complete with software, an electronics training area, and a computer interfaced applications training area.

Our children are our future, and we need to ensure their education continues to equip them for employment opportunities in our local communities and around the world. Children have shown themselves to be remarkably adaptable to the changing role that

technology plays in their lives. The centre will be available to all students in the school, helping to improve computer literacy as it relates to high-tech equipment and making complicated theories of mathematics and science easier to understand through computer applications. This is one more example of this government's ongoing commitment to the education of all our children. Thank you.

Manitoba Telecom Services

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I rise today to let the government know how disappointed I am in their lack of understanding of rural Manitoba and the lack of—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, when this government announced the privatization of Manitoba telephone services they said there would be no job losses. They said that services would be improved. Well, that is not what is happening. In Swan River the service centre which provides a very important service to many people in the area is now going to be closed. The central office technicians who play a very important role in the providing of the services at the school—they provide the services for the CBC facilities that are in the MTS station—are down to one person. We are now going to have to be served from Dauphin if this particular person takes time off, and people normally do take time off.

This government misled rural Manitobans when they told us that there would be no jobs, and I have to say that I am very disappointed that rather than thinking about providing better services, they were more interested in providing the opportunity for friends, people that are close to government, to have the opportunity to become millionaires. That is not what Manitobans want to hear from this government. Friends very close to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and relatives of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), a brother to the Minister of Finance, will now have the opportunity to make millions of dollars. At a time when we have services that are being reduced, telephone services, lack of funding for health care, lack of funding for our education system, government is more interested in their friends, and that is a disgrace.

We should be thinking more about providing adequate service, proper technology service so we can grow in rural Manitoba, not be thinking about our friends making money. That is what this government is doing, and it is a shame.

Economic Growth

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, Manitoba has one of the strongest economies in Canada. Our economic growth rate has ranked in the top three in the nation for three consecutive years. The front page of today's Free Press further trumpets our province's economic successes. The story entitled "Building Boom Takes Hold" reports on how the province's building and construction industry is gearing up for what could be the busiest year in a decade. Companies in this industry are so busy—they are scrambling for workers—that they are recruiting retired employees. It is no coincidence that employment opportunities and economic growth have skyrocketed in our province in the last few years. Manitobans know that the foundation of our fiscal policy has been to create the conditions that contribute to increases in employment and economic growth. This economic growth in turn generates revenue to support our priority public programs.

Now that the budget is balanced and the debt is declining, our government is able to focus on the priority areas of Manitobans: health, education and family services. This is a strategy that is supported by the majority of Manitobans. Manitobans understand that we as a government must live within our means, that we cannot simply raise taxes as the NDP were accustomed to doing as was witnessed by 22 tax raises in five years. If our government were to follow the fiscal policies suggested by members opposite, our economy would stagnate as important investment dollars left the province. Unemployment would rise, putting greater strain on the resources of government.

Thankfully, Madam Speaker, Manitobans have not had to live under the outdated and regressive policies put forward by members opposite. Instead, through common sense and common values, our government, in partnership with Manitobans, have built a successful province for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren. Thank you.

* (1440)

Point of Order

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I noticed the member just read a statement. Is it now in accordance with our rules for us to read speeches in this House? I thought the use of notes was acceptable, but to read word-for-word verbatim is not acceptable. I notice many members in this House read statements as opposed to giving speeches from notes.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable government House leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, the honourable member for Brandon East has been a member of this House for many, many years, and for that we ought to respect that. However, he ought not to raise an issue in reference to honourable members on this side of the House without making a reference to the habit that has formed amongst members of his side of the House, certainly during Question Period, to read verbatim questions and then to read verbatim supplementary questions, whether it had anything to do with the answer given to the first question or not. That goes on.

The point the honourable member raises, however, is worthy of some attention, because I think practices have shown some change over the years and this particular rule is probably known better for its breach than for its observance amongst honourable members in this Legislature and other Legislatures and in Ottawa. While the honourable member for Brandon East and I and the honourable member for Lakeside, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), might regret that, it is a reality of parliaments in the '90s.

So, rather than rule quickly on this, Madam Speaker, you may like very much to take this matter under advisement with a view perhaps to laying out some guidelines for that sort of thing. The fact is it has become a practice more than the exception. I do not say that in any happy way, and I do not say it to defend or not to defend anybody, because I have to confess I might have done it myself on occasion. So, with that in mind, I would, before asking you to make any speedy rulings, ask you to take this one under advisement.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Sturgeon Creek, on the same point of order.

Mr. McAlpine: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order. In spite of what the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) had put on the record here in saying that I have read from the script that was given to me, I can assure him that that is not the case, that I did not read, as he alluded to, every part of this statement. I used that as a guide, and it is not uncommon for the members opposite to come to those conclusions and make inaccurate statements in this House based on their perception, which is often wrong.

So I would ask that the honourable member be asked to be out of order on this particular issue.

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

Young Offenders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I wanted to—[interjection] No, no papers on my desk currently anyway—take this particular opportunity to comment in terms of a very important issue to me because I know it is an important issue to the constituents which I represent and ultimately, I would suggest, to a vast majority of Manitobans. There has always been a great deal of concern with respect to the Young Offenders Act and a need to try to deal with individuals below the age of 12, and the reason why I stand is just more so to look at what the current Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) is doing here in the province of Manitoba, and I think that it is a very positive step.

I do appreciate the efforts that department is doing in trying to work with youth justice committees, in particular the committee in which I happen to participate, because we like to think that there might be a better opportunity for youth justice committees across the province to be able to have more of a positive impact on youth, because ultimately I believe that an eight-year-old or nine-year-old knows what is right and what is wrong. In fact, if we can somehow get at those individuals at an earlier age, we might have more of a

positive impact in the future for those people as opposed to having to deal with children between the ages of 12 and 18. So I see a positive step in the right direction with respect to this, and I hope to see more coming down in terms of resources because we have to be very careful that we do not step too far forward without having some sort of resources behind us to ensure that in fact it is going to work and that it is going to be in the best interests of all parties concerned. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Cervical Cancer Screening Program

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, it is well known that cervical cancer is among the most treatable of cancers. It is equally well known that the treatment of this cancer depends on screening, diagnosis and treatment programs. Sadly, these programs are not in place, and approximately 20 Manitoba women die each year of cervical cancer, an eminently treatable cancer. One of these women died in 1996, and her story is an important lesson for both the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) and the Premier (Mr. Filmon). This woman's history began with an irregular test, but she had to wait four months for a biopsy, the same time as many women with suspected breast malignancies wait for a biopsy. In four months the cancer had spread. Even so, this woman had to wait an additional four months for treatment. By the time the treatment was available, the woman was told that her cancer was untreatable and that she had only six weeks left to live. Before her prospective surgery, she died at the age of 39 leaving her husband and four children.

This woman's wait for treatment and surgery from start to finish was nine months and the wait killed her. Her doctor told the woman that delays in treatment were due to cutbacks in health care, but cutbacks in health care is a code for a government which has lost perspective and has lost touch with the health needs of Manitobans. The result for this woman's family was death and bereavement. They do not want other women or their families to experience this kind of pain. They want holistic services for Manitoba women so that Manitoba women are kept alive and part of their families. Let us hope that the government learns from this family's unnecessary tragedy.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, just for the information of honourable members, I propose tomorrow to call bills, so that we will have the introduction for second reading of a number of bills, and then there will be opportunity on debate on second readings for debate on the bills, and then again on Thursday to return to a resumption of the examination of the Estimates of the government.

I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

URBAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Acting Chairperson (Edward Helwer): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Urban Affairs.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 1.(b) Executive Support on page 129 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Chair, before I carry on with my questioning, I would just like to put on the record my appreciation and sense of awe actually for Hansard for having produced since yesterday at 1:30 p.m. not only Question Period and Members' Statements and the normal business of the House, but also three sets of Estimates. They were on our desk this afternoon, and I think that is remarkable. I just wanted to congratulate Hansard and say what a great job they are doing, especially with three committees going at once. It is going to be quite

interesting for a while, but I think they did a wonderful job.

We were talking yesterday about the Partners in Public Service, and I had asked the minister about some examples of legislative changes to enhance efficiency or joint provincial-city partnerships with the private sector. He had mentioned the space management partnerships and other legislative changes for the Charleswood Bridge, et cetera.

I am wondering if he could tell me today if there are any space management partnerships in the works. Is there stuff happening in that regard, or is this purely an example of what might be happening?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Chairperson, where the space management initiative started was actually through an initiative by Government Services involved with Environment in looking at space and the best utilization of space for their various departments. What happened with that is when the Partners in Public Service initiative was started, there was the recognition that this was a good way to not only look at the government space that possibly could be utilized but also look at the City of Winnipeg space that could be utilized. So this is where the initiative is directed toward in space management.

One of the impediments or drawbacks so far has been the City of Winnipeg in their compiling of their database as to their spaces and what is available and the input for that. The idea is that it would proceed along those lines, but what is more important is that the city get their database in line so that it can be utilized. So they are working on it, from what I have been told, and, hopefully, it will be coming about in a very short time.

* (1500)

Ms. Barrett: So until the city finishes its database of I assume what they own and/or rent currently, the space management process cannot be implemented.

Mr. Reimer: Yes, it will be one of the initiatives that will be phased in, but there seems to be a recognition that there is a need and a value to look at that entity between the two partnerships. At this particular time, there has not been a physical direction started with the

space management, but it is recognized that it is one of the phased-in processes that they will initiate.

Ms. Barrett: Do you have any idea when the city will have completed its compilation of its database?

Mr. Reimer: Indications are that they are working on it. As to a specific time frame, there has not been a finalization on it yet. The indications are that they are working to try to get a compilation of it I guess as soon as possible, but they have not put a time on it yet.

Ms. Barrett: Which part of the city government now would be in charge of that particular part? With whom is the Department of Urban Affairs or the people that are involved with the Partners in Public Service linking?

Mr. Reimer: I can only report to the member that it is been done on the senior level of contact between the two departments. I guess that is about the only thing I can tell the member.

As to individuals or which particular departments, I think it is more or less in the discussion stages with the two levels on the senior level, the senior administrators, through our department and through the City of Winnipeg.

Ms. Barrett: The other part of this last set of questions that I had was the legislative changes that might be coming onside. The minister, in his comments yesterday, talked about the Charleswood Bridge. I remember our discussions of several years ago about the Charleswood Bridge, but that was an example of public-private partnership between the province and the city. Then he said something about there might be some other legislative changes that would be required. Any sense of what other legislative changes there might be in the works in this regard?

Mr. Reimer: Each year we request from the City of Winnipeg, very early in the year, a list of proposals for changes that they feel they would like to see implemented in The City of Winnipeg Act. They vary from time to time. Some are acted upon, some need further discussion, further input, further research, and they are put into various sorts of holding patterns or holding criteria until either the information is garnered

or there is a clear direction from the city as to what they would like to see implemented.

We have done that. We are working upon some of their suggestions right now. Also at the same time I think the member is well aware that there were a fair amount of recommendations that were forwarded by the Cuff report before review and consideration as for legislative packaging. Part of the packaging—when I referred to possible public-private partnerships, nothing prohibits under the present City of Winnipeg Act that the city cannot get into any type of partnerships that they are willing to.

It depends a lot on the projects and to the scope of what the city may be willing to develop, whether it may require any type of legislative changes before. If the member recalls, the Charleswood Bridge actually, the only reason it required a legislative change was because of the public-private partnerships, because of a recognition that we were dealing with something in a totally new realm. Initially they did not feel that there was any need for legislative changes, but until the legal interpretations came about regarding air space and the use of the riverbanks to be protective of the City of Winnipeg and in the investments that were being utilized, there was a requirement for this type of change.

These are the type of legislative changes I think we would have to be aware of as projects come about, whether they would be impacted or whether there is a need for a different type of change. So I do not think it has changed necessarily. That is all-encompassing for anything and everything coming up. I think it is changes that would come about because of a specific project that would need some sort of possible interpretation under The City of Winnipeg Act.

Ms. Barrett: I am a bit confused. It seems to me the press release, which says that the types of initiatives to be considered could include, and then there are a number of them, and the last two are legislative changes to enhance efficiency or joint provincial-city partnerships with the private sector. It seems to me that the Charleswood Bridge would fall under the second of those joint provincial-city partnerships for the private sector.

I was then asking about what legislative changes to enhance efficiency you might be looking at. Your response was, The City of Winnipeg Act changes happen very regularly as a result of requests that come forward from the city. So that sounds like more or less the same thing, but in the press release it sounds like there might be something, a new avenue or a new approach because this is a new program.

Some of the other areas, virtually all of the other areas in this paragraph talk about new kinds of partnerships, whereas it sounds to me like the legislative changes, what you are saying here, are pretty much the same thing that we have always done. So I am just wondering if I am actually being accurate in my interpretation or if there are new legislative changes other than those that come as a result of City Council requests being looked at.

Mr. Reimer: I think that what is referred to in the press release is that as the initiatives start to unfold in regard to the Partners in Public Service project, there may be the necessity because of job description or service delivery mechanisms or the restrictiveness of certain areas that the service has been then offered, that to accommodate a more co-operative effort between the two levels that legislative change may have to be implemented to satisfy the concerns and the restrictions that are involved.

Yet it has been pointed out if the two levels of government that are delivering a service under different legislation under The City of Winnipeg Act and then we are delivering a service under the—

An Honourable Member: Social Services Administration Act.

Mr. Reimer: Yes, then there may have to be some changes and rejigging of the formats. I think that this is what we are referring to in that area.

Ms. Barrett: So it is possible implementation of the other elements that might come out of the partnership, in effect.

Mr. Reimer: Correct.

* (1510)

Ms. Barrett: Another area, and here I am going to the Winnipeg Sun of May 24, last year, after the announcement of the Partners in Public Service—I will try and remember that—where the deputy minister says—there are no quotes around this, but the phrase is that it is too early to say whether any jobs may be lost in the streamlining process. I am just wondering if while you start to meet or carry on your meetings, if that is an element, part of a check list that is looked at in each of these potential program combinations, what are the implications? What are the impacts on staffing? Whether there are changes or are not changes, it seems to me that is an important element to be looked at, as well as affordable and cost-effective.

Mr. Reimer: I think the member is right that there has to be a consideration of positions, the jobs and the classifications of such in any type of amalgamation, and that becomes part of the analysis of any type of co-ordination or between the two entities. A very big part of the key to the equation is recognizing that we are dealing with people in positions. If we are dealing with the service industry and their positions are recognized in the evaluation as to any type of amalgamation or efficiency models, that may come about where there is manpower involved. So they would become a very important factor in any type of considerations.

Ms. Barrett: The minister just said that this is an important factor when dealing with the service industry. We are not dealing with the service industry, Mr. Minister, we are dealing with public service.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I would ask the honourable member to direct her questions through the Chair.

Ms. Barrett: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, very quick off the mark there. I apologize for not having directed my comments through the Chair to the minister.

Through the Chair to the minister: the minister said in his answer to my earlier question that we are dealing with the service industry. That caught my attention because to my way of thinking we are not dealing with the service industry. We are dealing with public service delivery; it is not an industry. I think this is a problem that people have to deal with when talking about governments, whether it is civic government or

provincial government, I think more particularly with civic government, because it is the level of government that is closest to people and that actually does provide a higher level of direct services to people.

I think it is very important, because to me when I hear the phrase service industry, I hear the word industry, and that says to me private-for-profit-corporations industry. There is a large sector of our economy which is the service industry, and it includes much of the food industry, the food delivery and service industry, direct service provision to people. It is the fastest growing sector of our economies, but that is not the same thing as service delivery provided to citizens of a community or an entity by public servants.

So I think it is very important to make that clarification, and I hope that when the minister talks about dealing with the service industry, he is not saying the same thing that you say when you talk about the private sector, the bottom line, the return to shareholders, this kind of thing. It is very clear that it is not a corporation, although we will get into the discussion of the Cuff report and the ramifications of that later today. I just wanted to make that comment to the minister.

Mr. Reimer: Well noted. The member is right. The implication was in regards to the public servants, I should say, that work for both entities, whether it is the City of Winnipeg or the Province of Manitoba, so that is of utmost consideration in any type of joint venture or partnership between the two levels. Well noted.

Ms. Barrett: I would like to move on then, if I may, to an issue of concern. Again, this relates back to our discussion, sort of, in the Capital Region yesterday, but it is the whole issue of urban centres' peripheral development. There was a presentation to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) November '96 from Brandon, Thompson, Portage, Flin Flon, Selkirk, Steinbach, Stonewall, Dauphin, Virden, Winnipeg and The Pas. It was a fairly extensive presentation that talks about the issues and concerns raised by these centres, their own peripheral development and the concerns that they have, some of which are very specific to their own communities but others of which are generalized to not only these communities but also, of course, the city of Winnipeg and its relations with its surrounding

municipalities. There were a number of summaries and recommendations that were made, and I am wondering if the minister has any updates on some of these. I will go through them.

The first recommendation was that the urban centre peripheral development group recommend to the Premier that the University of Winnipeg Institute of Urban Studies and the Rural Development Institute of the University of Brandon receive a joint commission for the preparation of a joint report on the impacts of peripheral rural residential and industrial development on the province and on urban centres and their surrounding municipalities. I am wondering if the minister has any information about this recommendation.

Mr. Reimer: I have been informed that they were supposed to be sending the terms of reference to myself and the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) but to date, we have not received anything from them.

Ms. Barrett: Could the minister give us a sense of the timing of this. This was November '96. When did the RDI and the IUS start meeting to bring forward terms of reference? How long has it been going on, I guess?

Mr. Reimer: We would have to look into it, because we do not seem to have too much correspondence from them or they have not been in contact. But we will check into it to find out more for the member.

* (1520)

Ms. Barrett: I appreciate that. It is well over a year ago, and I think that this probably is a situation that is maybe, in some cases, parallel to the Capital Region problems and challenges. I must say I am a bit concerned that the department or the minister has not given direction to the department to follow up on this more expeditiously, and I hope he does do that.

The expectation out of this recommendation is that the province will utilize the information to consider the development of a financial model outlining a relationship between those who benefit from local government services versus those who pay for them. This, I believe, is very important. This also speaks directly to the suburban cost growth development study that has been

on the backburner for years from the province. So this is a recommendation that has come forward again, not from the City of Winnipeg, although the city is part of it, but again from rural municipalities that are very concerned about these issues.

I understand that this is going to be a joint process between Rural Development and Urban Affairs, and I think that perhaps I will get my colleague to ask the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) if he has any other information when he goes into his Estimates. But I just want to point out that this is something again that is being—the concerns are being shared by communities as far north as Thompson, as far southwest as Virden, as far east as Steinbach and as far northeast as Selkirk. So, I mean, this encompasses virtually every segment, every section of the province of Manitoba, so it is a very important issue and process.

Mr. Reimer: The member brings up an interesting point because I happened to be at the MAUM meeting just the other day and had a chance to talk to some of the various mayors and reeves from around various areas of Manitoba. It is surprising how when you talk to them—as Minister of Urban Affairs, my so-called primary responsibility is the city of Winnipeg—but in talking to some of these mayors and reeves of some of the towns that even the member mentioned, Thompson and even small towns like Arborg and things like that, there is a commonality of concern for their towns and the growth within their town and around their town.

It was interesting to talk to the mayor for Brandon where they are now talking about core area problems and problems in their inner city. You seem to sometimes think that maybe this is a problem that is just strictly centred in Winnipeg, but other towns are experiencing various other types of growth stretch-marks, if you want to call it, and that they are having problems with some of their inner-city or inner-town core area and the peripheral development. The comment has been made, which the member has heard and I have heard, of people in and around Winnipeg that use the services of Winnipeg and live outside the city. It is surprising how you hear the same comment made of people that live in and around Gimli and use the services of Gimli or live in and around Stonewall or down in Killarney and use the services of Killarney, and how there is a similarity of concerns of how you

get the best use of some of the monies for services that are required to support your town, the inner town.

It is something that I think that at governments of all levels, not only on our level as provincial government, but on local levels, municipal levels and even within the city of Winnipeg, elected officials now are being tested in a sense of trying to come up with solutions or answers as to what is the way to try to get the utilization out of a better environment for their own towns or their own cities. So I hear these problems, not in isolation anymore around Winnipeg. I hear them from other areas in talking to other mayors and reeves and some of the problems that they have.

So this is a problem that I think that, when you start to get more heads around the table, possibly solutions start to come out. This is one of the reasons why when we alluded yesterday to talking about the Capital Region Strategy and coming up with trying to build on consensus and co-operation amongst the participants that it is better for the region, it is better for the whole area. I think that this is what is happening in a lot of parts in rural Manitoba where you are getting people together, not necessarily to amalgamate their levels of government, but the amalgamation of their ideas, which possibly can lead to the amalgamation of some of the towns and the R.M.s into one jurisdiction, because they recognize that some of the best ways of efficiencies are sometimes let us not each one of us reinvent the wheel when we need something where we can try to share it with our neighbour down the road or our township or our municipality.

So I think that there is more and more of this reawakening within the elected officials, that this is the best utilization of the taxpayer's dollar, because it is the taxpayer's dollar that really comes into effect when they try to accommodate all the wish lists that sometimes come about through the various concern groups not only in the cities but in the towns. So it is something that I think is quite a challenge, as I say, for the elected officials, but I think that the encouraging part is that more people are starting to talk about it. Hopefully, we can build on a consensus and build upon the strengths and the assets that are out there and make them even better not only for Winnipeg but also for the areas in and around Winnipeg and Manitoba.

Ms. Barrett: I appreciate the minister's comments about the importance of this situation. I guess I would say to the minister through the Chair that when the minister just said it is good that people are starting to talk about this, this presentation was made November of 1996. That is virtually a year and a half ago. In order for it to have come together for presentation, November '96, the communities had to have met far before that and put this together, so we are talking probably at least two years since these issues started to be raised by various municipalities and the City of Winnipeg.

It seems to me that the Minister of Urban Affairs has come late to the table on this one, that the City of Winnipeg was a participant in all of these discussions, a participant in the recommendations, a participant in the concerns that have been raised a year and a half ago, meets regularly with the mayor and the Executive Policy Committee. His senior staff meets with the senior staff of the City of Winnipeg. I am surprised that—and I am assuming perhaps this did not happen, but it seems to me that there was a presentation that was made to the cabinet or at least to the Urban Affairs Committee of Cabinet. Perhaps that did not happen, but my understanding, there was something submitted to the Premier's Office, and it just seems to me that it is, again, saying that these issues are important and yet not putting the resources necessary towards implementing them.

For an example, again the suburban growth study. Two years ago, well, we have not heard from the Urban Development Institute; well, okay, but you are not doing anything. The minister is not doing anything about the Urban Development Institute, not coming forward, not talking and trying to be a facilitator, as he is talking about the need for his department to be, not doing anything, and I agree. His department's biggest role, it seems to me, is to act in a leadership capacity, in a facilitative role, because it is a very small department as far as staffing is concerned. It is a link between a whole range of other communities and departments potentially.

That linkage has broken down, it seems to me, in the suburban growth study, and, as well, here we come again with the urban centre peripheral development group. The minister says there are no terms of

reference having been received from the RDI and the IUS and does not even know when these terms of reference were requested.

* (1530)

This shows to me a lack of leadership on the part of the minister in saying this is important. The minister says that he just recently met with MAUM. Well, yes, but these issues should have been known to him a long time ago. I think this is a problem that we are facing with not only this department but other departments, that the talk is there but the walk is not. So I just think that it is a real problem.

I will conclude by saying that the expectation under this recommendation is, again, the development of a financial model as to who benefits from services versus who pays for them. This is exactly the same problem identified by municipalities outside the Capital Region as has been identified by the City of Winnipeg. It is an issue that has to be addressed, and it has to be addressed very quickly, or we are not going to have any progress made.

Mr. Reimer: I should point out to the member that the group she was referring to at the presentation, that was a relatively new grouping of municipalities and individuals that came to meet with the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and make that presentation. It was not a group that had been in existence as an entity other than for that meeting. If I recall from that meeting, some of the directions that were given to them was to come with more specific terms of reference and that the invitation was open for further discussions with them.

To the best of my knowledge, they have not come back to—well, I know they have not come back to our department. I do not know whether they have come back to the government requesting further meetings to put more direction from their initial report that they came to cabinet with or to the government with. So they were a one-shot get-together, and they have not come back to government with any type of parameters or directions they were recommending.

Ms. Barrett: Yes, I understand that, Mr. Chair, and I think that is a problem with groups like this, because they are from all over the province; it is difficult to

meet. They also have many local issues that take precedence, and this is a problem in trying to put together something like this, which is precisely why I believe that the role of the Urban Affairs department in conjunction with the Rural Development department could have been and should have been, to recognize the fact that these structural difficulties were present and take a more proactive role, saying: okay, we have said: come back.

I guess what I am saying is a year and a half later the provincial government is saying, well, they never came back at the same time that the minister is saying it is an important issue. Why was it not B.F.'d, put in the B.F. file for three or four months later, or why was not contact made with some of the people that were involved in this issue? It seems to me that the inaction on the part of the provincial government, and I am not singling out Urban Affairs, only I think Rural Development has a role to play here probably as well, but why did the government not make it a priority to say: we will take some of the leadership here?

You have put the ball in the group's court knowing that it was a very new group, that it was a very loosely connected group, and you just let it sit there, so it is not my responsibility anymore, and a year and half later nothing is happening.

So I just want to leave that with the minister and hope that these issues that have been very clearly put together, there is a lot of good information brought out by each of these communities on issues that are facing them, and I think it is incumbent, if we are going to have a healthy Winnipeg and a healthy Manitoba, we have to address these kinds of issues because, as the minister correctly said, these are issues that we were not facing a while ago, 10 years ago.

Who ever would think that Steinbach would be an urban centre? Well, it very definitely is an urban centre and it has many of the same problems that Winnipeg has, writ small. The scale is very different. Perhaps some of the problems are unique to the Steinbach area, but if we do not start working together and if the government does not start taking initiative and leadership in this, it is not going to happen, and it is only going to get worse.

I have one final question on one of the recommendations. I believe this is something that has passed by both UMM and MAUM. That is the recommendation of the amalgamation of the departments of Urban Affairs and Rural Development. Is there any discussion in the government about this? What is the feeling at this point on that issue?

Mr. Reimer: I guess the ultimate decision as to the makeup of departments and ministerial responsibility rests with someone other than myself. I can only report on what has transpired in regards to the recommendation that the member is referring to and refer back to what the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has stated, that the two different departments have different mandates.

The mandate of Urban Affairs, because of the uniqueness of Winnipeg, having a Department of Urban Affairs recognizes that there is a responsibility by this government to recognize that Winnipeg is a different entity in the sense of its overall presence in Manitoba. So the Department of Urban Affairs under its mandate and under its business plan is geared towards the responsibilities of the efficiencies and the administrations and the governing of Winnipeg.

The Department of Rural Development has a different type of mandate in their direction and their involvement with the rural component of Manitoba. The Premier has indicated that there has been no reason to amalgamate them and, like I say, they each have a function and a purpose to serve and at present he sees no—like I say, I do not make the decisions but, at the present time, there does not seem to be any indication that there will be amalgamation of the two departments.

Ms. Barrett: Again, a phrase that the minister just used struck me when he was talking about the difference between the Department of Urban Affairs and Rural Development, and he talked about the business plan of the department. I am wondering if I have a copy of the business plan of the Department of Urban Affairs, if he could share with me. Again, is this something like the service industry?

Mr. Reimer: I guess what I am referring to is the annual report that Urban Affairs comes out with with the various categories and the responsibilities and the

achievements and the department's role and our mission statement. I think that is what I am referring to in here.

* (1540)

Ms. Barrett: Yes, the minister's background shows itself every once in a while. I guess that the issues raised and the discussion about the amalgamation is interesting. It is a decision that is not the minister's to make and there is a huge number of possible configurations of government departments. I think perhaps what MAUM and UMM might have been talking about, and it might have been a result of, again, a sense of perhaps the two sides not speaking with each other, the two departments not connecting together. Again, urban municipalities within MAUM and UMM have felt that they were not being listened to, that they have more in common perhaps with the city of Winnipeg than they do with their surrounding countryside or exurban things. I think that is evidenced by the urban centres peripheral development group.

I do not have a view really about whether they should be amalgamated or not myself. I can see pros and cons to both things, but I do think it is an indicator of an issue and a concern that is being raised by groups within the province of Manitoba. I would like to suggest that nowhere was, in the last little while, that distinction perhaps more clearly seen than in the playing out of the issue of the sale of water to Headingley.

I am not going to spend a lot of time on it because I do not think any of the parties to that situation cover themselves with glory. I think City Council chose not to agree to the sale of water to Headingley only on a technicality. It was a tie vote and, frankly, had the city's request for change to The City of Winnipeg Act been in place, the water sale would have gone through because the mayor would have had a second vote. So it was purely a technicality that what I think would have been a disastrous decision did not go forward. So the city or portions of the city have a big responsibility in the way this whole thing played itself out.

I would like to ask the minister to say what his views were on this issue because in all of the media and in all of the discussions and in all of the meetings never was the Urban Affairs department's or portfolio's view put

forward, whereas the Department of Rural Development, the minister for that department, was, I think, perhaps, some would say, unfortunately, front and centre in this whole issue. I just wonder what the role of the Urban Affairs department was in the whole issue of the sale of water to Headingley.

Mr. Reimer: It was certainly an interesting debate and topic of discussion for a while. I guess, in looking at the role of Urban Affairs and the department in regard to the Headingley situation, we were always of the opinion and still are of the opinion that what looked like a common-sense approach to a solution at Headingley was pointed out to the city in a sense that the residents of Headingley were already getting water from Winnipeg through the standpipe system, which meant that they had to come to the well and load up their tanks and take it back home and dump it in their holding tanks. So the residents of Headingley were already getting water.

The sewage lagoon is located just to the south of Headingley on the Perimeter Highway, which is almost within eyesight of Headingley and the town site of Headingley. So it would have sounded like a normal procedure to say, okay, is there room for you to get together? When I say "you," I am talking about the municipality of Headingley and the City of Winnipeg. Is there room for you to get together to see whether you can formalize the arrangement and come up with some sort of agreement as to the utilization of the water and the sewage? So that was more or less the direction that I as minister, in conversations with Headingley and with the city, suggested.

I also made it clear that there was, in no way, pressure in a sense that they had to come to any type of agreement. The agreement, if and when it came about, would be strictly up between the two parties. If there was a decision to be made by the council of City Hall that they did feel that they wanted to enter into any type of arrangement with Headingley, then it would be strictly at their sole discretion. It would then be up to the city and Headingley to negotiate some sort of settlement of costs and services that were going to be provided and volumes and utilization of the sewage system. They would be the sole negotiators.

We in my department and the provincial government would not be involved in any way of pressure or of

instituting a mandate for them to come to some sort of understanding. They would be strictly within themselves to come to an agreement. If they did, that is fine. If they did not, that is their decision.

So this is one of the reasons why I made it very clear, and our government made it clear, to Headingley and to the City of Winnipeg that the decision on it would be strictly between those two parties and that we would not be a party to influence either one of them to come to some sort of agreement or understanding.

Ms. Barrett: Well, Mr. Chair, I think that the minister may very well have in his conversations with the city and Headingley made those points in that reasoned fashion, and I have no doubt that he would because that has always been my experience of the minister, that he is not prone to any kind of hysteria or nonreasoned dialogue in conversation, but when the minister says there was no pressure on the part of the provincial government, on either the part of Headingley or the City of Winnipeg, I must in all conscience disagree, not perhaps on the part of the Minister of Urban Affairs but certainly on the part of the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach).

I do not believe the minister was at the public hearing, the one public hearing that was held at the west part of the city of Winnipeg in January dealing with this issue, and it was put on by the City of Winnipeg, as it should have been, an ad hoc committee to deal with this, where one of the presentations was by Councillor Clement from the Charleswood area. Mr. Clement, who voted for, I believe, the sale of water to Headingley, Mr. Clement, who is not opponent in any way, shape or form of development, he said in his presentation that the Minister of Rural Development had come to a meeting with himself, another councillor and the mayor and had said straight out: You have three choices: you sell water to Headingley, or there is a lagoon, or there is a lagoon. The lagoon would have been very close to the city of Winnipeg. It would have been an enormously intrusive situation.

So Mr. Clement said that this was harassment, that they were threatened by the Minister of Rural Development, and this is not Councillor Murray, for example, making these comments. This is the councillor who is normally very supportive of the work

of the provincial government, and he was saying that this was not an appropriate—he felt as though he had been threatened by the Minister of Rural Development. The Minister of Rural Development was the minister who was in the newspaper quoted all the time, and I think on hindsight the government probably feels that they would have been better served had the Minister of Urban Affairs been quoted more extensively. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) also wrote a letter in the local newspapers that says, and I quote: The province of Manitoba has not nor will it tell the City of Winnipeg to sell water to Headingley or to any other community in the province. The role of the province is one of facilitation between parties to look at a logical and economic way of obtaining water. That is precisely what the Minister of Urban Affairs has said this afternoon.

* (1550)

I think that had that actually happened, had the province taken a facilitative role, I do not know that the outcome would have been any different because the issue is fairly clear-cut, but the way it was presented in the papers, in the media, and at public hearings, was a real slap in the face to many in the City of Winnipeg who were very concerned about this, and who saw this as an example, not of the province's facilitative role, but the province's heavy-handed role.

I also think—and I must ask the minister what his view is on this. The minister said, and the government has said all along that Headingley was already getting water from the city, the standpipe. One of the problems is that the standpipe does not allow for—this is a very labour intensive, a very low-level kind of water provision. It is not very scientific, and it is not very technologically advanced, and there was a reason for that—to retain the rural character of the Municipality of Headingley.

The province kept saying, well, you know, why is the city not selling the water to Headingley? You are already selling it, the standpipe, and nothing is going to happen. It is not going to change the character of the city of Headingley, when Headingley's own five-year development plan would have put hundreds and hundreds of new homes in the Municipality of Headingley, by their own plan, and when we also know

that a large number of lots of land that is currently, I believe, zoned agriculture could not under the standpipe process, the current procedure, effectively or cost-effectively be rezoned and then sold. It is not nearly as clear-cut as the minister would have the community believe.

I guess I want to ask the minister if he feels that the province handled this issue well and that the outcome was—I do not think the vote by the city was what the government wanted, but were there any lessons learned by the Minister of Urban Affairs into how to actually deal with issues like this, an issue that is the same kind of issue that is going to happen again and again and again in the Capital Region and in the other smaller urban centres.

Mr. Reimer: I would hope that one never gets too old to learn from relationships in dealings with people and dealing with various aspects of government. The member and I are both of the political persuasion of public service in ourselves, and one thing that we have both learned is that you are continually learning in dealing with people, I think. In hindsight you always look back and you say, yes, maybe we could have done things differently or we should have been doing something in a different manner.

Naturally, I think through every experience you learn something that you can carry forth in your dealings with trying to come to some sort of resolve when you are dealing with public concerns. I guess in hindsight I do not know where it could have been changed any differently. It was left to the position of elected officials making a decision, which it should be. I think that this was the main emphasis on it, that it was left in the hands of people that either could make it happen or did not want it to happen. I think that is the truest sense of decision making, so there is a recognition that the people that are elected by the people are represented in their people's views. The indication was that the councillors at City Hall felt that they were representing their areas or their people's concern, and this is how they voted.

As to whether it should have been different, I do not think that I could have said that it should or should not be, because we are elected to abide by the wishes of the people. If the wishes of the people are telling us that

they want a certain decision made by our government or by our elected officials, I believe we are bound to uphold our constituents' wishes in trying to come forth with a decision that is compatible with the wishes of not only the decisions of the people that are elected but our party and our government in coming forth with the decisions. So I cannot really look back and say that it should have been handled any differently.

I think sometimes situations take hold of themselves and the resolve comes about, and you move on from there. Retroactive decision making really does not help in any form other than, like I say, you hope that you learn something from it and that you take forth when you come into situations again where you have to make decisions.

Ms. Barrett: I think we agree that it is up to the people who have been elected to make decisions, and they may not always be the ones that we would like to see or many people would not like to see. I was more concerned about the process. I just wanted to say that I think there are many people in the city of Winnipeg, both who support the sale of water to Headingley and those who did not, who were outraged and appalled, if I can use those adjectives, by the behaviour of the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach).

I will just say that I would hope that, No. 1, something like this does not happen again, but if there is an issue that has the ability to be as inflammatory on its own merits as this one did that the government looks very long and hard at who it is sending out to represent the government's views on the issue and that no service was done to the provincial government or to the ministers or to the process of trying to work together on some of these issues by the way it was handled. I think that is part of the problem, that people in Winnipeg for sure after this situation and also as we mentioned yesterday the BFI situation, there are a couple of issues.

So I just think it is incumbent upon the government to take a look at how it deals with these kinds of issues, because it is going to be the kind of problem that you are going to face when you are dealing with the Capital Region Strategy and when you are dealing with the urban peripheral development. It is going to require leadership and facilitation and mediation, not

confrontation, and so those are my comments and concerns on that one.

This is another issue that is going to happen. I understand that legislation is going to be tabled in the House this session dealing with changes to The City of Winnipeg Act as it happens virtually every session. I do not want to and I am not going to ask about specifics of the legislation, because that will happen in the fullness of time, soon, I am assuming.

I do want to ask some questions about the process and the concerns that have been raised about some of the requests that have come forward from the City of Winnipeg or from a portion of the City of Winnipeg, City Council, requests for changes to The City of Winnipeg Act. I will try and stay within the guidelines of Estimates and not stray over into legislation.

* (1600)

The minister said in an earlier comment this afternoon in discussing the whole issue of possible legislative changes in our discussion of the Partners in Public Service initiative that the commonly requests for proposals come to this government from the city that will require legislative change in The City of Winnipeg Act, and he also said—and I am paraphrasing here—that some of those requests and proposals need further input or research. I marked that down because one of the major, major concerns that have been raised in public forums and by various groups that follow the legislative process and follow city politics and civic issues very closely has been the fact that as a result of the Cuff report, which was tabled in the city in mid-October I believe, recommendations that came out of the Cuff report and other amendments from that report were passed through City Council with virtually no public hearing at all.

While I know that the City of Winnipeg has its rules and regulations and the province usually stays out of that stuff, although I would venture to say that we did not have that happen perhaps as much as we should have in the sale of water to Headingley, but there has been several groups and individuals who have raised publicly the lack of public hearings in the process that has led to some changes being made on an administrative level by the City of Winnipeg and

that is totally in the City of Winnipeg's purview. But the proposals that have come forward, the recommendations that have come forward to changes to The City of Winnipeg Act came forward as a direct result of the Cuff report, too, and came forward very quickly after the Cuff report was tabled.

The minister has had several requests in writing to him asking for a series of public hearings on this very important issue of change to the governance in the City of Winnipeg, and to date I have heard—and I do not believe others have heard his response. So I am wondering if the minister would share that with us now.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Chairperson, the member might be interested. Awhile ago, I guess it was at least six to nine months ago, I remember in a conversation with one of my staff we were talking about the City of Winnipeg, and I think this was in around the time that the Cuff report was being formalized or in its formation, I should say. The question was asked, I wonder how many studies have been done on the City of Winnipeg and the various areas of development and all these other types of concerns about the city, including the core area and everything else like that.

Believe it or not, there is a book that summarizes all the various reports that have been done in the City of Winnipeg since I think it is 1973. There are over 3,000 various reports that have been done on various components of Winnipeg regarding even the social services and planning and amendments and all kinds of different things. So there have been numerous, numerous reports that have been done on the City of Winnipeg. So that was just a sideline that I found very, very interesting in regard to how much the City of Winnipeg has been studied.

There was a wards boundary review committee meeting, the Eldon Ross committee, I believe it was called, did a wards boundary review committee in 1991. If you look at that report by Eldon Ross and you superimpose it over top of the Cuff report, there is a fair amount of similarities between the two reports. A couple of the areas was a four-year term and also, believe it or not at that time, they were advocating the elimination of the RAG committee, I believe it is called, the residents advisory group, and that was back in 1991.

When Cuff did his report, he also did an awful lot of reviewing and consultation. I understand that he had over 200 interviews of various peoples, public people, elected officials, former councillors, city staff officials, the public at large, to come forth, so I was told, that he had public consultations to come forth with his recommendation.

Then this was what was the basis of his report that the City Council reported on. I think the member is aware that, with our process here in the Legislature, we do have the ability for public hearings also when we get into readings of the bills, for the second, I guess the third reading, second or third reading. Between the second and third reading, there is the ability to have public presentations also. So there will be a time available for the public to make presentations once the bill has been introduced. So public participation before and after the Cuff report is available, and now with our legislative package there will be the public participation available also through our committee meetings.

Ms. Barrett: There may well have been 3,000 reports done on various elements of the city of Winnipeg over the last 25 years, I am not surprised. It is a hugely complex political organism. However, the impact of the report, the impact of the Cuff report—it is not just a report. It has been used as the basis for City of Winnipeg act amendments that will have the impact of changing the scope of City Council and the city governance enormously, probably, arguably, the most important series of changes that will have taken place in the city of Winnipeg since Unicity. Unicity, starting back with Unicity, there were hundreds of public hearings held prior to the legislation coming before the Legislature.

The point is not who Mr. Cuff consulted with, although to my knowledge there were no public hearings held, and even if there were, virtually very few people would have known about them, and more to the point, they were public hearings that would have been held and the consultations were held prior to Mr. Cuff writing his report. There has been, there was by the city, no public input to the Cuff report or the recommendations that flowed out of the Cuff report that have made their way to the provincial government in the form of requests for changes.

* (1610)

There were like two or three weeks between the time the Cuff report was published and the time the City Council passed The City of Winnipeg Act amendments. There was no public participation in that process. There was public participation because some people made presentations to City Council, but like 10 minutes long, a very, very short period. There were no public hearings held throughout the city of Winnipeg.

I would like to tell the minister, and this is not information from me. This is information from John Kubi [phonetic], chair of the East Kildonan-Transcona residents advisory group—has written the minister several times and has not had yet or did not, up to recently, have a response from the minister. One of his documents where he did a bunch of historical research is that there were three major reports that have had impact on the City of Winnipeg and its organization. One was the Taraska report, and public hearings were held through part of 1995 and were not completed until May 1996—1975 and 1976, excuse me. The City of Winnipeg Act Review Committee's final report of 1986, an issues paper was prepared and made available to the public prior to the preparation of the report, and 29 public hearings were held in the afternoons and evenings in various community committees and at City Hall before that report was finalized.

Finally, the Eldon Ross report that the minister has talked about, the Winnipeg Wards Boundary Commission in 1991, hearings were held in all the community committee areas, public hearings were held prior to the final report. None of that happened with Cuff. Now, granted, this is a city responsibility primarily, but the concern that has been raised by citizens is that given the massive impact these changes will have, if they are put forward in anywhere near their form as recommended, on the City of Winnipeg, on its rights and privileges and duties of its citizens and its city councillors, the enormity of that impact demands public input prior to the legislation having been brought forward.

When the minister said earlier today that sometimes when the city sends requests to the province, the province sometimes says there is need for further input or research, is the minister saying that there was no

need, he felt there was absolutely no need for any other input or research into the issues raised by the recommendations of City Council to the provincial government vis-a-vis the Cuff report, that they were perfectly comfortable with the impact that these recommendations, if carried through, would have on the City of Winnipeg and its legislative and political life.

Is that what the minister is saying, that he is very comfortable with the Cuff report and he does not have any problem with the process that the city undertook and felt no compunction about going ahead, doing his legislative job without any public input prior to the legislation being tabled in the House?

Mr. Reimer: I can only refer to the fact that the City Council—when the Cuff report was presented to them, there was a fair amount of debate on the floor of City Council. There was the availability for public presentations to council on the floor of council during the Cuff report. I do not know the exact number, whether there were any public presentations. I think there were some public presentations made at that time to the council. Council then had the opportunity to debate it within themselves, bring forth amendments, to debate it again.

I can only relate that when the final report was passed with a vote of 12 to four, it showed a very strong amount of endorsement by the City Council, that there was a willingness that this was the way that they were wanting to proceed. An endorsement of that strength would show that the majority of the council, three to one, were in favour of the report.

So there was a fair amount of solid support for the Cuff report in its entirety, other than the amendments that the City Council put on the floor that were also passed. To me that shows a fair amount of satisfaction and endorsing that the city did not feel that they needed any further public consultations or a need for any type of further amendments to the report that was forwarded for consideration to this government.

Ms. Barrett: Oh, dear. Oh, dear, oh, dear. So a vote of 12 to four on City Council shows City Council solidly in support of an issue; therefore, the provincial government will go along—as the minister has said sort

of indirectly in a couple of public comments, they are going to support the will of the City Council in this regard and not be heavy handed and patriarchal in their dealings with the City of Winnipeg.

Well, then, would the minister explain to me why a vote of 16 to nothing in 1996 by City Council in opposition to the BFI landfill was not supported by the government? That is a little bit of selective reasoning here, and frankly I do not think that carries water. The City Council has asked for the ability to have taxation privileges. They have asked for a number of things that the provincial government has said no to. So I am sorry, through the Chair to the minister, it is a bit of a specious argument that the minister is making here when he says that a vote of 12 to four shows solidly in support of this situation and therefore we are obliged to follow through without any other initiatives on our part. That will not wash.

Is the minister not concerned about the issues that have been raised by the Council of Women of Winnipeg, the Provincial Council of Women, the East Kildonan-Transcona residents advisory group, the issues that were raised by those in opposition to this legislation on the floor of council, the fact that the public had I believe it was 10 minutes to make presentations for one morning at City Council, whereas the Taraska report, the ward boundaries report and The City of Winnipeg Review Act in 1986 all had public hearings outside the City of Winnipeg council chambers during times when citizens could more easily attend? Clearly the minister does not care about these issues, because as far as I know he has not even responded to the letters that have been written to him. He may have. My information may be out of date, but there are very serious allegations that have been raised about these issues.

I guess I would like to ask the minister if he is concerned, as the Council of Women of Winnipeg is, that the changes that have been proposed by the City of Winnipeg will bring about a cabinet style of government without the checks and balances of a party system, that the changes will give the mayor two votes potentially, a tie-breaking vote, in a case where in this last election less than 20 percent of the registered voters supported the current mayor.

* (1620)

Now, the minister has talked about how the City Council is reflective of the wishes of the citizenry. I would suggest, as the Council of Women of Winnipeg does, that actually the city councillors themselves are more reflective of the will of their constituents because they are by and large elected with a much larger percentage of the vote of the people who vote in their ward than the mayor is being elected at large.

I do not understand what rationale can be used to give the mayor a tie-breaking vote in a situation like this. My understanding is that there is virtually no city in Canada of this size—virtually no city; I chose that word very carefully because I thought it was one—that has given the mayor a tie-breaking vote. When you put that together with the power of the mayor under these recommendations to appoint the entire Executive Policy Committee and the power that the Executive Policy Committee now has to have private meetings in camera, the Executive Policy Committee, along with the mayor, can be half of the City Council.

With the mayor's tie-breaking vote, that, in effect, means that the mayor who could be elected, as this one was, with 20 percent of the public vote, can have virtually dictatorial powers because he or she will elect the Executive Policy Committee. They will bring recommendations to the floor of council and could very easily, as has happened several times now, have a tie vote which then the mayor, him or herself, could break.

How is this democracy? How are there any checks and balances in this? This is a major issue here, and the government clearly feels that there is not a problem. I would like the minister to respond to that concern, please.

Mr. Chairperson: Just for the clarification of the committee, the honourable member has alluded to changes of The City of Winnipeg Act being proposed, and this is close to anticipating amendments to the legislation which would be better discussed at committee considering the legislation. You may wish to interrupt since it has happened only once in this case here, but I think that we want to be aware of that in your discussions and your questions.

Ms. Barrett: I knew that this was an area where there was going to be a line that needs to not be crossed, and I am well cognizant of that. What I am trying to do is to talk about the process and the principles rather than the specifics, because I do not know what the legislation is. I just know what the city has asked the government to do, and I am talking about some of the issues that have been raised by people about this, and, basically, why the government has chosen not to hold public meetings about this before the legislation. I will endeavour to stay on the proper side of the line.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the honourable member.

Mr. Reimer: The member is right, no decision has been made as to what will or will not be implemented from the Cuff report other than until the final legislation is brought forth, and then we will know what has been considered. So it is bordering on a bit of speculation on my part as to what will or will not be part of the package. I could report that the committee meetings that would come through come about because the legislation possibly might have the opportunity for people to discuss some of these things, if these are part of the legislative package that has been presented. I should point out that the package that was presented had far-reaching effects as the member has alluded to, and this is one of the reasons why there has been a fair amount of research or looking at implications as to what has been requested.

So the bill, as to what has been requested and combined with other requests that the city has brought forth, is in the process of review. Hopefully, it will be coming forth as soon as possible, because I believe that there is the member and other members who would like to know what has been committed to regarding The City of Winnipeg Act. I can only say that we have to look at not only what is good for the efficiencies of the city, but we have to look at how they balance in co-ordination within the framework of Manitoba and the government and the direction that all responsible governments would go. So any type of addition, deletions or amendments to what has been proposed by Mr. Cuff and other recommendations, we would hope that they are for the betterment of Winnipeg and the management of its governmental structure and the people that are going to be involved with it.

So in looking at some of the correspondence that I have received from the various people that have been concerned, we have replied to all of them. If there is anything outstanding, well, we will certainly have the department look at it and find out exactly if there is anything outstanding. I would hope, in fact, I am fairly certain, that we have responded in any way that we can to the concerns of the people that have brought letters to me. So we will endeavour to do that.

Some of the letters and the comments refer to the present mayor, the present situation, and we have to remember that we are not only looking at legislation that might affect some of the present personalities but future personalities that may or may not be elected to the city. So we have to look at the betterment for what is good for all of the city and not look at the personalities of who is in the office and how it would affect him or her that is presently there. So hopefully that will be recognized by the member and by the people concerned.

Ms. Barrett: As a matter of fact, the minister's comments about looking at the legislation in the context of no matter who was mayor was a major point in the Council of Women of Winnipeg letter to the minister dated April 3, this year, and I think that is a very good point. You draft legislation based on what you want to see, the best outcome, and also understanding that you have to have checks and balances too in case you get situations that are not positive. So I do not think anyone is in disagreement with that that you have.

It is very difficult, because you are looking at these processes and these recommendations in the context of a current City Council and in the context of a mayor, for example, and members of the Executive Policy Committee who are very forceful individuals. So I think everyone is cognizant of the need to look more broadly and to look forward to saying this legislation will have impacts or whatever legislation is brought forward will have impacts not only on that.

* (1630)

Mr. Reimer: I just wanted to add onto what the member is saying that I think it is important that the legislation is brought forth as soon as possible, because a lot of people may be considering or not considering

getting involved with civic politics, and the sooner that they recognize what some of the ground rules are if there are going to be changes coming about through the legislation, that they are aware of it in due time so that they can make decisions as to whether they feel that they want to get involved with running for office. I just wanted to bring that up.

Ms. Barrett: Yes, thank you, and on that point before I carry on with my earlier question that I had not finished with, again, the Council of Women of Winnipeg in their letter of November 17, 1997, made the point about the election this fall from the exact opposite viewpoint, that this current council put forward these recommendations very late in well over two-thirds of the way through their own mandate and that perhaps a sober second thought would say: let us hold off until you have a new council who will be elected. I would assume, and I do not mean to prejudge what will be in the legislation but again talking about process, that changes to The City of Winnipeg Act may not impact—oh, how am I going to say this—legally. Anyway, I will not talk about that right now, but I think that you could use that same argument from the other side.

The question I had earlier and the minister just talked about the fact that the government was doing research and looking at the implications of the request from the City of Winnipeg—with whom is the government doing research and what implications are they looking at?

Mr. Reimer: I think when we look at any type of requests from the City of Winnipeg for a change of legislation through The City of Winnipeg Act, we have to look at how it has a ripple effect on other aspects within the City of Winnipeg, how there possibly could be overlap with possibly even The Municipal Act and whether there are adjustments that have to be made in other forms of jurisdictions. A lot of it is just process more than anything.

Ms. Barrett: I would argue that all of it is process. So what you are saying is the research and looking at the implications are more what consequential amendment acts would have to be implemented. I know a couple of the areas which, of course, we cannot talk about because it would be beyond the scope of this

discussion, and, of course, the legislation is probably nowhere near finished.

I was hoping, frankly, that the minister would have a little broader definition of research and implications and would have discussed if he was not prepared, as clearly he is not prepared, to hold public hearings prior to the legislation being drafted or seriously considered being drafted, that he would have chosen the avenue of research and implications that would have been available to him which is to hold public hearings prior to the legislation rather than just doing the consequential amendments research. I think he could have availed himself quite effectively of people who are on both sides of the issue.

There was a public forum on the issues of city governance, and the president of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce was very eloquent and very clear in her support of the process, not only the process that had been undertaken, but clear in her views about what city government should look like. That was an excellent forum of discussion of the principles of city government. I just think it is very unfortunate that the minister was unable or unwilling—he was very able to—was unwilling to do this.

I think there are many people in the city and throughout the province that are going to take a look at this and say we do not like this process and think that the balance that the minister was talking about, balance efficiencies with good governance, is not going to be assisted by not having gotten the benefit of more people's input and dialogue, because it is one thing to receive a letter and to respond to a letter, it is quite another to actually have a face-to-face dialogue or a discussion of the issues in something that is so critical.

This is not a simple change in a tiny little bit of how the City of Winnipeg is run. This is a massive sea change. It will take, people have said—the view of the City of Winnipeg as a civic government that is democratic and open and decentralized will be gone, and the city will be run like a business, and that is exactly what the Chamber of Commerce chair was talking about and she was very much in support of. This comes full circle to some of the comments that the minister made earlier this afternoon, the words that he used that struck fear and terror in my heart, that we are

moving in the direction of a corporate view of governance and of government, and that is not the view that most people in the city of Winnipeg want, I think.

It is not going to assist us in providing the kind of leadership at the civic level that we need if we are going to have a vibrant city of Winnipeg in a vibrant, vigorous Manitoba as the minister said in his opening comments yesterday.

I think he has missed a golden opportunity here, and I am afraid that it was not an oversight at all, but it was a deliberate decision on the part of the government to say: this is the view of City Hall that we can live with. We want it to be a more corporate, more centralized, less democratic process because it will be easier for us to deal with a city that is totally top-down.

I would like to go on and discuss this more at length, but I think it would be very difficult to do so within the guidelines established by the Chairperson and vigorously enforced by same, so I will end my comments. I know that there will be a number of people who will make presentations when allowed to on this issue and hope that at that time the minister will be open to hearing those presentations, use this as an opportunity to do that research, that broader research. I know that we on this side will be more than happy to allow as much flexibility in changes to those issues that will enable this to be a more positive process than it certainly has shown itself to be so far.

On another topic that I think I am probably going to have an easier time of asking questions on, the Manitoba-Winnipeg Community Revitalization Program, I have the final evaluation report. The minister mentions some of this, I think, in his opening remarks. Hansard was much more efficient at producing the Hansard than I have been at having the chance to read it. I would just like to ask him about some of the findings and the program impacts in the summary.

Finding 4 says: the structural factors that limit the programs' capacities relate to the diminishing value of program budgets, a reliance on predefined expenditure categories and a pre-established time frame for program implementation. To me this says that in the context of this overall summary, which says the program itself is

very good and provides an excellent service and needs to be maintained, but this says that there is not as much money, the categories are too narrow, there is not enough flexibility and the time frame is not as flexible as it needs to happen. Are you looking at that? Can we expect some changes in this regard?

* (1640)

Mr. Reimer: The program that the member is referring to, the MWCRP program, the Manitoba-Winnipeg Community Revitalization Program, has been very successful. It is a program that was originally, I believe, started back in the early '70s, and it has continued to roll over, if you want to call it, in increments.

The reason behind the audit and the evaluation program report was to get a feeling of where we have been, what we have done, and where we are going to be going with this program. We are committed, I think, as the member realizes, to the budget that we have allocated and other programs. It may not be under the same guidelines, because one of the things that we did want to do with the audit report is to take an evaluation as to sort of the good, the bad, the ugly, and how we can improve on it.

We are doing an evaluation of it ourselves. I think the City of Winnipeg is doing an evaluation. I know there has been some discussions as to what the implications are and where we go from here.

The concept is a good concept of getting communities revitalized more or less as it is implied. The vehicles and the directions are something that we want to re-evaluate and see how we can make it maybe even better or more effective and more direct in the results.

So the evaluation is a healthy situation to go through at this particular time because we feel that if we are going to get some better use out of it, let us see how we can do it better. So that is more or less the basis behind the review.

Ms. Barrett: The report says it was prepared for both the province and the city. So both the province and the city are looking at this report to evaluate further what

they want to do. Both entities are using this report as the basis for launching something new or making changes.

Mr. Reimer: Exactly, yes.

Ms. Barrett: Is there any time line as to when the evaluation of this evaluation will be completed?

Mr. Reimer: I have been told that we want to get this up and running as soon as possible. The evaluations have been going on. We would like to get this program—there is a value to it. It is the identification of where it is going to go is what is being looked at right now, but we would like to get it up as soon as possible and get it going back into the communities. Under what format, I think that is what we are working at right now.

Ms. Barrett: I should know the answer to this, but I cannot remember it. So currently the program has concluded, or are there projects still underway? So there is still something happening in the community?

Mr. Reimer: Yes, there are commitments; there are projects that are ongoing. There are projects that have been committed for funding that we will continue to honour and to implement. There are no new funds in a sense. The existing funds are being used up. I believe it was almost \$5 million per level of government, over \$5 million per level, so there is over \$10 million that was utilized through this program.

Ms. Barrett: Does the minister know when those funds will be finally expended?

Mr. Reimer: I think the end date is March of 2000. Hopefully, they will all be expended before that time, but that is the end date for the fundings under the existing program.

Ms. Barrett: Okay, so by the end of the fiscal year '99-2000, is that the end date at this point?

Mr. Reimer: I believe that is right. The areas that they are still working at are in the Elmwood area, the Glenwood area and the east Norwood area. That is where there are projects that still have to be completed.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Chair, so, in effect, there is one more fiscal year after this one where there will be potentially some moneys expended.

Does the minister anticipate having completed the department's evaluation of this program and implementing another program before this, so that we do not lose the momentum and there is something always ongoing?

Mr. Reimer: Most definitely. I would like to get a new program as soon as possible, so that we can start to utilize this season actually, you know, for renovations or revamping or whatever has to take place.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Chair, before we conclude, I appreciate again the minister's ability and willingness to deal with general issues before we get into the specifics of the Estimates books themselves.

I do have a couple of questions as we go through the Estimate books and one on 1.(b) Executive Support. I probably could figure this out if I looked at the chart, but how many staff are there under this \$230,000?

Mr. Reimer: Seven staff.

Ms. Barrett: Is there a chart that could tell me which staff those are?

Mr. Reimer: On page 5 of the supplement. It should be noted that some of the staff years are shared with Housing. In fact, the seven are shared between the two departments.

* (1650)

Ms. Barrett: So it would be that half of the salaries for those seven would be under this one and half would be under Housing?

Mr. Reimer: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: 20.1. Administration (b) Executive Support \$230,100—pass.

20.2. Financial Assistance to the City of Winnipeg
(a) Unconditional Current Programs Grant \$19,587,500.

Ms. Barrett: Going back at least to '94-95, my records show that this grant has remained the same. Can you tell me how long it actually has remained the same?

Mr. Reimer: Yes, it goes back to and including 1994-95; that was the year.

Ms. Barrett: I am wondering if the minister knows what the rate of inflation has been in that time period.

Mr. Reimer: No, I do not know.

Ms. Barrett: Frankly, nor do I. I have not worked that out, but I do know that inflation has not been at zero for that period of time, and I would just like to suggest that the minister in his opening remarks when he spoke about how generous the province had been with the City of Winnipeg, at least in this area the effect of inflation over the last few years since '94-95, the last five years, would have eroded to a fairly substantial degree, the buying power, if you want to use the business analogy, of this unconditional grant. So I think the government should take a look at reviewing that.

Mr. Chairperson: 20.2. Financial Assistance to the City of Winnipeg (a) Unconditional Current Programs Grant \$19,587,500—pass; (b) Unconditional Transit Operating Grant \$16,339,000—pass; (c) General Support Grant \$8,094,100—pass. 2. (d) Dutch Elm Disease Control Program \$900,000.

Ms. Barrett: I do want to start by saying we all appreciate the increase that the province has given to the city in this particular area. I grew up in the Middle West of the United States, and I am old enough to remember when elm trees graced the streets of Des Moines, Iowa, and Sioux City, Iowa, and they do not any longer do that. I think it is essential that this is one of the singularities of Winnipeg that we must maintain, so I know we all appreciate the increase. I am wondering if the minister can explain why \$900,000 was chosen. What rationale for that particular level of increase?

Mr. Reimer: The member is right when she makes the statement that Winnipeg is blessed with a tremendous elm tree legacy in and around our province. The additional \$200,000 is recognized because, just as there

is a problem with fighting Dutch elm disease within the city, there is a problem of controlling the Dutch elm disease coming into the city from around the peripheral area. So the idea is that the City of Winnipeg, from what I understand, will be going into a program of control in some of the areas around the city also. So, in recognizing their additional cost, this is one of the reasons why we increased their budget by \$200,000 in their battle against the Dutch elm disease.

Mr. Chairperson: 20.2.(d) Dutch Elm Disease Control Program \$900,000—pass. 2.(e) Unconditional Grant - Urban Development \$6,700,000.

Ms. Barrett: I notice that there is an increase, and I am assuming that it is based on the net VLT revenues. Is there a set formula that is applied here? I do not need to know the formula but just if there is one.

Mr. Reimer: Yes, it is 10 percent of the net revenues that are generated from the VLTs within the city. That is what that figure represents.

Ms. Barrett: Has the city ever come to the province asking for an increase in that percentage?

Mr. Reimer: They have asked.

Ms. Barrett: Seeing as how the increase has not been forthcoming, I am assuming that the response was no. I wonder if the minister knows what the vote of City Council was for this request. Was it 12 to 4 or 16 to 0, or?

Mr. Reimer: The answer was no.

Ms. Barrett: I think my point was made, so I am prepared to let this pass.

Mr. Chairperson: All right. 20.2.(e) Unconditional Grant - Urban Development \$6,700,000—pass.

Resolution 20.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$51,620,600 for Urban Affairs, Financial Assistance to the City of Winnipeg, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

Item 20.3. Urban Affairs Program Support (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$547,800—pass; (b)

Other Expenditures \$221,500—pass. 3.(c) Canada-Manitoba Winnipeg Development Agreement \$3,451,300.

Ms. Barrett: Very briefly, I know that in the listing of WDA programs, there are several that are listed as being a result of the Pan Am Games. I am wondering if a portion, if not all, of those projects should have been under the Pan Am Games budget rather than the Winnipeg Development Agreement budget? What was the determination in some of those—was there any discussion of that in those areas?

Mr. Reimer: Yes, there are three items that have been identified with the Pan Am Games, if they want to call it, in regard to funding that came through the Winnipeg Development Agreement. One was a business plan for The Forks area, which was \$2,500; the other one was a feasibility on leaving a legacy at The Forks, which was a feasibility study of \$10,000; and the other one was in regard to some funding that was involved with the Riverbank Development agreement, which was the low-lying bridge at The Forks. That was a partnership with the Pan Am Games Society.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 20.3.(c) Canada-Manitoba Winnipeg Development Agreement \$3,451,300—pass.

Resolution 20.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,220,600 for Urban Affairs, Urban Affairs Program Support, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

Item 20.4. Expenditures Related to Capital (a) Financial Assistance to the City of Winnipeg \$23,500,000—pass; (b) Urban Initiatives \$250,000; (c) Canada-Manitoba Winnipeg Development Agreement \$2,028,000—pass; (d) Red River Floodway Control Structure \$500,000—pass; (e) Less: Recoverable from Capital Initiatives (\$5,000,000)—pass.

Resolution 20.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$21,278,000 for Urban Affairs, Expenditures Related to Capital, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

The hour now being 5 p.m.—

An Honourable Member: We are not done.

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry.

We have now come to the part of the Minister's Salary. We would please ask that the minister's staff please leave the table.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates for the Department of Urban Affairs is item No. 20.1.(a) Minister's Salary \$13,100—pass.

Resolution 20.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$243,200 for Urban Affairs for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

This now completes the Estimates of the Department of Urban Affairs.

The time now being 5 p.m., committee rise.

HEALTH

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

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 21.1.(b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 71 of the Estimates book. We had agreed also that indeed questions would range quite widely. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Mr. Chair, yesterday we were speaking about hepatitis C and the compensation package, and I think the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) indicated to the minister that we would ask a few more questions on that issue before moving on. I wonder if I could begin by just providing a little bit of an outline as to my understanding, and perhaps the minister could address that.

I understood from yesterday that the minister said that the principles for compensation had been established and that they would include—and I am being quite, quite loose here—a lump sum that is to be determined, and that one of the other principles would be an effort to meet the needs of people living with

hepatitis C. This would be income related, provide income replacement. Also, I think the third item was that the compensation package would perhaps fund additional medical needs, and that would depend on the province, depend on the kinds of supports that the province had. I believe the minister also said that there was a working group that was meeting to spell out the details, the principles having been established.

Furthermore, I think the minister indicated that the date for compensation of January 1, 1986, was taken as the first date, or the logical date, because it was at this time that there was a change in the standards of care, or that a change in standards of care could be safely determined or determined. I am talking about care in regard to the nature of blood and blood products.

Furthermore, I think the minister said that, while some might see the HIV compensation package as setting a moral precedent, that need not imply—I think the minister talked about the fact that the HIV group was very small, whereas the hepatitis group would be larger and the numbers would be much more significant. I am assuming, then, the financial cost would be much more significant if it were a compensation package that paid no attention to dates.

The minister talked about the total package being \$1.6 billion, and said that the share for Manitoba would be approximately \$13 million, and this would be over a period of three years. I just want to check my facts with the minister.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Mr. Chair, just to clarify the member's review of our discussions yesterday, first of all, the comments with respect to the 1986-1990 period as defined were not my personal view in terms of the work I had done personally, but the recommendation that was made to us for a period by the national government and the working committee on reviewing the appropriate material and including the class action suits that were launched in a number of provinces. So we as provincial ministers and the federal minister relied on that work that was done by the research team who prepared the work for us. So if at some point in time they prove to be wrong, I have no reason to suspect that today, but I would not want the member to attribute that particular date to any work that I had done. We are

relying on work that is done by primarily the national government in preparing discussions here, which of course underlines the point about where we in fact did start.

With respect to issues around negligence as we discussed yesterday that the premise of that particular period, which the member has discussed, is that it was during that period of 1986—we picked January 1 as the beginning of the year—but during that year of 1986 a test that had been developed, and again in the continuum of the development of any test or any particular medical procedure there are those who think they have a test, start to prove it, have it tested, and then of course the acceptance of it as a proven test for a particular item grows within the medical community.

In the North American medical community, it was in 1986 that that test began to be adopted in some jurisdictions in the United States, and so one could argue that the pendulum of standard of care had started to swing from the development stage into the standard period in that particular time, and that was the argument and the logic and the rationale that were presented to us as ministers by those involved in that particular process.

Is there something else I may be missing that the member may want to flag in her recap?

* (1500)

Ms. McGifford: The province's share, that is, Manitoba's share of the compensation package, from what the minister said yesterday we understood to be approximately \$13 million over a period of three years. I wanted to ask the minister, and I realize that the details of the package are not entirely worked out, but I wanted to ask the minister if he could tell us whether this money would be entirely devoted to the lump sums to meeting the income needs of individuals and meeting additional medical expenses, or does he foresee that some of that money might be used in other ways?

Mr. Praznik: As the press release that was put out by federal, provincial, territorial ministers indicate, and I would quote from it, and I will provide her obviously with a copy of it if one can get it copied. I quote from the release: ministers suggest assistance to individuals be negotiated on the basis of initial fixed payment as

well as a variable subsequent payment based on the severity of each individual's disease.

Now, in our discussions as to what this meant, my understanding is that the severity of the disease is reflective of the ability of an individual to earn a living and that consequently the more severe the illness the less likely the person would be able to earn a living. Then of course if they are unable to earn a living, the compensation plan would be able to provide a supplement to them on top of the other assistance that they would normally get, such as CPP disability and whatever other plans they would have, so that the total package on which an individual will rely for their health care, their health needs, their support needs and their financial needs, this is one part of it. Many of those other components already exist, including for people who received hepatitis C or had hepatitis C prior to this particular period.

I do not want to leave the impression, as some did in the media yesterday on some of the coverage, that there were only health care costs being covered. That is inaccurate. Most individuals will have an entitlement to Canada Pension Plan. That is why I flagged one of the issues as speedy acceptance there. This is still a matter of negotiation and ultimately court approval, but that is the plan as we envisioned it as ministers. But we are not the only parties at the table, obviously.

Ms. McGifford: I wonder if any portion or part of this \$13 million would be used to cover, for example, administrative costs or legal fees, that sort of thing.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, the cost of administering this particular program—and you have to appreciate, as well, that this is a capital pool which over the three or so years of its being paid into, I guess us beginning next year as provinces, in the completion of four years this pool will have a capital fund which will be invested and earn income. So it is not limited just to the \$1.2 billion. There is an income component depending on the terms that will carry it into a long period. But its administrative cost in setting up has to be covered inside the pool.

Now, when the member refers to legal fees, et cetera, this is not a litigation fund. It is one in which it will be negotiated. There will be actuaries' fees, and I am sure

there will be some legal fees in actually putting together the trust or whatever has to be established, but compared to where one would be in litigation, it is just a very, very small share of what that would be if the other route was chosen.

Ms. McGifford: I did not mean for litigation; I meant other kinds of costs. Can the minister hazard a guess at what those other costs might be?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I do not want to even begin to do that. The working group is there. They have to deal with various organizations. There are so many factors. Virtually none of the factors that will influence that are within my control or realm; consequently, I do not even want to hazard a guess at that.

Ms. McGifford: Yesterday the minister said, I believe, that the statistics that his department had for those infected with hepatitis C before 1985 were quite rough, and he did not provide those statistics. I wonder if there are any, and, if so, would he provide them?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am going to ask Mr. Wendt to comment on that as part of the working group that is developing those numbers. I think he can outline some of the technical difficulties in getting a handle on the size of that particular group.

Mr. Ulrich Wendt (Manitoba Representative, Hepatitis C Working Group): Mr. Chairman, there are a number of technical difficulties. The records of the Red Cross themselves, they are not complete. Some of these records go back quite a few years. The hospital records themselves, in most jurisdictions, there is a limited requirement for record retention, and because the nature of the infection is such that it is in many cases symptom-free for so many years, it could be the case that the symptoms will not show up until after some records will have no longer been retained.

So there are a number of technical difficulties in being able to come up with a definite number, so we would need to have people actually come forward to identify themselves.

Ms. McGifford: So the short answer is that we do not really know how many persons were infected with hepatitis C in Manitoba before 1985.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, one qualification to the member's statement is that would be through the blood system. There are other ways in which people can get hepatitis C, and there is a whole group of individuals who have gotten the illness, not through the blood system. But the short answer is, yes, that is a difficulty, and there are estimates as to those numbers. They vary considerably, but I think Mr. Wendt maybe wants to comment on sort of the best-guessed estimates in the country.

Mr. Wendt: The epidemiologic evidence suggests that the number might be around 20,000 or 30,000 prior to that period.

Ms. McGifford: I am glad the minister corrected me. I, of course, did mean people who contacted hepatitis C through tainted blood and as part of the system. I think Mr. Wendt's figures reflect the numbers infected in all of Canada, and I am wondering if there is any rough guess or, even better, a definite—well, we do not have definite statistics, but I wonder what the numbers might be in Manitoba for those infected with hepatitis C through tainted blood before 1985. Do we have anything?

Mr. Wendt: We do not have a definite number. It would be somewhere in the neighbourhood of 800.

Ms. McGifford: So potentially then there are 800 persons in Manitoba living with hepatitis C acquired through contaminated blood who will not be part of this package and whose families will not be part of this package.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, based on the information that Mr. Wendt and the working group have provided, that could be the estimate as a possibility. I want to, for the benefit of the member for Osborne, make this point. As we have come to the estimate that the size of the population outside the group may potentially be as large in the group, I would like to take out of that, though, the hemophiliac group first which are regular users of the system.

* (1510)

As Mr. Mark Brown indicated to me, the vast majority of hemophiliacs are likely to be included in the group because they would have received blood or blood

products during the window, but it comes to a more important and a larger point. If you assume that this group of people is the same as the group we are compensating—in the case of Manitoba, about 800 in each group; across Canada 22,000 in each group, which would be, I think, the right number—the package we put together is \$1.2 billion for the 20,000, the 22,000 for which there is a very good argument to be made, or an argument to be made, that there was a negligence or malfeasance on the system. Manitoba's share is our 4 percent of the \$300 million of provincial dollars. For that program to be expanded, the lion share of that, on the basis of doing really an ex gratia payment, a no-fault system, with no negligence or malfeasance, the bulk of the dollars that would be needed to make that work have to come from the largest partner in the agreement, which is the national government.

So, even to get to the point, and this was what I was trying to make yesterday, the two hurdles are the principle of do you begin a compensation package for people injured where there was no malfeasance or no negligence in the system; and, secondly, how are you going to finance that? In the case of the area where we believe there was a potential malfeasance, potential negligence, the federal government had to come to the table and, at the end of the day, after very tough negotiations—I saw Jennifer Dundas's program last night on CBC, and I have never seen a more creative editing job done in many a day. It is regrettable because I do not think it does the issue justice; but, if you are going to extend that on the basis of having a no-fault compensation package, the majority of that money has to come out of the national government.

Although I guess the CBC and the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) did me great credit to think that I was an architect of preventing that from happening, with our 4 percent of the provincial \$300 million, the reality of it is that the players with the most money that will have to be on the table have to make the decision to do that if you are going to have a national program.

The federal government brought \$800 million to the table for the area where there was a potential malfeasance or negligence. They did not come to the table with another \$800 million for other people, for a gratuitous or no-fault program.

The Province of Ontario, which was responsible out of our \$300 million, their portion will be in the neighbourhood of between \$100 million and \$150 million, I would imagine, Ontario. They have not come to the table with that money. The Province of Quebec has not come to the table with their dollars. Two other larger provinces than Manitoba, British Columbia and Alberta, have not come to the table with those particular dollars. So if you look at how the compensation package was structured for where there is a malfeasance or negligence and you see where the financial resources have come from to make that happen, keeping in mind that the provinces, including the Province of Manitoba, for an action or a fault that was not of our making, is having to pay for the medical care side of this already.

The dollars for any expanded program, the vast majority of dollars have to come from the national government. Quite frankly, to even get that program off the ground, and the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) I think suggested it might happen, the national government has to come to the table with at least another \$800 million, and anyone else looking at this, it is not going to happen without the major players being prepared to commit their dollars. In fact, that is why we have a compensation package today, because the player with the most responsibility did come with \$800 million. It may sound significant, but in the overall cost of hepatitis C, it is not even half of what is being spent. The provinces are bearing that.

So my point is very clear, despite Mr. Brown and the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and others sort of implying that at the table Manitoba and this minister, with only 4 percent of \$300 million in a \$1.2-billion package, can influence that decision making. In reality, it is those players that have the biggest chunk of dollars on the table who have to come to the table with those dollars and, despite the fact that Jennifer Dundas cut my sentence in half to make me say what I did not say last night in the media, my point was that where Manitoba took a hard position was not on this issue.

This issue, when we came to the table, was advanced by the federal government and it generally accepted that we are here to deal with a potential matter of negligence. The issue of a no-fault system in health

care is another matter, another day, with larger implications.

But the area where I took a hard line, and I say it very clear on the record, was that the national government had to pay their fair share of the total costs. Now, we got more money out of them than they started with but, in my opinion, they are still not paying their share of the total costs that have been incurred because of the blood system and hepatitis C. Now, that is a very different issue from the compensation package, or it is an extension. I make no apologies for taking a hard line on the part of Manitoba taxpayers that the federal government should pay its fair share of the costs. I do not think the New Democrats would oppose me in taking that position, and I have never heard them do it, but that is what I said last to the media and that is the position I have taken.

I think the member recognizes that to extend the program on the same basis, you would have to raise another \$1.2 billion, and if you extended it on the same basis as you are now, that means the federal government would have to be at the table with a further \$800 million. They have given no sign whatsoever that they are even prepared to consider that. So just in terms of those numbers, if this issue is to change, the players who have the biggest dollars have to be at the table to put their dollars forward.

Ms. McGifford: I am very happy to hear, and I have heard before, that there will only be four or five hemophiliacs left out of the compensation package, but I am also well aware that there are apparently 796 other individuals who are either transfused or have somehow or other ingested blood products and have hepatitis C.

The minister is talking about very serious issues when he talks about financial restrictions and financial responsibilities and responsibilities on the part of government to taxpayers and identifies the role of the federal government and the federal government's responsibility. At the same time, the minister is aware and I am aware that there are and will be Manitoba families living in destitution, in poverty and, adding to that, in ill health.

Part of my experience before coming to this House was to work in the community with people living with

HIV-AIDS, who were living in circumstances that were just beyond the pale—just a shame to Manitobans—absolutely terrible circumstances without telephones, without being able to purchase the foods that they needed, people living in one-room suites with cardboard boxes for their furniture. This is not the way Manitobans should live, and this is not the way people should live just before they die. I really want to know what the minister says to families, like the families I am describing. Also, I think it is important to point out it is not just the father or the mother, it is the children and, in some cases, the extended family who are suffering. I would like to know what the response to these families is?

Mr. Praznik: First of all, I appreciate sincerely the point the member makes because it is a concern that I have as well, and I appreciate where she is coming from on this. Yes, anyone who suffers from hepatitis C that is not in this group, or suffers from another severe illness, and we all have constituents who have heart disease or other things that have made it difficult for them to work and that has certainly affected the financial ability of their family to cope, along with their ill health. What does one say?

It is always very, very difficult circumstances, but that is why one should take into account that for many of those individuals, there is within our general social safety things like the Canadian disability pension. So there is a package there, and the principle that the member asks in extending a package beyond the area for which the system may have had a negligence—you know, I say, realistically, or I say to her that maybe some of these issues have to surround our whole overall safety net, because there are people in those circumstances who are not just with hepatitis C but with other ailments as well or illnesses that prevent them from working and having an income. That is very hard and very tough and that could happen to any of us through no fault of our own or through no fault of anyone else, and we recognize that and perhaps more work has to be done on our overall safety net in that particular area.

* (1520)

After yesterday's discussion, a colleague pointed out to me as we talked about this principle, and this is why

I say, you know, there are areas of debate and it has been a good discussion we have had in this committee about the principle. None of it is easy and there are two sides, I think members opposite recognize this, and there is a practical side to that, as the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) has sincerely and rightly so put to this committee.

But there are many places in the course of the operation of the health care system where there is a factor of risk. There will always be a certain amount of risk in the blood system, as one of the components, a certain amount of risk in the pharmaceutical system, a certain amount of risk in surgery, in everything we do. What area do we compensate and what do we not?

A colleague of mine pointed out that, for example, in the days before the polio vaccine, a number, a percentage of people who suffered from polio got it because they attended at hospitals for other things and that hospitals by their nature, no matter how hard they achieve the standard of cleanliness and trying to be the case, they tend to be centres of greater amount of infection, particularly larger hospitals than other places. There were many people who got polio because they accessed hospitals for other service. We did not compensate them as a society for saying you got polio in our hospital.

There are cases we have seen: the flesh-eating disease, for example, where people who have, they suspect, contacted while in hospital because that was an area where that particular—is it a virus we are talking about—[interjection] Virus or bacteria could have been there and yet standards of cleanliness are maintained, but it is a hospital where there is a higher concentration of activity that can lead to higher concentration of risk. Do we provide income assistance in those cases? Now if we decide to do that, how do we finance that? Where do those dollars come from? What choices do we make?

I think the point that we as ministers of Health nationally have attempted to come to grips with is that, if the system has through a malfeasance, a negligence, injured someone, obviously, yes, you can be sued; you can go to court. There is a responsibility; you have to meet with it. But if people have been injured or suffered injury through the regular, normal operation of

a health care system and the assumption of the risk that goes along with that, without a malfeasance, without a negligence, do we compensate there?

That is a very, very difficult question. Once you start saying yes for this group of people—and, yes, I admit we did that in one particular case with HIV. I explained yesterday my observations. I think it happened because people thought it was a one-time thing. It was a small group, it would be done and it would never happen again. Well, it keeps happening. Do we do this here? Do we continue to extend it? Then, how do we put that kind of what, in essence, is a social safety net beyond what we do already in place?

We, as a society, have already said that through the Canada Pension Plan we will provide a disability pension for people who, through no fault of anyone, are unable to work and earn a living when they are permanently disabled. That system is not perfect. Perhaps some tag on to that system has to be developed to support people who are in, for whatever reason, a greater medical need, or maybe that system has to be enhanced. I accept that argument. I have many constituents who have had to go on disability and that in itself is not an easy pension plan.

But there is this principle and where do you go from here? Yes, it is always easy to say in this particular group let us do it, but then where do we proceed from and where is the fairness to those who may suffer injury in a hospital setting through no negligence and are unable to earn a living, only have the Canada Pension Plan and have no special plan on which to rely with a disability pension? So this is a very tough issue. It is tough for the families and for those individuals who are involved. I truly appreciate where the member is coming from. I am just trying to give a sense of the thought process through which federal, provincial, and territorial governments went in arriving at this particular plan.

Ms. McGifford: One of the things I think that distinguishes people who acquired hepatitis C through the blood system from people who, perhaps, died or whose surgeries were not successful is that when you have a surgery, you are usually advised of the risks involved. When you take pharmaceuticals, you are usually advised or should be advised of the risks

involved. But people who were transfused with blood, up until fairly recently in history, believed that there were no risks, that they were doing this only for the benefit of their health. So I do think that there is a distinction, and I am not sure that the minister's argument is as tight as it might be.

Mr. Mervin Tweed, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Earlier the minister was talking about the need for some of the major players to come to the table, if this package were to be extended, and he identified several provinces who could come to the table or the federal government could come to the table. I am asking the minister why he could not go to the table and show some leadership and bring other players to the table? Is there some reason why that would not work?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, if you look at the numbers on the compensation package—first, if you look at the overall total cost of the hepatitis C issue of providing care and support for people with hepatitis C, the provinces are already at the table very significantly with dollars for which they receive no support from Ottawa. If you look at the responsibility within the system, surely one has to agree that it rests with the operator, the Red Cross, and the federal government as regulator primarily, and they have their responsibility. That is one of the reasons, I think on this compensation package at least, the federal government came to the table and ultimately after some very hard negotiations, of which I was a part, came with \$800 million.

If we were to extend this program as the member suggests, which one could do just a quick calculation would be another \$1.2 billion, even if we were to adopt the same ratio, there has to be a willingness for the largest player to be there, and Mr. Rock was very adamant in our discussions and negotiations that he had no further dollars. I know it is easy because we are in Manitoba in a Manitoba committee in the Manitoba Legislature dealing with an issue of health with a provincial Minister of Health, but we as a government, we as a Legislature and I as a minister, cannot accept responsibility for the wrongs or malfeasance of a whole host of players outside of our control. We just cannot do that in a responsible fashion.

What amazes me about this whole debate and watching the media coverage is that the Canadian Red

Cross Society who operated the blood system during this period, whose sole contribution to what is today a \$1.2 billion in compensation, and if we did see the program expand, it would be \$2.4 billion that their compensation for what in essence they were responsible for, will be at the end of the day some \$100 million for which they are bargaining hard to continue, and they are not even putting all their assets on the table to go towards compensating people. Where are the people out there saying where are you Red Cross? When are you going to live up to your responsibilities?

The national government, because they tend to be far away from all of us in our daily lives and from our provincial media, have the responsibility of regulating products used in health care. They regulate pharmaceuticals to ensure their safety. They have the power and the ability to regulate blood as a product used in health care delivery. Where are the demands for them to live up to their responsibilities?

Every time I, as provincial minister, made that statement to the media, I mean, you get, well, yes, that is fine but. Well, it is not fine but. They have a responsibility to those people, a very large one identified by Mr. Justice Krever. In my opinion, the national government is getting away under this program with way under what is their share of their responsibility.

* (1530)

Now that does not help those people that we are talking about today, those that have hepatitis C, who did not get it in the window period, may not have got it through negligence or malfeasance but will suffer and their families will suffer. I know that does not speak to them, but I say this very sincerely to the member: Is it because we are sort of the last stop on this that we have the finger pointed at us, and everyone else escapes who have run the system? No, they have to live up to their responsibility, and I think part of the anger with Mr. Rock was, by many there, is that they have to live up to their responsibilities as the regulator.

The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) said this may happen. It may happen. The pressure has been there, and they will have to deal with it, making a decision about where they want to be at the end of the

day. There is a principle and there is money. Both those issues have to be dealt with if this thing is going to proceed. But for Manitoba who represents a very small portion of the total contribution, to say take leadership, my experience in federal-provincial relations has been it is not by and large going to be a lot of the small provinces. It is the large players who have to come to the table with significant money to make it happen are the ones that have to be willing to do that.

The last thing I think we do, in fairness to the people of the province of Manitoba, is if we always rush in to assume what is not our responsibility, which is not what we should be paying, that we do them an injustice as well, because it means resources get shifted from things that they require to pay for things that are not in our realm. I say that to the member sincerely.

Mr. Rock—this was the point on which I was very hard and adamant in our discussions—is that the national government has to live up to its responsibility of regulator. They are not even paying 50 percent of the total cost to date for a potential malfeasance or negligence of which the provinces had virtually no involvement or responsibility. And we are paying far more than half.

So you know, if you look at people who are asking for that assistance and fairness, my advice to them is, if they feel that they have been done an injustice, they should be pointing their criticism, their demand, their requests, and their argument at those who have the responsibility for the system and have not yet been anywhere near their percentage of responsibility with their treasuries and their pocketbooks. As someone who has sat through this—and I know it is because the media is here, and the issue is local, and we are all in our provinces—but one has to look at where does the responsibility lie, who has to be there, who is putting forward their dollars. I say this sincerely: the provinces for a potential malfeasance or negligence for which we are not responsible, only minimally some involvement, we today are paying the lion's share of the cost. So at what point do those others who are primarily responsible accept and fulfill their responsibilities?

Ms. McGifford: With all due respect, I think the minister knows that people living with hepatitis C are

aware that the federal government has responsibilities and, no doubt, are doing their work with Mr. Rock. I am the one who is talking to the minister today. I know that the Manitoba Hemophilia Society has spoken with him, but their national counterpart is certainly putting pressure on the federal government. So I do not want to leave the impression that these groups are beating up the minister or, indeed, ministers of Health in any other provinces. They are very well aware of the responsibility of the federal government, and they were very well aware of the responsibility of the Red Cross. Indeed, what really impresses me about these people is how carefully their work is researched, how well they have done their homework, and I think we should respect them for that.

I just have one last question for the minister. I understand that from the years 1986 to 1990, approximately—give or take—but approximately 1,800 Manitobans acquired hepatitis C. I might have my number wrong. The minister seems to be shaking his head. But my question is, I do understand that a number of people who acquired hepatitis C during this period do not have a record of transfusion. I wonder how that will affect their qualifying for the compensation package, what they will have to do in order to qualify.

Mr. Praznik: The member asks an extremely relevant and important question because this is something we struggled with. The principle is balance of probabilities during that period, so any type of record or verifiable recollection of a physician that would, during that period, indicate the probability of receiving blood or blood products will be accepted. I trust that within this process there will be some appeal mechanism for these matters to be dealt with, like any others on matters of fact, but I hope in these cases we can err on the generous side as opposed to the nongenerous side of it, and that is the intention of ministers. That is why I think in the case of hemophiliacs that the number will get down to be very, very small.

As in all compensations programs or all public programs, there are always issues around, factually, does one qualify, and again the principle, the balance of probabilities; I think the standards of proof are going to be an inquiry basis. Certainly, we want to make sure that there is some independent appeal function in place

that would ensure that this does not become just an administrative or bureaucratic decision, that people have a chance to meet their peers in essence to be able to make their case should there be some doubt as to the evidence.

Mr. David Chomiak (Kildonan): I am sure we will have just as an enjoyable discussion today as we did yesterday. By way of administrivia, I had indicated to the minister that I would get back to him today about sort of rough scheduling. I do not know if the House is aware, but I think the Estimates is not sitting tomorrow; I think tomorrow is bills. So we will next meet, as I understand it. Thursday morning at 10 and then in the afternoon. I was hoping, if possible, if we could perhaps deal with the Information Systems section on Thursday, if that is possible, if that fits in, and then the following Tuesday when we meet again perhaps the Lab Services portion. Would that be functional?

Mr. Praznik: If I could suggest on the Lab portions, perhaps the member would, in the interests of having more productive discussion, defer that for a couple of weeks because we are in the process of dealing with that issue, and on Tuesday next I do not think I will be in a position to give him as much information, more conclusive information, as I will likely be able to do about two weeks from now.

Mr. Chomiak: Okay, perhaps we can reassess that, and just as an interim suggestion, perhaps move to—I would not mind dealing with the USSC food services on Tuesday if that is at all possible.

Mr. Praznik: What we will do is inquire if the chair of the board and Mr. Sheil [phonetic], who is the CEO, would be available on Tuesday. We will make every effort to ensure that they are here as well with the committee.

Mr. Chomiak: I am just now going to go on a series of questions. I wonder if you want to take a break now or wait till—take a five-minute break if that is in agreement.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Is it the will of the committee to take a five-minute break? [agreed] We will convene back here at 3:45.

The committee recessed at 3:39 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 3:48 p.m.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): I will now call the committee reviewing Health Estimates back to order and start with questions.

Mr. Chomiak: My series of questions for the balance of the afternoon are going to be general in nature, arising out of Question Period this afternoon, and just general in this area based on whom I see here from the minister's staff, that is just by way of background.

I wonder if the minister might indicate for me at the onset who Jean Burton is.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, if this is arising out of the discussion Question Period today, I would like to, just by way of the record, indicate to the member there has been no inconsistency in the statements I made when we awarded the contract that I made in December when reiterating those comments. I say to the member in any discussions or planning that we have had at the senior level around the contract with Olsten which I am told and Ms. Hicks, my associate deputy minister, will put some information on the record.

Any discussions we had around my executive table, of which I am a part, have not been inconsistent with anything that I have said. In fact, the only issues we have had is completion of the evaluation. I believe the contract is a May-something-to-May-something contract, and if there was to be any extension around that contract, it would have to do with the completion of the evaluation and any transition that would have to take place.

We have been, I believe, consistent from the day we awarded the contract last spring. I have indicated that the results of that tendering process produced only five companies that met the standard qualifications and only one that could bring in the service on their tender less than our estimated costs of delivering the service through the public system.

By any stretch, the tendering process, that did not produce the results that one would have expected, and that is why, in fact, when we set out the quadrants we limited the number of quadrants that anyone could do to two as opposed to four. We wanted to certainly have a comparison and evaluate that comparison between the four we are delivering and the two that are being delivered by Olsten throughout this trial year.

* (1550)

But, as I have said, the results, everyone has expectations; they were not met in the tendering process. We complete the year and surely to goodness if some renewal at some point, or not renewal, because we are not talking renewal, I do not want to leave that impression, but if some extension were required to facilitate completion of evaluation or transition, particularly with the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority coming into place, that that certainly is not inconsistent with any other comments we have said.

I am going to have Ms. Hicks, who after questions were raised in Question Period, and I must say to the member, we have lots of contracts and issues going on in the department, this is one of many hundreds of issues. Any discussions that I have had as the minister around the table have been with respect to what I have just outlined. When the member came forward, and I understand after seeing this memo now for the first time, her comments said that the contract has been renewed for six months. The status of that is not something I would be up to date on in the regular course of administration. Before dealing with the press I asked Ms. Hicks as to the status and she confirmed with me that there had been no contract renewed, so perhaps she would like to add some information to this issue.

Mr. Chomiak: I just want to clarify. Is Ms. Hicks answering for the minister on this?

Mr. Praznik: I have dealt with, I think, the policy issues around this. As associate deputy minister, this area falls within the responsibility of Ms. Hicks. She confirmed with me after Question Period that no contract, to her knowledge, had been renewed or extended and there was a memo that the member has

referred to, and he asked me specific questions about staff in her area, and I would like her to respond.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Is that agreeable? Ms. Hicks.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I do not want to be difficult, and I am not trying to complicate this. We basically have a general agreement that technical matters will be dealt with—and have agreed—that technical matters could be dealt with by staff. I do not want to be in a position—I have never felt comfortable in a position of debating with minister's staff. It is not something that I think I should have to do, nor should they have to do. I am not sure that if dealing with the issues, the questions that I am dealing with, perhaps the minister can make an assessment, as I ask each question, whether or not he will answer it or whether or not the associate deputy minister will answer it. In that way, we get around that difficulty.

Mr. Praznik: I am not here to debate with the member today. I am here to provide as factual answers as I can. The member raised an issue today, based on a memo that was provided to him or someone in his caucus, that indicated one thing that was not the case. When I asked my senior staff for a report or an update on the facts of the matter, that was what was conveyed to me, and I have no problem with Ms. Hicks answering the questions based on the facts. If there are questions of policy, I will certainly deal with them. Perhaps we will judge each question as they are put.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, and I will return. Can the minister indicate who Jean Burton is?

Mr. Praznik: I am advised by Ms. Hicks that Ms. Burton is a supervisor out of our Tuxedo office for Home Care staff. The member can appreciate with the literally thousands of people who have traditionally worked in the Ministry of Health, I am not familiar with the vast majority of the people who work in the Ministry of Health.

Mr. Chomiak: Could the minister confirm that on March 27 Jean Burton sent out a memo to all Home Care staff?

Mr. Praznik: I have no personal knowledge of that issue, so I cannot confirm it.

Mr. Chomiak: Will the minister confirm that, in fact, we tabled a letter on Manitoba Department of Health letterhead dated March 27, 1998, from Jean Burton, today in the House; Subject, Re: Highlights of Supervisors' Meeting March 27, 1998?

Mr. Praznik: The member tabled that. If it is what it is, yes, I have no problem acknowledging that.

Mr. Chomiak: Will the minister acknowledge that the memo is two pages long and had a list of 15 points that were highlights of the supervisors' meeting March 27, 1998?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I do not think the fact of the memo—to my knowledge, we are still checking if that, in fact, is an accurate memo that was provided. I have asked Ms. Hicks to do that. But the contents of the memo, if it is in fact an accurate memo, I have no reason to doubt that today, but stranger things have happened in this place. But it has been confirmed to me by Ms. Hicks who is responsible for this area that no contract has been signed, so if there is information to the contrary in the memo, that it would not be accurate. From time to time, staff in the Ministry of Health do make mistakes, just as we all do.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister confirm that in the memo that we tabled in the House, the two-page memo, that on point 9, and I quote: Olsten's contract has been extended six months?

Mr. Praznik: As Ms. Hicks is responsible for that area, I am going to have her answer that question.

Ms. Sue Hicks (Associate Deputy Minister of Health): Mr. Chairperson, I understand that in the memo that was tabled today that, yes, the supervisor who prepared the minutes for the supervisors' meeting did indicate that the Olsten contract had been extended for six months. I have no idea where this information or how this information was relayed to this individual.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate how the 15 points highlighted in the memo, which was memo titled "Highlights of Supervisors' Meeting, March 27, 1998," appeared in a memo that went to all home care staff?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chairperson, those are minutes of a supervisors' meeting. They share them with their staff.

That is probably, I suspect, how the member obtained one. That does not necessarily mean that they are reflective of the policy of the ministry. Mistakes happen from time to time. Sometimes information is not conveying, sometimes there is speculation that becomes information. Those things happen; they particularly happen in a big organization.

If the member is asking us, which is his assertion, that the contract had been renewed secretly, as I think his leader described it, I am telling you today, based on what Ms. Hicks is telling me, that that is not the case. Any discussions that we have had as a policy matter around my table as minister, with respect to any extension of a contract, not a renewal, but an extension, had to deal with a very, very small conversation which would be around completing the evaluation, which I think is important to ensure that if there is anything we can learn out of it, we do, and any concern for a transition. I say that now on the record, and from what Ms. Hicks tells me, that is the case.

If someone at a supervisory level has a different impression, or different belief in a very large organization, it is not unusual for information, speculation to become in minutes such as this, it is not an endorsed memo from any on my management team, my senior executive, et cetera. It is representative of comments that were made at a supervisors' meeting. That does not necessarily mean they are reflective of the policy of the ministry.

* (1600)

Mr. Chomiak: Since this memo is dated March 27, 1998, since numerous references were made to the Associate Deputy Minister of Health, I assume, since there is reference to—and I am quoting—“Louise Friesen will be assuming day-to-day supervision of the nursing unit. She will report directly to Sue”, is that some other Sue, or—[interjection] Sue Mackenzie, it is indicated.

Is the minister between March 27 and today's date—has a correction been sent out to say in fact the Olsten contract has not been renewed for six months?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chairperson, I did not even know that these minutes existed until the member raised it in the House today.

As I said, the policy issue involved here is to get the evaluation done, which we would like to see the results of, and as I said when we awarded the tender way back when last year, that the results of the process produced only one bidder that met both the quality and the price requirements. It was not a significant saving. We have learned things as we have gone through the year, and we want to formalize a process with an evaluation. I, quite frankly, can see where the member is coming from in having this document, and I can see the impression that has been left with him, but any talk at the executive policy around an extension had more to do with completing the evaluation, and any transition that would be in place, and certainly not carrying on. We want to have the evaluation done, though; I think we should.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I find it hard to believe that these minutes are speculation, or whatever term the minister or the staff might want to use to term these minutes, when in fact, if you look under the particular minutes: Home care update organization chart should be out by next week; John Brody will be moving to WCA headquarters; there will be a press conference Tuesday, March 27, 1998; new letterhead to be used; business cards are being ordered; ID badges are coming; Olsten's contract has been extended for six months.

Mr. Chairperson, this does not strike me as idle chat or speculation on the part of—and the minister characterizes it. These are relatively senior people dealing with relatively significant issues in the home care field. It is hard to believe that they could be characterized as nothing other than a minute on obviously relatively accurate information.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I have been around government for many years. I have run small departments and big departments, and there are many occasions on which I have seen speculation of staff make them into minutes or documents that say one thing that were not a case in terms of policy decision. It would not be the first time it happened; it will not be the last. But, given the fact that he has raised this only with us today in the House and both Ms. Hicks and myself have been here and committed to Estimates, I think before we pursue this any further, in the interests of accuracy, I would be more than prepared to pursue

this discussion with him on Thursday or Tuesday next after we have had a chance to discuss this in greater detail with staff. I would like to assure him that what we are saying is accurate, and I am giving him what my recollection of discussions is today. This memo does surprise me somewhat.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I am assured by Ms. Hicks that no contract has been renewed. We obviously want to confirm that with the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority in greater detail than a phone call today. So I would be more than prepared to return to this on Thursday, and if the member would do us the courtesy of having the opportunity to check back with our staff to find out more about this memo and where the information comes from. I am interested in knowing that myself.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, well, by way of further background to the minister, the last occasion I was involved in an instance like this, there was a memo signed by the former minister, Mr. Jim McCrae, approving a particular measure that had been agreed to under the MMA agreement. It was approved and signed by the minister, and I raised it as a public issue. What the excuse was that time: Well, yes, the minister signed it and approved it, but it was conditional approval. So I have a history in this, and this is a written document of fairly senior officials that went out to all staff, and it is of a significant nature. The information surrounding it is not insignificant with respect to home care. Given the political context of home care for the past several years, it is, in my view, something that I find hard to believe. Indeed, I do not believe it was done in error. I believe the discussions have—and the last time I was involved in an issue like this, the excuse that came back was there was conditional approval by the minister. So I have had a history in this with respect to issues of a very similar nature.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, we have all had experiences, and I appreciate the member's comment. First of all, let not the record show that these are senior officials of the Ministry of Health. Our home care supervisors are certainly not senior officials in the Ministry of Health. Senior officials are the ones that I interact with and deal with at my executive table. They are senior people.

This is not signed by a senior member of the staff of the Ministry of Health. It is by a program supervisor who is in the process of being transferred to the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority, so today not even in the Ministry of Health, and certainly cannot be characterized in any stretch of the imagination as a senior official.

Secondly, Mr. Chair, I remember a year ago when the member brought to this House, to the Legislature, rightly so, the issue of changes in the deductible program for our orthopedic devices. The member, being provided by—I do not know; I gather it was one of the organizations that had been consulted about proposed changes. It was a matter I had been minister for a number of months, had never heard of the issue anywhere in my briefings or discussions or Estimates process. I remember speaking to my staff as I came into the House. I know I was arriving late that day—I had a meeting with the Concordia Hospital board—and being told by my deputy that, in the process of looking at how we do deductibles, our staff had thought that this was a good way to do it and thought, before they brought it up to our executive level for consideration, they would go and have a consultation with the stakeholders. That consultation resulted in the member getting the material. If I had been in his shoes, I would have raised it, too. It was a great concern, but my staff in the department, and by the tradition of the department, had not gone out with my authority or approval as minister to consult. They did not even know if this matter was one I wanted them to consult on. It was an initiative they undertook.

Now I have since changed that process in our department. That does not mean from time to time something like that will not happen again, but that is my experience as a minister in this particular department. I was not pleased that officials at whatever level were going out meeting with stakeholder groups about changes in public policy that had never even made it to my executive, let alone the cabinet. So that is an experience with it, and that is why I am saying a lot of things are possible that may not in fact accurately reflect what is going on.

I appreciate what the member is saying, and I am indicating to him that Ms. Hicks, who is the ADM responsible in this area, is going to endeavour over the

next couple of days to find out exactly where this is coming from. I have no problem discussing it with the member on Thursday or Tuesday after we have had a chance to check this out, but I can assure him that from time to time these things happen, particularly in a very large department.

This is not signed by senior officials of the department or anyone in a policy-making function. As a consequence, we would like to know where that comment was coming from and on what basis it is there. I would like the opportunity to do that to be able to accurately report to this committee and the member the origins of those comments.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am not going to belabour this point, although I am tempted to, except I just want to put one other point on the record. The minister constantly makes reference to the fact that it is not signed and that it is not senior staff—

Mr. Praznik: I did not comment on signing it.

Mr. Chomiak: That the memo is not signed? Then I will—

Mr. Praznik: I did not comment on that. I said the people whose names appear are not senior staff.

Mr. Chomiak: Are not senior staff. The minister has indicated that the people are not senior staff. They were clearly told a series of information about the home care, significant information that was put in minutes and circulated extensively. One of those major items is the Olsten contract issue.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, just on the record, first of all, I have never referred to it being an unsigned memo, and I have never challenged the authenticity of the memo. It may be a true memo; it may not be. I have no reason to believe it is not, but I am saying I have not challenged the authenticity. All I have said is it is not senior people in the Ministry of Health whose name that material went out under. It is the minutes of a supervisors' meeting, which meant somebody acted as a secretary and wrote up what in fact they believe transpired at the meeting. I would expect somebody may have approved that before it was sent out to everyone. I cannot even verify that. Are there errors in

minutes? Yes, maybe the information was in fact brought that way. Maybe the person who brought it was under misinformation. That happens from time to time. I am going to endeavour to find out because I am not happy with it. If the member's point is that misinformation has gone out to our home care staff and that is causing concern among that staff, yes, I want to know about it, and if it needs to be corrected, it will be. I appreciate his point.

* (1610)

Mr. Chomiak: Is the minister definitively saying that the Olsten contract will not be extended beyond its expiry date?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, the comments I made in the House and the comments I made at this committee were there is a provision in that contract to extend it if there is a requirement to, and there may be a requirement for some very valid reasons, to complete the evaluation or, very aptly, to accommodate a transition. Surely to goodness, we are not going to get so caught up in the battle of an issue that if a contract had to be extended for several months to accommodate a transition with the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority because it was the best thing for patient care and people were not geared up to do the change overnight, surely to goodness we, as legislators, are not going to criticize that from happening.

The major point that, in my view, the New Democratic Party has made is the need to maintain home care in the public realm, and I think going through the tendering process last year, the industry out there that does provide home care services, the We Cares and others had always made the point that they could deliver a better product for less cost to government. They were given an opportunity to prove that in a tendering process. If they had been successful in that process, it might have been of great benefit or a benefit to both the taxpayer and, more importantly, the home care recipient. For whatever reason, in the course of that process, only five companies met the quality standards that were set for delivery of home care. One of them did not even want their bid considered because they were not prepared to do bonding, if I remember correctly, and when the remaining bids were opened,

only one brought in the service at a cost that was less than the estimated cost of us doing the service. So we carried on with what we had intended, and we have the evaluation. During the course of the year we have made observations of that system. As a general point of principle, what I intimated last spring and I reiterated in the hallways of the Legislature last December or November was the point that through that process what we have generally learned is that the public sector is a very good vehicle for delivering home care, and if that is the case why would one change it.

We still want to complete the evaluation. There are still things to learn. Assuming that course continues and that looks like the course we are on, we want to go through that process. There would likely have to be a transition back to the system, so I do not see where we are at loggerheads in the result. How we get there over the next few months, I do not think why any one of us would want to endanger public health if the contract had to be extended for several months to accommodate a transition.

I would not believe, knowing the member for Kildonan, that he would—if that was the best way to do some transition, why he would oppose that. It does not make any logical sense.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate specifically what the end date on the contract is?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chairman, Ms. Hicks advised me it is in May, and we will endeavour to get that exact date for the member.

Mr. Chomiak: I am going to be moving on to some other general areas. At this point I wanted to commence by asking if a few documents could be tabled in the next little while, and that is, if we could get updated lists of all the board and all board members and all executive members of all of the various regional health authorities that have been set up. [interjection]

Well, in fact, if the minister has indicated a list, perhaps what I will do is I will type up a memo for tomorrow or for the next occasion when we meet, and I will submit that in terms of documentation that we are looking for.

I wanted to spend a little time on the Betaseron issue. It has come up in the House, and I am not entirely clear what the difficulty is. Does the minister have his person?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, the irony of the moment, I think Mr. Potter is on his way to the meeting, the scheduled meeting with the MS clinic as we move forward on Betaseron.

If I could ask Mr. Godin to come up here. He is my staffer who has been working co-ordinating this. I should tell the member one of the difficulties I have experienced in the last few months is the staffperson out of my office who is working with the department, the MS clinic, Deborah Vivian, has left this role in government, and, of course, there had to be a bit of a transition in staff to sort of head it up in my area.

I can tell him though that I think everyone wants to see this move forward as quickly as possible. I just look to Mr. Godin for some detail as I give the member an update. When we embarked on a pilot project, we talked to other jurisdictions who had undergone the same thing. Saskatchewan took some seven months, six, seven months, five to seven months to get their program up and running. British Columbia took I think it was around three to four months. I had occasion to be in British Columbia on numerous issues, and I had a chance to visit with a program along with some of my officials. We had the chance to literally pick the brains of the people who were involved in it on some of the things that they had done, because they have probably one of the better programs with Betaseron in the country. It is a credit to British Columbia, so we wanted to make sure we were emulating them as much as possible. It was a very interesting experience. We gained a lot of insight, and they have also, I understand, provided us with some information as a follow-up, and there is communication going on now.

The MS clinic is the host for this program. There are a number of things that have to be developed, obviously, ensuring we have the right criteria for use of the drug. The information process of talking to the people who meet the criteria to decide whether or not they want to be on the program is, the risks and benefits, very, very critical, and British Columbia had a very effective system, we thought, of doing that, of

ensuring that follow-up and work with people who are on the system. The other part that has to be put in place are the criteria for evaluation, how we are going to measure the effects of this particular drug. Those are being worked on. I know there is a great human cry from those who have expectations of being on to get on with the program. I certainly share that, and we have asked the MS clinic—there will be some discussions today—that at least we can get on to get the time frames firmed up so they can be announced publicly and to get on with the assessment and each piece as they move forward.

But very much they as hosts have to be involved in this, and we keep trying to move it forward. Currently, I understand that they are developing their lists now of people who will be eligible for the program. When I say eligible, the eligibility is based on medical reasons, certainly not on the finances for the program. There is only a certain percentage of people with MS for which Betaseron may be helpful. So it is important in sorting out that list.

So that work is underway now and, as I said, it is very much in the hands of the MS clinic and those people who are working out the logistics. As we have seen in other provinces, it does take several months to get the program up and running.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate whether or not all of the initiatives, the financing, the technical details, et cetera, from the provincial Department of Health's perspective have been put in place?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, the finance has been approved for the product. The medical criteria, et cetera, have to meet the standards of the MS clinic and the medical practitioners, and what is being worked on today, of course, is the evaluation process or how we will evaluate the success of the drug.

This is, I should say for the member, somewhat innovative for our pharmacal economic committee, because they traditionally have only said yes or no to a product and, as the member, I am sure, appreciates, often the benefits versus the costs, you know, if a drug is low cost, medium benefit, it gets approved. If a drug is high cost, low benefit, it is easy to say no. If it is high cost, high benefit, it is easy to say yes. It is where

you have a fairly high cost and the benefits are not certain, they are still developing, people have not assessed them, that there is enough doubt, and often the committee has ruled no until the information has gotten better.

* (1620)

What I have asked them to do and what is in their power is to create what I call a red-light, green-light, yellow-light process, the yellow light being approval with a recommendation for a pilot or study that would be monitored to provide further data. I expect, given the growth in the drug industry in new treatments, that this yellow light is going to be a very effective tool for advancing products.

This is the first time we have done this, and so getting an evaluation tool and perfecting it is going to be very important and have ramifications for other drug products. We want to get it right, and it is somewhat new ground for all of us. I should say to the member, when we canvassed the country on their pharmacal economic committees across the country, we found just a huge divergence in how those committees operate in terms of what their criteria are to set drugs. If there really is a need for a national government to step in, this is an area I have suggested to Allan Rock that perhaps we should be doing this on some national basis instead of going through it in each province, where we can develop some acceptable criteria and a process and take products through once across the country instead of many, many times in different jurisdictions.

So something we would like to work on, but it is somewhat new ground, and I would like to think it is an improvement on the way that that committee operates.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for that response, and I am going to want to pursue this entire issue much more extensively when we get to the Pharmacare portion.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, on that point, because it is such new ground, if we could arrange for perhaps the people from the Betaseron clinic, the MS clinic, it may be useful to have someone here if that is possible from our Pharmacare program to be able to get into greater detail as the program advances, because it really is a

new way of dealing with the evaluation of drugs. I have never heard the member criticize the need to have an evaluation process. I think we both have shared concerns about how that process works.

So I am trying to get a process that is much more receptive and fair and faster in making decisions and being able to study the effectiveness of drugs. I think we share that goal, and I would like to be able to perhaps bring some of the people working on it to give him an opportunity to get a better sense of what is happening here.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, my next question was in fact for the minister to describe for me, if he could, the structure. So, since the associate deputy minister is involved in the actual structure, perhaps we will come back to this on Thursday morning. It will not be extensive. We can perhaps deal with it Thursday morning if it is possible.

I heard mention of a Dr. Auty whom I have also spoken with. We may not have to do that. I am interested in it as well. If we can just get through the structure and the function, that probably is sufficient for Thursday. If we can go more extensive, that is fine, but we do not have to. I know how these people's time is.

I was going to turn a bit to the organizational chart. Can we go through that?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, just by way of caveat to this chart, this is our chart as of January 28, 1998. As the member appreciates, we are in a huge state of transition in the delivery of health care—whereas the ministry was responsible for directly just about everything in dealing with 180 boards, different organizations, delivery mechanisms, we delivered some health care—the Ministry of Health in terms of delivery today is delivering only very few programs, things like Pharmacare, province-wide programs, air ambulance, certain parts of the public health program, and some mental health, et cetera.

Much of the delivery is now with regional health authorities, and that has triggered, of course, some major reorganization within the department. Last year I managed to reorganize our senior structure. We then took our existing pieces within it and put them under

our changes in senior structure, and as we get through the spring season, we are now contemplating again some further refinement of the area underneath our senior associate deputies to further refine our function, because as I have said, the Ministry of Health, our role now is less one of delivery of service. It is one of financial administration, quality control, delivering certain province-wide programs that are important and dealing with things like federal-provincial, aboriginal, jurisdictional issues, et cetera. So it is much more a policy financial quality control organization than a delivery one. As a consequence, we will be refining this as we move along.

Just, for example, I have come to appreciate, given the creation of the Canadian Blood Agency, the whole hepatitis C issue we have discussed, the federal financing and, of course, the area of aboriginal jurisdiction, the issues with First Nations dealing with Health and Welfare Canada. I almost need to have an individual here to just manage those particular issues where we have had a very, very slim organization there, so we are still in the process of making some changes.

Mr. McFarlane, whom I introduced yesterday, who is on our books as a special adviser, is doing a major rework of our insured benefits division. We expect to have some major service improvements there. We have over 40,000 visits a year, or pieces of business a year we deal with, and we think we can deal with them in a more service-oriented manner. He is part of doing some of the internal reform as we change our role and function. I just wanted to put that on the record to give the sense to the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) that the senior part has been set up and what comes underneath is still very much a work in progress as we go through this parade of reform and change.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, so the person slotted into the special advisors is Jim McFarlane?

Mr. Praznik: Yes.

Mr. Chomiak: The Chief Medical Officer of Health is now?

Mr. Praznik: It is Dr. Jim Popplaw, who is acting. That position has been posted—will be posted—within the month, I am advised, to fill it on a permanent basis.

As you know the previous Chief Medical Officer of Health retired from that position to take a job, I believe, in the Turks and Caicos Islands. I must admit to the member there are many a day that we spar in the Legislature that I wish I was still working with him in a different jurisdiction.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the nursing advisor, where is that now located?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, the former occupant of that position, Caroline Park, resigned from that position earlier this year. We are assessing how that office will now fit in with respect to the WHA regional health authorities, how that is being filled. Again, that is part of the work in process. Before we refill that position, we want to see what our expectations of it are as we do some changes within the department.

* (1630)

Mr. Chomiak: I note we have a fairly extensive department of Planning, Policy and Special Projects, numbering about 22 individuals. I wonder if the minister might elaborate who occupies those. It is on page 29.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, this is the area that Mr. Wendt is responsible for, Mr. Ulrich Wendt, who was here earlier, right. It includes his people who work on these interprovincial issues. It includes also our legislative unit. That would be Heather McLaren, Donna Hill, who are both lawyers by trade, who do all our legislative regulation. Mr. Tom McCormack is in there, who does work on projects under the deputy's office on special issues that arise from time to time that do not fit into another area of responsibility. Our French Language Services Co-ordinator is based in here as well.

Mr. Chomiak: Unless I am mistaken, this component did not exist last year. It has been put together this year. Amalgamation or other, can the minister elaborate on that?

Mr. Praznik: These people, I understand, were all there last year by and large, and they have been combined from other places where they were housed,

so this would not be new staff years, but a reorganization. It is part of that work in progress that I spoke about, because as the functions of the ministry are changing in a new delivery mechanism, the way in which we organize things is also changing somewhat. So this unit was brought together, I am advised, in the last year, people from other areas. But I know on a personal basis most of the people in here who I actually interact with a fair bit in the course of our work, they have all been around for some time.

Mr. Chomiak: I was not suggesting that these were new people, but I believe this is a new structure that has been developed in a planning and policy area to the minister. I wanted to ask some specific questions about it. Is the minister comfortable with me going through that now?

The specific reference on page 28 to the amendments to five acts, and I wonder if the minister might outline what five acts this policy department is developing. It is at the bottom of the page under Expected Results, where it says: "Development of amendments to five (5) Acts as approved by Cabinet."

Mr. Praznik: We will get that complete list, but I know it includes amendments to The Public Health Act, The Mental Health Act. There may be some amendments we think to the regional health authorities. I will get the complete list for the member. I know one of those areas that we are attempting to address, that this area is working on, I know is of interest to the member, has to do with the area of the extra billing and the Canada Health Act, so this is the unit that is looking at those amendments that we would be required to deal with that particular issue.

Mr. Chomiak: When the minister returns with the specific information on those acts, will the minister also be in a position to advise me when we might see these acts introduced in the Legislature? For example, I was under the impression that The Mental Health Act would be introduced this year. That was the advice that we were given last year.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, that is the case. Those amendments come from some years ago; they had to be developed. I would have liked to have that bill before

the House last year, but I know with the heavy legislative agenda it was not able to complete the drafting work on it to be able to bring it to the House. That was done over the fall time, so I intend to be bringing it in. I know there are some finalizations to that bill before I am able to bring it into the House, but it is expected to be in this year's session.

Mr. Chomiak: Something stands out for me with respect to the activities of this group when I see something that says: represents the minister and deputy minister as required. Now, I am not suggesting that there is anything untoward, but it does suggest that these are fairly senior policy individuals, if in fact they are in a position or there are positions to represent both the minister and the deputy minister.

Mr. Praznik: That representation would be primarily at the technical level. For example, Mr. Ulrich Wendt, because he, within this unit, has been our person on the working group for hepatitis C, the working group on the new Canadian Blood Agency. Technically, I believe, that deputy ministers or their designates are serving on that committee. Well, in a practical matter, deputies cannot always be at these meetings, so Mr. Ulrich Wendt represents the deputy in this function. If there is a federal-provincial meeting, and it has happened from time to time, where I and my deputy have not been able to attend and it is on very much a technical matter of issue, Mr. Wendt has gone as our observer.

I know, Heather McLaren and Donna Hill, who do all of our legislative drafting and our regulation change, we have had them represent us, I guess you could say, at a variety of consultations and issues where we were dealing with the technical portions of amendments or those issues in going through. They have represented my deputy or myself in many of those opportunities to do consultation on various issues with legislation they are involved in, and they report back to us on policy issues or concerns, and anything that requires a policy decision happens. They are all excellent people and when you are managing an almost \$2-billion operation with literally hundreds of issues, I know the member appreciates you have to have a group that can fill in and deal with matters from time to time just practically so that you can cover all the potential bases.

Mr. Chomiak: Could we have a list of who the managerial and the professional/technical, that is the 14, for this particular group?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, I will provide the member with a copy of this list. I understand that only Mr. Ulrich Wendt and Heather McLaren—one would classify as managers within the system.

Mr. Chomiak: The group facilitates the development of public/private partnerships is stated as one of the activities. Can we get a list of the public/private partnerships that the group is involved in?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, we will get a list of those projects for the member.

Mr. Chomiak: There is also a new result for me that I was not familiar with, and that is the analysis and assessment of Health industry proposals in consultation with the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism. Can I have a perhaps a list and perhaps a description of what that is about?

Mr. Praznik: Just by way of general information, I found as minister on a regular basis we get approached by various private sector concerns to do pilot projects or test projects. et cetera, that in Manitoba, in the health industry, they have the potential of (a) improving health care, which is our minister's concern here, and, secondly, have the potential to see industrial health care, industrial development in the province. So we do have a liaison with the Ministry of I, T and T to be able to work on these particular projects.

We will get a list for the member, but I know from time to time, for example, some of these projects—and we will get into it when we discuss the list—often there is a proposal that a significant amount of private sector dollars would be available to set up a pilot program or an area that could be beneficial to the treatment of various illnesses in the province of Manitoba. So we want, of course, to be able to evaluate that to see if there is a benefit to us on the health care on the industrial development side, and that is why, in fact, that unit or that position exists so that relationship exists in order to deal with these particular matters as they arise from time to time. We will get a list for the member to discuss them, and I will be able to comment on where we think they are going on each one.

* (1640)

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for the copy of the individuals who are attached to this section. I note that there are two full positions with respect to the home care appeal panel. Are these administrative positions that assist the home care appeal panel or are they some other function?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, these are the support persons for the home care appeal panel.

Mr. Chomiak: There are also three individuals that three staff-years identified as special projects. Can the minister outline what their role and functions are?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Dale Berry is the individual who is working on the industrial development private/public partnership issues. Tammy Mattern has been seconded to the Better Methods project across government, and Bob Rauscher is serving both myself and the deputy now in an administrative support capacity to ensure that various issues, et cetera, and decisions that are made by our executive, that information, et cetera, passes on throughout the department. So in many ways he serves as a secretarial support. I say that not in the role as a secretary to a board in essence, but to our executive.

Mr. Chomiak: What would be the duties and functions of the chief communication officer, Louis Barre?

Mr. Praznik: It is not communication, it is information, and there is an important distinction. One of the frustrations I think I have had in this role, and certainly I see it reflected in the questions and answers of the member for Kildonan from time to time, is the way in which we assemble information to be able to assess where we are, where we are going, what we are achieving. Mr. Barre's responsibility is within our department, and he is working very hard on this to develop the information reporting systems that we need to be able to assess where we are, what services we are delivering, how we collect that.

It may be hard to believe that in a ministry that spends so much money, we have not had these kinds of tools for decision making. When I speak to my

colleagues across the country, they are all more or less in the same state we are, but health care has not been a very good area at generating the kind of information statistics that one needs on which to judge where you are going, trends, information that you need to make decisions.

One of the things that I have attempted to do, as minister, on a regular basis is to have—and right now Mr. Rauscher is providing that support to our executive—but to be able to rotate senior or mid-level managers who display talent and ability for promotion within the department through the executive offices on a yearly basis to be able to get a good understanding of how things work in the deputy's and minister's office, legislative issues, et cetera, and Louis Barre was the first person to occupy that position, an excellent manager. When he completed that task as of September, this was an area that we had identified as an executive. We were terribly short, and his interest and specialty is information, information technology, making decisions on information, so we viewed him as the right candidate to take on this very large task of ensuring that this is built within our department in support of executive decision making. So he is now working on that particular area.

Mr. Chomiak: Who is the Health secretariat?

Mr. Praznik: That is the support to the Manitoba Health Board. I hope I do not breach any confidences to the Legislature, but when we do bring forward some amendments in this session of the Legislature, one of the things that has been a bit of a pet peeve with me is the Manitoba Health Board. Its functions are an appeal function, and it really should be called the Manitoba health appeal board. It deals with appeals on rates for personal care homes and residential issues, et cetera, and we are now currently using it because its power includes other issues as the minister may assign, issues around boundaries for regional health authorities. Where areas would like to move from one authority to the other, this is the board that I am going to have hear those particular requests. So this is the secretariat that supports that Manitoba Health Board, which, in essence, is really the Manitoba health appeal board.

Mr. Chomiak: There is reference to the co-ordinating legislative proposals and regulations for self-governing

professional bodies. Now, this in itself may not be the appropriate line, but can the minister indicate whether he is anticipating any legislative changes to any of the self-governing bodies during this legislative session?

Mr. Praznik: When we get our list of proposed legislation, which I will have for the member on Thursday, if my recollection serves me correctly, there is at least one piece of legislation that deals in this self-regulating profession. I know some months ago I met with, I think it is, the dental area, and there were some issues that needed to be dealt with as a result of some changes in federal regulation. I am not doing the member a good service—it is some time since I dealt with it—but it was demonstrated that we needed to make amendment. We will have Heather McLaren here on Thursday to be able to answer any of those questions.

Mr. Chomiak: To the best of the minister's recollection, is he then not anticipating any changes to any of the professional acts concerning nurses during this session?

Mr. Praznik: None that involve any major policy issues. To the best of my recollection, I do not think there are any changes to the professional acts coming forward. There may have been some housekeeping that may have been talked about somewhere, but it is certainly not something I am aware of today. Changes on the nursing side in terms of major policy are not part of that legislative agenda for this year.

Mr. Chomiak: Now, in the list of documents—I am going to request one of them—is a list of all of the various appeal panels. We had an extensive discussion last time concerning appeal panels. Has the minister made any significant changes in this area, or is he contemplating any?

Mr. Praznik: No, I think if I remember correctly, last year we discussed potential combination of the health appeal or the Health Board and Home Care Appeal Panel. To be blunt, we have had so many things on our agenda in the last year that that has not been a high priority. The Home Care Appeal Panel tends to work quite well and moves on. The only change that I flag with him, as I have indicated, is the Manitoba Health Board. I would like to ensure that it is properly called the Health Appeal Board.

I can tell the member that I know there are some issues around the regulation of personal care homes that may require an appeal process, and I have the power to assign it to that particular board. So that board has the ability to deal with most any or all appeal matters that I want to assign to it. Quite frankly, I do not think any significant changes are pending, other than the name simply because I think it leads to a lot of confusion.

Mr. Chomiak: The minister is going to bring back, hopefully, when we next meet or as soon as possible, a list of changes to acts and the like. Is it also possible for the minister to provide a list of any significant regulatory changes that are being contemplated by the Department of Health, and I am specifically thinking of regulations governing the care and administration of people in personal care homes?

* (1650)

Mr. Praznik: I think I could say safely today without hopefully breaching any of the requirements of the legislature, one of the areas we have discussed last year—and it is important to both of us—is the way in which we license and regulate personal care homes. That is an area of great risk within the health care system. As the member knows, last year we made changes in The Regional Health Authority Act that gave us the power to step in as a ministry under certain circumstances with respect to hospitals or personal care homes to temporarily take over their management should that occur.

One of the issues that we identified was the licensing procedure for personal care homes. I believe they are currently licensed under The Public Health Act, if I am not mistaken, with a very minimal set of powers. Basically they get a licence and your only power is to take it away or one can take over temporarily, I guess, under The Regional Health Authorities Act, but we have recognized that it is important to have a licensing scheme in place that provides and, as I said, part of the ministry's role in this new delivery system of health care is to be the assurer of standards of care and the enforcers of standards.

I have some difficulty with the deliverers of the service also being the group responsible for

enforcement of standards, and so one of the principles that I am trying to build into this new structure in the ministry is that with the vast majority of services delivered by regional health authorities, the ministry has to play the role of ensuring that standards are met.

So consequently we have to ensure we have the right authorities and licensing powers. So that is one area we have found is an anomaly in the legislative scheme for health care where the power to establish licensure in a more complex way does not exist. So it is likely the member will see that in legislation I bring forward this year that that will be included in that package to then empower us to be able to do that.

Of course, any type of legislation like that, most of the operative provisions are developed by way of regulation, so if we bring that forward and the Legislature approves, it will take some months after that to develop the appropriate regulations if we have such a statute in place.

Mr. Chomiak: When I attended the portions of the inquest with respect to the gentleman that died at Holiday Haven Nursing Home, Department of Health officials attended and were questioned with respect to the licensing provisions that are in place from the Department of Health with respect to personal care homes.

I stand to be corrected, but I believe that they also testified that there were contemplated changes to those provisions that were being reviewed by the Department of Health, and I am wondering if it is possible, because I have never actually had a chance, if it is possible that I could have copies of the regulations in effect and, if at all possible, if there are changes to the regulations that are being circulated, if those are possible as well. In other words, I would like the most up-to-date provisions of the licensing provisions as they relate to personal care homes.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, the day that we identify for discussion on this area I will endeavour to have as much of that information as possible, but I do just want to emphasize that out of the Holiday Haven incident, which is of great concern to both of us, I think all Manitobans, we learned a lot of things about the powers and licensure that exists or does not exist, and

we took some immediate steps last year to give the province the power to step in in situations like that that we did not have.

We are now taking steps to modernize our whole process of licensure. So the only caveat I put is, much of what exists today may be inadequate for the task, and we are very much in the process now of bringing that up to, I think, a modern licensing scheme for personal care homes because of the concern that we all share.

In that context, I would be delighted to have that discussion with the member when we get to that point and perhaps next week he can identify the day that he would like to deal with it.

Mr. Chomiak: Is the minister aware or has the department been aware of whether or not the results of the inquest have been circulated?

Mr. Praznik: I know, Mr. Chair, that we should be able to expect the results of that inquest shortly. I am not sure, I think it is Judge Bueti who is doing the inquest. I do not know if he has yet reported, but we will endeavour to find out.

An Honourable Member: I am afraid to call a judge.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, I think we are all afraid to call a judge to find that out, obviously, but I understand that the report should be expected sometime around now or in the spring, so we will find out what the status is of that for the member.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, as we are getting close to five o'clock, perhaps I will wrap up just with—I will outline some of the things where I would like to see us go.

We have talked about dealing with Information Services next when we meet as well as pursuing a little bit of the Betaseron issue, and roughly anticipating going Tuesday after the holiday weekend probably trying to deal with the USSC, the food services matter, if it is possible.

An Honourable Member: Tuesday for USSC.

Mr. Chomiak: Tuesday for USSC. Correct.

I want to advise the minister that, while it is not on line, I would not mind a discussion with the minister on just a couple of issues that have come up. The Victoria lodge issue and the whole status of Levels 1 and 2 care, I would not mind just dealing with briefly on Thursday, as well as a little bit of a discussion just on the status of. I am also going to query the minister on the status of some of the announcements that were made in the recent Free Press article about the minister's short-term plan for health care. So, unless other issues arise of a significant nature between now and then, it is roughly where I am anticipating we will go on Thursday and Tuesday.

* (1450)

Mr. Chairperson: The time being five o'clock, time for private members' hour. Committee rise.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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 for Executive Council. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time.

We were on Resolution 2.1(b), but we had agreed that we would ask questions openly and pass everything at the conclusion.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I concluded yesterday on the Millennium Fund and the infrastructure program. I want to continue on some federal-provincial questions, but the government took as notice yesterday the amount of money that the federal government was clawing back on the alleged private health care under the Canada Health Act, and the Premier took under notice to bring that information back. I wonder if the Premier has that information this afternoon.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Chairman, the information I have from the Department of Health would indicate that the number of insured services that are being performed or estimated to be performed in private surgical clinics in Manitoba is 3,000 per year. That resulted in a monthly federal transfer payment

withholding of 49,000 being withheld at the time that the new federal guideline interpretation came into place on October 15, '95.

Now the interprovincial reciprocal agreement rate for daycare surgery has been adjusted from 285 to 400 per procedure, so the adjustment results in 68,000 of monthly transfer payments being withheld. So it is not a matter of an increase in numbers of procedures but rather an increase in the rate that is charged through this interprovincial agreement which is the basis of the costs withholding.

Mr. Doer: There are national bodies that maintain national statistics on this area of federal interpretation and penalties under the—pursuant to the Health Act. Can the Premier indicate the last fiscal year, which would have been—I am sure they would have numbers for '96-97, the total amount of money that Manitoba was penalized for so-called private procedures contrary to the Health Act?

Mr. Filmon: According to these figures, it should be 68,000 times 12, which is 816,000. That is the estimate for this year. Last year it was 588,000.

Mr. Doer: And does that represent the total penalties assessed by the federal government for all health care procedures in Manitoba, the total amount?

Mr. Filmon: Yes, that is the information I have been given.

Mr. Doer: Thank you for the information. I would like to ask the Premier, we have joined with him and other Manitobans in being opposed to what we would consider to be made-in-Toronto immigration policies of the federal government. We have certainly seen a reduction in the number of immigrants coming to Manitoba, and a reduction below even our population representation in Canada, some four percent in the last number of years. We think some of the policies work against families in Manitoba, in terms of reuniting families. They work against other people from around the world, in terms of economic opportunity in our province. We all recognize that we are sons and daughters, or grandsons and granddaughters of

immigrants, except our First Nations people who of course were here 6,000-8,000 years ago. I know the government has had a number of, should I say, policy disagreements with the federal government.

Can the Premier advise us: is there an existing agreement with the federal government, and is there concurrence in this agreement with the federal government?

Mr. Filmon: We do have an immigration agreement with Ottawa, as the member knows. It does increase our ability to influence the process to try and bring additional immigrants into Manitoba, but we have spoken out strongly against the landing fees. We have spoken out strongly against the limits and quotas that have been put on immigration. At this point, it is difficult to tell what effect that will have had. It certainly appears as though Minister Robillard is backing off on some of the recommendations from the committee that advised her, particularly with respect to the need to have English or French capability in coming here, perhaps a few others, but we certainly, despite having an agreement that allows some influence on recruitment—and we are getting more recruitment in particular areas. The member may know that there have been quite a few Argentine Jews who have been coming here, I understand as of the weekend, 29 families, many of which resulted in contacts we made during the Pan American Games process. There are other areas in which we are going out actively recruiting from various parts of the world.

* (1500)

But having said that, we are still limited by, as the member has indicated, a made-in-Toronto policy. I would argue a made-in-Toronto, made-in-Vancouver policy because those seem to be the areas of greatest influence on the limitations that the federal government is placing on immigration numbers.

Mr. Doer: Is there any indication that the Manitoba members of parliament are onboard with the provincial government's position and are both inside and outside of government? Are they consistently fighting on behalf of the Manitoba interest to have economic growth through both in-migration in Canada, birth in Manitoba, and immigration in this province?

Mr. Filmon: Did the member ask if we are still fighting for more numbers, or did he ask if the federal members—

Mr. Doer: Federal members.

Mr. Filmon: Well, it is difficult to say. Federal members have indicated in the public arena that they have not been comfortable with some aspects of their government's policy, but there is no question that they would knuckle under to their federal government's policy and try and have it both ways. Certainly, the federal members that we would have some influence on. I suppose the Conservative member would be supportive of our position vis-a-vis increased numbers coming. I do not know what position would be taken by the Reform representatives on this issue. I certainly believe that his colleagues at the federal level would be supportive of us achieving greater immigration numbers into Manitoba, knowing that we face serious skill shortages in a number of areas.

He probably saw the article in the weekend paper about recruiters being given bonuses to bring people into areas such as Great-West Life, Kleysen Transport, Loewen Windows, a number of different areas of skill shortages in Manitoba. Many of these areas can benefit from having increased numbers of immigrants, skilled trades for a number of our manufacturing areas, even people with good computer skills could certainly be recruited through immigration. We continue to make that point with Ottawa, and I would say that unfortunately, as the member has characterized it, the policy is not designed with Canada as a whole in mind. It is rather directed at particular interests in Toronto and Vancouver.

Mr. Doer: Has the Premier given any thought to having a community meeting on immigration, inviting all the members of Parliament, including the incumbent federal government, as a way of presenting a different dynamic, a made-in-Manitoba dynamic to immigration, rather than just relying on the traditional methods of minister-to-minister information? As the Premier has indicated, he used the term "knuckle under" in terms of the federal government. I think there is a certain amount of saying one thing in Winnipeg or in other parts of the province and saying something else quite differently or not saying anything at all in Ottawa. We

would be prepared to join him in an all party, if we are unable to move the federal government on its policy. We would be prepared to work with him in a kind of made-in-Manitoba, all-party approach to either go to Ottawa or have a forum in Winnipeg where we invite the four parties represented in Ottawa here as a way of trying to get around the traditional, centralized caucus decision making in the federal government and having more of a unique Manitoba perspective in this debate. So we would be prepared to join with the Premier.

We do have skill shortages. We do have families that cannot afford some of the fees. I know my grandparents came from different countries a couple of generations ago. They could not have afforded the fees to come into our country. I know the Premier probably feels the same way about his family. I think it is incumbent upon us, who have had the great joy of living in a wonderful province in a great country, that we ensure that the kind of tolerance and the kind of economic opportunity that immigration represents be passed on to people that are contemplating moving to Canada or families that would like to unify. I would be prepared to join in with the Premier in any way, shape or form to put more of a kind of human face and public face on this policy issue, if we are unsuccessful with the federal government.

Mr. Filmon: I appreciate the suggestion of the member opposite, and I am saying this kindly, not as a criticism, that I do not doubt that this would put some pressure on some of our local representatives, probably even embarrass them, which is not necessarily going to change what happens in Ottawa. The difficulty is that the local members faced with this kind of pressure—I have seen people like Mr. Alcock and Mr. Pagtakhan, for two, Mr. Walker, who is no longer there, say locally, because there have been these kinds of public hearings, public meetings organized by the International Centre and the organization that Marty Dolin heads up. These kinds of meetings create that kind of embarrassment or discomfort in local members, who usually indicate that they are sorry that these policies are coming into place and pledge to the people there that they will do their best to fight against them, but when it gets to Ottawa the message gets drowned out by the policy of the government.

So I guess the trick is: how do we get the decision makers in Ottawa to recognize and respond to the need

to change the policy? Quite honestly, this is the kind of thing that we have to come to grips with, is how do we really influence Ottawa. You know, you have seen it in the Liberal backbenchers here in Manitoba seemingly standing up and saying in rural areas that they are not really supportive of the gun registration laws, and then at the same time letting the government policy go through, or voting against certain things from time to time or speaking out for Pinawa, let us say, and then having the minister responsible downsize and dismantle Pinawa while their local member is saying that he is all in favour of keeping it going. Those are things that—unfortunately, public meetings can bring some local discomfort and embarrassment to a member, but we are trying to find a way to really convince Ottawa that we need immigrants, particularly in areas to fill known visible skill shortages and to help us build our economy stronger but also to be able to add to the kinds of families that have come here over the last two decades and that are very good, productive citizens in our society.

* (1510)

So I would like to think a little more about how we might get maximum positive impact out of this kind of proposal, but I certainly appreciate the Leader of the Opposition's offers of participation.

Mr. Doer: We will just leave that offer for the Premier in the best spirit it was intended.

It has been reported, on another federal-provincial matter, at the time that the federal government had approved additional funding to the Pan Am Games, that some 70 percent of the games now would be funded through the public sector, federal, provincial, municipal sector. Can the Premier indicate the balance of private and public sector revenue for the sustainability of the games at this point?

Mr. Filmon: The information that the member puts forward I believe is accurate. The actual numbers are: City of Winnipeg, cash commitment of \$8 million; federal government, cash commitment of \$49.5 million; Province of Manitoba, cash commitment of \$42 million—for a total of \$99.5 million. The total approved budget is about \$145 million, and that is slightly over

two-thirds, so his figure of 70—I think it is 72 percent, if my memory serves me correctly.

Mr. Doer: From the original bid and the numbers that we saw, certainly some of the revenue items had been overestimated, TV revenues, for example, we know had been overestimated in the original budget and some of the other expenses had not been anticipated. Can the Premier indicate the increase in expenses from the time of the budget? The term that was used was we have a shortfall but that was based on the original budget. We know that there have been some revenue shortfalls. Can the Premier indicate what the expense discrepancies were from the original budget proposal to the revised numbers that are being used?

Mr. Filmon: The increase went from a budget of 122, which was the budget upon which the bid was based, to 145. I do not have the information as to where the increase in expenditures was. Certainly the major difference in revenue was what they valued the TV revenues at versus what they are able to get. I think it was grossly overestimated and that is the major difference in terms of the revenue side.

Mr. Doer: I have been told that the TV revenue budget was estimated on games, Commonwealth Games and other games that did not have the same TV audience as the Pan Am Games. I have also been informed that the expenses have gone up from the original bid based on the numbers of athletes and coaches that Manitoba would pay for, or the games would pay for, to come to this community.

Can the Premier indicate how many athletes and coaches the games were going to pay for in the original bid and how many athletes and coaches are going to be paid for in the current budget?

Mr. Filmon: I am informed that the difference in costs for the athletes was more a matter of the travel subsidies being underestimated, not the numbers per se. In fact, the numbers may have increased by 10 percent or so. I think they are now considering 5,500 and originally it was 5,000, but in addition to that the travel subsidies are now estimated at \$9 million, and they would have been perhaps a third of that at the time of the bid process. There would be also a little extra cost on housing that they were probably underestimating.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chairman, \$99.5 million is a lot of public money for the games. Will all the facilities that are being prepared and built or enhanced for the Pan Am Games be available for the public after the games?

Mr. Filmon: The one major area of expansion is the second pool at Pan-Am, which would certainly totally be open for public access. There is the new fieldhouse at the University of Manitoba, which would be a public facility in the hands of the University of Manitoba. There is a velodrome, a second track. One is short track, and one is long track. I forget which one is being built but, again, it would be a totally public-use facility after the conclusion of the games. The retention pond at South Transcona is totally public access.

Dredging of the lake at Minnedosa would remain a public facility. The improvements at Birds Hill at the equestrian facilities would remain in public hands. The area that is privately controlled is the baseball park, but it has a clause requiring access to amateur baseball. So essentially everything that remains by way of infrastructure would remain as a public access facility. As you know, the University of Manitoba School of Nursing dormitories are going to be used for the Pan American Games also of course as one of the legacies of the games.

Mr. Doer: So can the Premier, and I would expect that the policy for public money would be for public assets that are available to the general public after the games. I would expect that that would be a rule of policy development because I know it was the general rule of thumb for our former Premier Roblin when he had the games here in Winnipeg in '67, and I know it was the general principle under which Mr. Desjardins and Mr. Parasiuk initiated a bid or a discussion of a bid in Indianapolis in the mid-'80s that all subsequently came with the awarding of the games in '99.

* (1520)

Is there any public money going to enhance any facility that would only be available for private use or private members?

Mr. Filmon: Certainly it will be very similar to the legacy from the '67 games. We have to acknowledge that in things that were for instance left at the university

that a person could not just go up and demand access to it. It would have to be arranged through the university for a valid meet or something of that nature or even for training that the university would ultimately have the final say over the use of it, but it is in public hands.

Similarly, I think the water ski association will retain control over the use of the infrastructure in the retention pond in Transcona, that it could not be that somebody just drives up and says, I want to go and water ski on this course without permission and without going through the channels. Similarly, the province operates Birds Hill, and you could not just walk out there and demand use without going through the proper channels. I would say there are more partnerships this time than there were in '67, where in '67 almost everything was just straight publicly funded with very few partners involved.

In this case, they have chosen to partner with many different community organizations in order to create these facilities, and in soccer and other areas it would devolve to whoever is the local public authority, municipal government in some cases, university in other cases, that kind of thing. The only area in which you have some public funds with a private facility that I can recall at this point is the baseball stadium, and, as I say, we have a clause in there that requires amateur baseball to be able to have access to that facility in future.

Mr. Doer: I thank the Premier for the answer. I have some concerns about the venue for soccer. We will have a situation where the World Cup soccer tournament will take place in the south of France, and I would expect that Manitobans will want to see some of the great soccer teams starting with Canada, of course, but other countries like Brazil and others that will be major sports attractions, international attractions, to this tournament.

We are hearing that the original venue was to be the Winnipeg Stadium, and we are also now hearing that that may be transferred out of the Winnipeg Stadium. There are logistical problems, there are space problems, and I just want to straighten it out with the Premier. Has the venue for soccer or football been changed from the stadium? Was that the original plan? Has it been

changed, and where is it going to go if it has been changed?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Chairman, the member can elaborate on his understanding of it, but my understanding is that there was at some point in the planning the hope that soccer could be played at Winnipeg Stadium, but the FIFA have absolutely ruled out playing on artificial turf, so the only way it could be done at Winnipeg Stadium would be to tear up the artificial turf, put grass on, leave it there for the next football season, that is the '99 football season, and then put new artificial turf on following that, all at considerable expense.

So the better alternative that is being recommended is that the soccer be held at the city-owned facility on Wilkes which is, again, a public facility, with some upgrading of seating. The argument against that that people are saying is that it would be unfortunate that there would not be as many people able to see it as would at Winnipeg Stadium, but, logistically, there just does not appear to be any possible way of using Winnipeg Stadium. I guess the grass could not be put in—you see, it would have to go in after the '98 football season, and they would have to tear it up and put it fresh, and it would be a terrible playing surface to have been laid in the spring of '99 and played on in the summer of '99. Nobody recommends it as the solution.

The other alternative is not to go into a private facility but rather just another public facility that does not have as much seating, but I do not see how that would affect seeing World Cup soccer teams coming through here. They would still play at that facility on Wilkes anyway, as far as I would know.

Mr. Doer: As one of the people that is a purist in terms of football stadiums and loves the Green Bay Packers stadium with grass, real grass, and does not like artificial turf, and I do not know who was involved in putting artificial turf in the stadium to begin with, and probably, you know, any one of us could have been involved and not known it, could have been involved in the decision, I cannot imagine, this is kind of unfortunate, because we have got, I mean, I know my own daughter plays soccer now; I know lots of people have kids that play soccer. They may be of a young age, but they would love to see these world-class athletes play soccer.

I am worried about, say, the Brazilian soccer team, the A team, the team that is going to be playing in the south of France, I hope the Premier is being able to assure us it is the same team that is going to show up. Will they show up to Wilkes Avenue for this tournament, and will there be enough seats to watch a great team like that play?

I am quite worried about this; this is a real international community. Soccer is a world attraction. From the last Pan Am Games, there has been a quantum change in the number of kids that are playing soccer at all levels, boys and girls of all levels, from where we were in 1967. There would be a greater, much as we saw in the United States a couple of years ago or three years ago now with the World Cup soccer, tremendous interest in watching soccer because of the explosion of youth that are watching it.

It does not seem to me that we have got the optimum situation for soccer right now, and I would raise this with the Premier. Does he think Wilkes can accommodate the great numbers of people, Manitobans and people from the United States that would want to come here and other Canadians who would want to come here to watch it, and are we really going to deny a lot of members of our community that tremendous opportunity to witness soccer? I am quite worried about the venue right now.

Mr. Filmon: I do not doubt that the Pan Am Games Society people are just as concerned to try and get as many people to see it. On the other hand, what is most important, if we are going to get the top teams, is to have a proper facility to play on. If the consequence of that is that they play on a first-class pitch but it is being watched primarily by television as opposed to in person, that is one of those things that they will have to decide on. I do not know of any other solution to providing a larger venue for them. I am quite sure that they could not construct a new one in time for 1999.

They have ruled out the Winnipeg Stadium because of the logistics of having to tear up the artificial turf, and they do have a facility that is certainly a good soccer pitch for playing and has lots of practice grounds and everything else around for the teams, maybe, I think, can hold several games at once, but it does not have as big a seating capacity as they would like for it.

So that is, I guess, a trade-off that they have to decide. I certainly do not think that it is something that a politician will decide when the best minds in the business are there to make that decision.

Mr. Doer: I am just going by memory now, and I have not got the document in front of me, but if my memory serves me correctly, the Winnipeg Stadium was used in the bid that was approved by the Pan Am's selection committee. The Winnipeg Stadium was used as the site, was it not?

Mr. Filmon: I do not have that at my fingertips. I know that in many cases they did not have to give specifics as to where they would hold things. There was a possibility, for instance, of holding volleyball, basketball and other things at the Winnipeg Arena. All they had to assure was that they had adequate facilities or would construct adequate facilities for it, and I do not know if they had to be so specific as to say that it will be held here.

The member may know that it was planned to hold the water skiing at Portage la Prairie. It has been moved now. Those are decisions that the society has to make, but they cannot make them without the approval of the international sport organization, in this case it would be FIFA, as well as Pan Am-PASO, the Pan American Sports Organization. So they have to get all these things approved by the sport experts when they make the final selection.

* (1530)

Mr. Doer: I will move onto some other federal-provincial questions. I know that the Premier had announcements on the Pan Am Games. It was part of the last Team Canada trip and he also had announcements on the Canadian Wheat Board. He also had announcements on the last trek to Asia dealing with the wheat board sale to an Asian country. Were there any other major announcements that were made by the Team Canada mission and the government of Manitoba dealing with Manitoba contracts in the most recent set of visits to South America in January?

Mr. Filmon: The ones that I can recall off the top of my head are at least three contracts that were signed by Duha Color Services, plus the establishment of a

display home in I believe it was Chile by our people who are involved with export housing. There were several companies involved because we had with us people from Loewen Windows. I believe it was also Olympic Building Systems and Newton Home and Kitchen Craft and so on, and so they were very much involved with building a display home in Santiago.

There was also an announcement by the University of Manitoba, the relationship both with a university in Mexico and a university in Santiago again. I know a couple of deals that were done without publicity, one by a grain storage company, a manufacturer that was with us, another by Can-Oat that was not for publication because of the fact that it might have caused some difficulty with Argentine producers, but a fairly significant agreement for a sale there.

Those were all things that were either done in conjunction with or during the Team Canada mission. The Wheat Board made sale announcements in both Mexico and Brazil. A number of the other grain companies, including James Richardson & Sons and XCAN, were doing their ongoing business meetings while we were there. Some have resulted in agreements and contracts since then. Others would be part of their ongoing business relations with those countries.

Mr. Doer: Can the Premier indicate what the overall trade—do we have a trade deficit with the Asian countries that we have been visiting? Have our exports gone up? Have our imports gone up? Is our current trade situation—can the Premier indicate from '95-96 to '96-97, which would be prior to the Asian flu, whether we are seeing an increase in the trend line? I know we are seeing an increase in the trend line on exports. I know we are seeing an increase in some of the imports. What is our deficit of trade with Asia, and do we have an increased deficit of trade? Do we have a surplus of trade with Asia, which I think we should with agricultural products? Can the Premier indicate what the status of that is, please?

Mr. Filmon: We will just indicate that the trend line continues to basically go upward in our exports to these countries, as the member has indicated, but that can vary substantially. Particularly, I have figures that indicate from '96-97, Japan, our exports are up; China,

our exports are down; and that could be just one Canadian Wheat Board sale that would cause that, to the tune of \$130 million.

The basic trend line: Indonesia is up; South Korea is up; Taiwan is flat. I will have to find out about the imports. I do not have that at my fingertips. We will just basically say that contacts that are made through the Team Canada process generally have produced long-term relationships and results that we can point to positively, but at the same time we also have long-term relations that certainly pre-date Team Canada, people like the Wheat Board or our major grain companies having done business there in many cases for 25 years or more.

* (1540)

So we just basically say that it creates a very high profile. I would say that the Leader of the Opposition would be impressed at the kind of publicity that we get for our Team Canada trip. We are basically on the front pages of every local newspaper every day that we are there in the capital cities or the major cities that we are visiting. Certainly, the business people who now pay in excess of \$10,000 to be a part of the trip, because that is what it costs for them to go, are very complementary and very supportive of the ability to make contacts with the high profile that the trips give them in the countries that they visit, with suppliers, with customers and other people.

So if the member wants the statistics on imports and exports to these countries, we will pick all of the countries that we have visited in Asia. In three years, we went to, I believe it was, about 10 countries. We will try and get both export and import numbers over the period of the last three or four years.

Mr. Doer: I thank the Premier for that. I always thought that former Premier Harcourt's idea of a Team Canada approach was a good one, rather than having every individual Premier go in to China, or in to Japan, week after week after week. I thought it made more sense to proceed this way. I think we would want to see those numbers. If the Premier could provide those, it would be helpful, particularly, numbers before the so-called Asian flu.

Can the Premier indicate what impact—we know that British Columbia will be very hard hit by the so-called flu. We know that there are economists saying the United States will eventually be hit and that will eventually impact on Canada. We know that others are saying it will not happen. What is the present prediction in terms of the Asian situation? I know that Tokyo is going up in the last couple of days, but there was speculation that some of the budgetary changes were not as great as they should have been yesterday. What is the present prediction in the Manitoba government on the impact of the so-called Asian flu? I know that some of the markets are closed today, but what would be the impact on the Manitoba economy? What are the present trade predictions and its economic impact on Manitoba for the Asian situation looking in the near-term, the '98-99 fiscal year and the '99 calendar year?

Mr. Filmon: Not that I need or want the credit, but I just mention that former Premier Harcourt used to refer to it as the Harcourt-Filmon proposal, because really it was the two of us who conceived it at the Western Premiers' Conference in 1993 and sold it to the Prime Minister in December of that year when we met on the 21st in Ottawa. I was very happy to co-operate in what I thought was a good proposal and a good idea, and Premier Harcourt certainly deserves credit and mention on it.

The best minds in the world at the IMF and at the World Trade Organization are grappling with the challenge of attempting to quantify what impacts the Asian currency meltdown might have on economies throughout the world.

In discussions this year at the World Economic Forum and discussions I have had with various ambassadors who have come through, it is interesting that everybody has a different perspective, and I would say that what most people do not, or cannot quantify is the side-swipe effect. They can think in terms of what impact it will have on our direct exports, the assumption being that it will make our exports more expensive because their currency has devalued so substantially that they probably will not be able to afford to buy the exports from the various different countries.

But the side-swipe effect is one that, for instance, the Mexicans are concerned about and we ought to be concerned about, and that is the impact of our imports from Asia becoming cheaper for many of these countries; therefore, these imports supplanting our production in third party markets. The Mexicans, for instance, produce a variety of the same products that are produced in Asia, and they are afraid that Asian products will now take the place of Mexican products in a lot of third country destinations. They really do not know what this might be.

This year, for instance, in our budget we said the uncertain prospects for Asian economies raised questions about Canada's economic output for 1998; however, most analysts are now of the view that Canada will continue to do well. The Canadian economy has as much underlying strength going into 1998 as it did at the start of '97. Overall monetary conditions remain stimulative; inflation remains low; government finances have continued to improve. Premier Clark said to me that they are calculating a loss of GDP in excess of 1 percent. I do not know what the effective figure they used for their budget projections was, but it was somewhere in that range.

I heard an analyst from the CIBC say that Manitoba had more to lose because it has a significant level of export into Asia. I immediately talked to some of our staff economists, and I said could they be under the misapprehension that those exports by the Canadian Wheat Board actually will impact our GDP, because they do not. Basically, the Wheat Board is the conduit by which a lot of agriculture production goes through to Asian countries. It actually contributes zero to our GDP. The Wheat Board has the same number of staff; whether they sell a million tonnes or 10 million tonnes, they still have the same number of staff in Winnipeg, and so it really does not have an impact.

The impact would be on the price or the production to the producer, and, of course, we are as a province one of the smallest producers but the biggest exporter because of the Wheat Board and other grain companies being located here. When they brought that to the attention of the economist, she acknowledged that that is right and that really if you strip it right down, our exports to Asia are not that significant that it would have any particular impact on us, maybe a tenth of a

percentage point if there is going to be a significant impact.

So at this point, it is the third-party kind of influences that we cannot quantify, that nobody can quantify, but I am given to understand from various discussions with Canadian—well, it used to be called the Canadian Manufacturers' Association. It is now the Alliance of Manufacturers & Exporters Canada whom I met with a few weeks ago and others, that they are still predicting a very, very buoyant year for manufacturers and exporters in Manitoba, and so we have no reason to believe that there is something unforeseen at this point in our economic forecasts.

Mr. Doer: Well, we have met with the manufacturing association or what its term is today or latest term, and they, of course, feel quite confident. Obviously, with the low dollar at 70 cents, it is quite a bit lower than even eight or nine years ago when it was at 88, 87 cents.

So they feel, their advice to us is anything below a 79-cent dollar, that they are in a situation where they have tremendous competitive advantages. In fact, most of them raise the issues in terms of their industry, the whole need of training and retraining of skilled workers as the major challenge that they have.

The grain prices, particularly wheat, are down from last year. Some of our agricultural products are down on the commodity markets. What is the present analysis that the provincial government has, and what is its impact on producers here in Manitoba in terms of income for farm families here in this province?

* (1550)

Mr. Filmon: That is always a difficult thing to forecast. Most observers thought that last year, because of some commodity prices dipping, that last year would have resulted in a reduction in our total net farm income. It resulted in the highest in our history.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): A 7 percent overall net gain.

Mr. Filmon: It was, the Minister of Agriculture points out, a 7 percent overall net gain. Was the figure 3 billion?

But it shows you that, just as the entire economy of Manitoba is extremely diversified—and I have had this discussion with my colleagues to the west that Manitoba really is, although a prairie province in name, a central Canada province in economic description. Our economy is far more similar to Ontario's than it is to Saskatchewan's, Alberta's or British Columbia's. It is very dominant, predominant in manufacturing today, in financial services, in transportation-distribution. Agriculture, as the member knows, represents a very small, much smaller part of our economy. But what is changing is the value that we are adding to the agricultural production. Although direct agricultural production is down somewhere in the range of 6 percent of our entire GDP, agribusiness in total is somewhere in the range of 16 percent, I think, agrifood, 17 or 18 percent.

So it is the whole business of adding value and diversifying crops. If you take a look at what our exports are to Japan, you will see things like bird seed, honey, buckwheat. We are the largest source of buckwheat for Japan, and that is because of our eastern European heritage where buckwheat was a staple Ukrainian food, and this is one of the few places in the world outside of Ukraine that actually produces buckwheat to this day. In Japan, they make pasta out of buckwheat, so it is quite an unusual set of things that make up—even our agriculture is so diversified by comparison to Saskatchewan or Alberta that it is difficult to predict what will ultimately happen, because people tend to read those same signals that the member opposite is talking about and when they see wheat prices going down they move into canola or to buckwheat or to lentils or peas or something else that may have higher value. At the same time, there is this overall trend, the member opposite may know, that we are now producing something in the range of in excess of 4 million hogs per year, and we are producing how many acres of potatoes?

An Honourable Member: 70,000.

Mr. Filmon: 70,000 acres of potatoes, which continues to grow. Potatoes, for instance, are the highest net return per acre of any of the major crops in Western Canada these days, because they are being grown for processing.

So these are the kinds of things that will have a major impact on how this all works out. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) is suggesting that our best guess at this point is that our total agricultural income will be stable, probably not the kind of major increase that we have seen in the last two years, probably will stabilize this year, but at this point we are not expecting it necessarily to go down.

Mr. Doer: I was hearing that the potato producers about a year ago, that there was difficulty with the plant in Carberry in terms of the access to U.S. markets, that there had been some real economic opposition to the potato export from the plant. I know we were involved years ago in the expansion of the plant, which has since been expanded again for french fry production and sale to certain outlets including the golden arches, I understand. Has that situation been resolved? I believe it was the United States that was opposing some of the sale of our french fries to their communities as opposed to the Asian market, which was continuing to expand.

Mr. Filmon: If the member opposite is referring to the fact that there was a temporary interruption of their ability to supply to their major clients, who were McDonald's restaurants in greater Chicago and greater Milwaukee, it was a quality problem. The potatoes did not meet the quality standards for a period of time. It might have been ones that had been in storage too long. I cannot recall the story, but I did know the circumstances. That was overcome in a relatively short period of time, and they were right back to not only full production but also to full export to their major customers in the United States. So as far as I know everything is back to normal.

Mr. Doer: Moving to two other issues left in the federal-provincial area before the member for the Interlake has a couple of questions for you. I am sure you are aware that your staff are involved. I am sure they are on their toes standing ready for his questions, but he is getting impatient with me I am sure.

But the flood situation, do we have a federal-provincial agreement on the flood, (a) from the 1995 flood, which I asked you about last year; (b) from the 1996 flood, which I asked you about last year; and © from the 1997 flood, which was a flurry of debate in this House and in this Chamber through the federal

election and after the federal election and subsequently? Do we have agreements on all three flood years?

Mr. Filmon: As the member may know, we still have not collected on our submissions for flood-related expenditures on the Assiniboine River in 1995 or the Red River in 1996, and we have had interim payments on Red River flooding of 1997 to the tune of \$55 million towards the 1997 expenditures, which will probably end up being close to \$300 million, so there is still a lot of money that will have to be collected but, in fairness to them, I would imagine that all the bills probably are not yet submitted. There is probably a lot of paperwork on our part to be completed. Certainly I think the '95 and '96 bills have long since been submitted but an indication of the slowness of the normal system of review and auditing that goes on, there are many outstanding issues, not the least of which is commitment to long-term floodproofing, which is where we believe the major emphasis should continue to be.

* (1600)

We want to be able to be assured of protecting as much of the area that is flood prone on the Red River Valley as possible. We should hopefully gain and learn from the experience of 1997 by saying that wherever people are in a vulnerable position, they should either be made aware that they have a responsibility to self-protect, or else we should provide them with an alternative if community ring-dikes can be built. So we have got the flood-proofing program which I think is now estimated at about \$60 million thus far, and that is the ones that are most easily protected. The only commitment that we have got to that is \$12 million, which the federal government committed way, way back, about a year ago.

We are in final discussions on the expansion of that program. We have made the commitment that at least \$60 million has to be expended to do the very obvious areas that are vulnerable and in need of protection. We still do not have the federal partner coming in for 50 percent of that.

Mr. Doer: I believe it was the May long weekend last year, there was a discrepancy between a public statement, a clash of public statements between the

Premier and the lead minister of Manitoba, the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy. His statement was that they could not approve anything at the last cabinet because there was no submission from Manitoba. You then subsequently produced a letter that you tabled in the House, and tabled with the public, said he was wrong. He then came back and said, as I recall, that the letter had too much in it. After he said he did not get something, then he said the letter had too much in it.

What is the present state of that letter that you sent in terms of the negotiations with the federal government? How much have they accepted as legitimate claims for the people of the valley? How does that apply to people outside of the valley that had been flooded in the past, like Winnipegosis, the Shellmouth Dam, citizens adjacent to the Shellmouth Dam, the Assiniboine River and others that obviously are flooded in Manitoba but outside of the Red River Valley?

Mr. Jack Penner, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Filmon: The information that the federal lead minister was looking for, obviously he eventually did find, and I think one of the areas of confusion was that it was in the hands of a federal department in terms of detail and all that. It was in their process and perhaps not directly in his hands, but anyway it has been in process. We continue to be seeking their commitment to a whole variety of areas of support, including for the City of Winnipeg which was not approved by the federal government, including for repairs and upgrade to the floodway as a result of the 1997 flood, and including so many areas of flood proofing in the valley that involve community ring dikes and local area ring dikes and local protection works, so all of that is still in front of the federal government awaiting their response. We understand that we may get the response in the not too distant future.

With respect to areas like Winnipegosis, I believe, and Shellmouth that the member opposite raised, those are not included in the guidelines that the federal government has set out for potential flood proofing or compensation beyond anything that has already been submitted to them from the 1995 flood in the Assiniboine Valley. We have had a pretty direct statement from them that they will not consider any other works other than in the Red River Valley. I

believe that they also have allowed us to include some areas of damage that occurred when the Assiniboine diversion into Lake Manitoba was used.

Mr. Doer: So when does the Premier expect the—I am not even going to ask about '95-96. He should have heard a long time ago. I had raised the question of whether he raised this on the Team Canada trip in '96 when they were spending 10 days on the plane with the Prime Minister, whether he thought he could get some success out of that. Regrettably it has not been concluded. When do we expect an answer on the actual '97 flood, if we are in for 300 million? If the total cost is 300 million, when do we expect an answer about how much the federal government will cover under the 90 percent guideline and how much they will cover under other formulae that they will use?

Mr. Filmon: The member opposite probably knows that there was much of it done under 90-10, but two areas of programming, the business compensation, small business compensation and the farm compensation, and the areas that were outside the federal guidelines that included things like rental properties, vacant properties, and I forget what the third area was—part-time farmers. All of those areas the federal government would not include under DFA, and we eventually negotiated a 50-50 cost-shared program for all of those areas.

* (1610)

So I could not tell him at the moment how the proportion works out, but our expectation is that we will end up paying about 50 million out of the total bill that we think may approach about 340 million. Our share will be in excess of a hundred million out of a total \$340-million bill. The reason that comes out to much more than 10 percent—it comes out to somewhere between 25 and 30 percent—is because much of those costs were now shifted into a 50-50 mode, because we ultimately felt that those claims should be compensated. The feds said fine. Well, we do not have anything under DFAA for it, so we will come up with a separate ad hoc program for farms, for businesses and for all these three categories that were not covered in housing under DFAA, and that is why our share is much higher than most people believed it should be.

I am told that these 50-50 side programs are consistent with what was done by the feds in Saguenay and possibly some of the Edmonton 1987 tornado settlement. So where we could not convince them to put it under DFAA, we were able to convince them to have a separate side program, provided we were prepared to put 50 percent of the funding in, and that is how we have arrived at these obligations that we are attempting to pay now.

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Mr. Chairman, if I might have the indulgence of the House to stay seated while I ask my questions on Riverton Boat Works. I really do appreciate the Premier giving me the opportunity just to raise some issues with this. We could, of course, have done it through the regular opportunity of writing, and I am sure the Premier is more than aware of this situation. Letters have gone to him over the many years past since—I remember 1990-91.

I guess in speaking to the family just a few days ago about this issue and as the Premier is probably aware, the president of the company, Mr. Ken Thorsteinson, had passed away this fall and the legacy of this issue still stays with the family. They do want to get it resolved, Mrs. Thorsteinson and the family.

Going back, and I know the Premier and his staff were made aware that certain events were occurring going back to February of '97 where the Riverton Boat Works and the Thorsteinson family was informed that there seemed to be a deal on the table, that negotiations were being done at that period of time. In the following period of time, Mr. Thorsteinson was assured by Dr. Jon Gerrard who was secretary for the department that was dealing with it and all of a sudden—and after that letter of December 3, 1997, but previous to that September, Mr. Leitch was good enough to respond to Mr. Thorsteinson's letter to you, and he, too—obviously, by his letter Mr. Leitch was advised that the claim would be settled in the very near future without any real explanation from the minister himself but from one of his executive assistants, Mrs. Thorsteinson now and Riverton Boat Works was informed that there was no deal on the table. There was not going to be any kind of compensation for this long-standing issue.

I guess what the family is wondering is the part that was played by the Premier's Office and was there any

correspondence, was there any contact with the federal government, Transport Canada, on this, and what was the Premier's Office feeling on this and whether the fact that they thought, as well as Mr. Thorsteinson at that time, that the deal was going to be made?

Mr. Filmon: This issue certainly does have a long history. I recall, actually, correspondence from Felix Holtmann when he was member of Parliament and was advocating for the Thorsteinsons and attempting to do what he could through the federal system to arrive at an acceptable agreement for them.

When Mrs. Thorsteinson wrote to me, I had the letter referred to the Clerk of the Executive Council, Mr. Leitch, who used his contacts at the federal level to attempt to find out whether or not something was being done on it. It was indicated by senior people in the federal system, particularly the Department of Western Economic Diversification who are not the responsible department but the ones that had been staffed to Dr. Gerrard when he was the minister, and Dr. Gerrard, to our knowledge, had advocated on behalf of the Thorsteinsons that a settlement be entered into by the federal government.

It was, I guess, Ports Canada and the Department of Transport federally, and it was the understanding of the senior officials in Western Economic Diversification that, due to Dr. Gerrard's efforts, a recommendation for settlement was sitting on the Minister of Transport's desk in Ottawa at that time. This was, I guess, about early September that Mr. Leitch was told this, and he wrote that to Mrs. Thorsteinson.

Subsequently, after we were contacted again by the Thorsteinsons late in the year, we now utilized our contacts in Ottawa to try and verify what had happened to it, and apparently I guess it was turned down at the ministerial level. So they then subsequently informed the Thorsteinsons. We are completely at a loss to do anything further since this is total federal jurisdiction, total federal responsibility, and our reason for being involved was to try and help a small Manitoba business which was placed in a difficult and we think unfortunate position by the federal government department's decision. Despite our efforts to advocate on their behalf, we seem to have reached the end of our road in our ability to help them.

Mr. Clif Evans: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Premier for those comments. I do have the letters from Randall McCauley on behalf of David Collenette, the Minister of Transport. I find it, as the Premier says, I find that I believe anyhow that after dealing with such an important issue to this small business and to people, the Thorsteinsons, that an executive assistant would send with his signature on a final letter saying no, on an issue that has been long outstanding, and I think the Thorsteinsons are responding to that correspondence. The Premier's Office will be getting copies of that.

They also wish for myself and anyone else that would be able to continue pursuing this on their behalf to write, not only to the minister and as we have done before, write to the Prime Minister with this issue and request that a meeting take place, even if it is in Ottawa, to go to Ottawa and meet with the Minister of Transport to really get face to face, deal with the issue and try and resolve it to what again, and I say again that the Thorsteinsons and I believe others were given the impression early in 1997 that this was going to be finally settled after many, many years.

* (1620)

In one of his letters the executive assistant claims that there was some sort of a court decision made. Well, that in fact is not the case. It never did go before court to be resolved. There was always that threat of going to court but being an agreement with the province, it was a federal-provincial agreement for this. The Thorsteinsons feel that support from our province be provided, support in whatever which way we can provide support to have this matter looked into even further.

You know, I strongly believe, as the Thorsteinsons do, that there is something that is missing. There is a missing link from the federal side of it, and the only way that I feel to address it, and the Thorsteinsons do too, it is their suggestion that with support from the Premier's Office, with support from myself, support from the federal M.P.s here in Manitoba, that such a meeting would put it on the table. Let us get it decided on and let the minister and the Prime Minister, if so be it, tell the Thorsteinsons that there is not going to be any settlement. I think that is where the Thorsteinsons want to go.

I know the Premier said that it is tough because they have just pretty well washed their hands of it. The feds have said no, but I think, if we could agree to support the Thorsteinsons in a combined effort to have some meetings done and request that these meetings be initiated by the feds and they are more than willing—they were even told by the feds, their lawyer was even told by the feds, to get prepared for it, and lo and behold, meeting with family members yesterday, he says we got a bill in the mail from the lawyers saying here is our bill for dealing with this settlement. They get a letter, as the Premier has received also a copy saying, there is no settlement.

We did an investigation. Well, there was never this investigation that they talk about. They were never contacted during this time. Thorsteinsons and Riverton Boat Works were never contacted during this alleged investigation into the matter, so with the Premier's indulgence and support I hope I would like to initiate anything that we can do on behalf of the Thorsteinsons to not let this go away. They are not letting it go away. They do not want to just accept it without really having the truth brought out.

Mr. Filmon: I must say that I am very supportive of the argument that the member puts forward. It seems like a terribly unfair situation. I just want to say that I thought we were at the end of the road in terms of our ability to do something, but Ports Canada has been a particularly bad and difficult group to deal with for Manitoba.

You may recall that about five years ago we had to initiate proceedings to go to a lawsuit to have them pay their electricity bill to Manitoba Hydro from the port. It was substantial. It was in the millions of dollars that they owed, and we eventually, by initiating the action, did get them to pay the bill. It seems incredible that you would have to do that to a federal Crown corporation.

I have just been handed a copy of the Canada-Manitoba Subsidiary Agreement on Churchill, which was signed in 1984 by the federal government, Mr. Axworthy, as Minister of Transport, along with the Province of Manitoba, the New Democratic government of Mr. Pawley. In it, under Program B, Port

Infrastructure Improvements, is a Clause 3, which outlines the responsibilities that Ports Canada will take as part of this agreement. It says: Tug construction. Ports Canada will commission the construction in Manitoba of a new 2,600 horsepower tugboat to replace the W.N. Twolan. The tug would be designed to fulfill the primary task of ship-berthing at the Port of Churchill with the necessary equipment to carry out the various other tasks required of it. It is estimated that construction could get underway within eight months. Canada will reimburse to Ports Canada all expenses which it may reasonably incur in connection with the construction of the tug up to a maximum of \$3.44 million.

This may be something that the new Minister of Transport is unaware of, and maybe if we bring this to his attention, and cc Mr. Axworthy who signed this agreement originally, we may get some further ability to open the door.

So I am going to ask my senior staff who brought this to my attention just now to develop that letter, and will cc the Thorsteinsons and yourself to ensure that you know what is happening, and we will see if this has any impact.

Mr. Clif Evans: I thank the Premier for those comments, and, on a final comment, I am pleased to see that we have seen perhaps something. The family itself, with this issue, one of the sons, in dealing with his dad on this for the many years, has picked apart the agreement. All the correspondence has notes on it and in the computer that would perhaps even provide us with even further information once I talk to them and show your comments, where we might be able to go with this.

We will also be initiating letters to the Premier for his support and help, and also to the federal minister with respect to this, and we certainly do not want to see it closed. All the support that we can get for Riverton Boat Works, we would really greatly appreciate from the government of the day, and I will continue the correspondence and information with the Premier and his staff on that. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Filmon: I thank the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), and I assume it is Mr. Miles Thorsteinson that he is speaking of. If he could contact Mr. Leitch and provide copies of anything that he thinks might be relevant to the case that could add to what information we have, we will proceed to do our best to help him on this issue.

* (1630)

Mr. Doer: I just have a few more questions on the Estimates of the Premier. When the Premier approves the education financing for a fiscal year, does the government take into account the ministerial Advisory Committee on Educational Finances?

Mr. Filmon: It is a ministerial advisory committee, and that committee would supply that advice to the minister. I have not seen any copies of information that they might have provided to the minister, but I would be almost certain that she would take into account their advice when she makes her recommendations to Treasury Board or cabinet on issues.

Mr. Doer: So is the Premier stating the last two years that this report has been submitted he has not had a copy to read prior to the decisions being made on education finances?

Mr. Filmon: I do not get copies of every report that goes to the ministers. That is not the nature of the cabinet system of government. The ministers do have their responsibility and authority which they are held to by this House and by me, so I would say that I would be almost certain that I had not seen it. Having said that, that would not mean that from time to time some things do not get sent into my office.

Mr. Doer: I know the Premier walks down the halls with clippings falling from every different direction from all over the country. Perhaps I am just suggesting that those great clippings that he has I know are also not his responsibility. He has them flailing all over the place sometimes. We like to sometimes intervene in his great speeches and get him off on his clipping file when we need a little levity in his speeches.

I know he just loves having newspaper clippings, as I say, from every part of the country and every

part—perhaps he could read 10 less clippings a year and read 10 pages of administrative Advisory Committee on Education. He might find it interesting. I would just encourage him to do so. Nothing wrong. He has his clippings going, and he has got clippings as I speak.

Does the Premier, who reads, as I say, clippings from far and wide, read the Council on Post-Secondary Education Report that would come to the government?

Mr. Filmon: Certainly I am interested in so many matters that come before government that I try and keep in touch. I have met with various people from the council even in the past year, but I cannot say that I have committed the report to memory, so I know it is in my files. If the member wants to raise any issue with respect to it, I will try and respond.

Mr. Doer: Has the Premier reviewed and what is the state of play of the apprenticeship report that took some time to prepare, and how does this apply to the new federal-provincial agreement on human resource training in Manitoba?

Mr. Filmon: The apprenticeship report is by and large being adopted by government. The briefing which cabinet received from the minister on it I believe indicated that most of the issues that were being recommended were able to be accepted and dealt with by government. Funding has been provided for the various different areas that will require additional funding, and it is being dovetailed with the devolved authority for the various different Human Resource Development Canada functions that are being accepted under the administration of the Province of Manitoba under the devolution of authority for labour market training.

Mr. Doer: The federal government, through the formerly known Unemployment Insurance program and now in an Orwellian way called the Employment Insurance Program—

An Honourable Member: E-I-E-I-O.

Mr. Doer: Well, that is another way of calling it has formally purchased spots in community colleges as part of their training strategy. What has been the net number over the last three or four years in terms of

training in our community colleges from the federal government, and what is the present status under the new provincial human resource regime?

Mr. Filmon: The federal government in recent years has certainly decreased its purchase of training spots from our community college system fairly substantially, and it has been an issue of concern that we have dealt with the federal government on. With the devolution of authority, I know that the community college is working with the provincial department to try and determine what is the best way of handling the training relationships, whether it is a matter of providing funding directly to the student or whether it is a matter of seat purchase as the best approach, and they are coming up with a plan as to how to do it under the new regime.

Mr. Doer: Will the Premier be able to give us numbers of how many people were paid for by the former system under the federal government for community college training versus how many will now—and I expect there will be a decrease prior to the so-called devolution—and what would be the current status? Is there an ability to give us the federal-provincial numbers going back to say '95, '96, '97 and now in the new regime in '98?

Mr. Filmon: If this were Question Period, I would say that is a question for the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training, which clearly it is. I do not have that information. I would have to get it directly from the minister and would be prepared to give it to the member, and then he can ask her questions of it in her Estimates, if that will be of some help to get it ahead of time. We will just check Hansard and make sure that we are getting the right information that has been asked for and provide it ahead of time, and then it can be the subject of discussion with the minister.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, and I would note that the Premier, I think, did sign the agreement last year I believe with the federal government.

I just have a question on Access programs. Over the years, Access program peaked at something over \$10 million in terms of expenditure, partially funded, and then decreased by the federal government, partially funded, and decreased by the provincial government. The last numbers we looked at were in the \$6-million

range for Access. First Nations populations are growing. There are more young people graduating from high schools available now for post-secondary education and training, and yet there is less money available.

This is a program I think and I said during the evening when I was together with the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) and many others at the Rainbow Society praising Ed Schreyer or regaling Ed Schreyer, as the case may be for the Minister of Agriculture—this was one of the tremendous successes, I felt, well in anticipation of a demographic challenge and a training challenge, from the Schreyer government, and I am personally very disappointed that the amount of money has been reduced both from the federal government's share and the provincial government's share.

* (1640)

Is there any attempt to look at the numbers of First Nations youth that are now graduating from high schools, the need that they would have for post-secondary education and training, and to look at a kind of 21st Century approach to the obvious challenges that we have in post-secondary education and training?

I think we have lost 10 years in this area by slowly—not even 10 years. I think the cuts started in the early '90s period. The money actually was enhanced from '88 to '92, and then it started to go down. Both the federal government did it and then the provincial government cut it. I think it is regrettable, in terms of long-term decision making, that we have cut this money.

Can we look forward to a kind of next century vision of Access and training that we saw certainly in evidence in the early '70s and maintained, I should say, by the Lyon government in the '77-81 period?

Mr. Filmon: As the member knows, there are large and growing demands for services to our aboriginal population in Manitoba and that we have in the throne speech covered many areas of expansion, Partners for Careers, other areas of investment in training and education that is growing.

There is no question, and I have said over and over again that the Access program has resulted in very

many positive outcomes and has provided role models for young people in our aboriginal communities. I think the member should know that although funding has declined, primarily federal funding declined but there has been some decline in provincial support as well, that what we have done is that we have focused on ensuring that the numbers remain, and as our aboriginal people have indicated in many instances, they want to be treated equally to the rest of the students in society. The program now calls for them to share some of the responsibility by way of student loans, just as all other students in society do, and that has resulted in us being able to keep the numbers of trainees up.

We are very proud of the fact that we have—and I have met with them personally in many cases—graduate engineers, doctors, lawyers, social workers, teachers, that they are benefiting substantially from the program, and they are now required to take some of the support by way of student loan. That has been our way of ensuring that we attempted to keep the numbers up, and we are looking at the adequacy of the resources to ensure that where there are those who want to be in these programs that we can provide resources for them.

Mr. Doer: Well, the Premier and I have disagreed before on this program, and I will continue to register our disagreement. I think we are really missing a number of opportunities here and challenges as we move into training. I think we have a real substantial discrepancy on the basis of resources and the basis of need, and we are going in the opposite direction in my view of anticipating the future. We are going backwards in my view, and we will just leave it at that. We will just agree to disagree.

Finally, I have some other questions on the issue of the telephone system. Just a couple of questions. Who conducted the appraisal of the value of the phone system? The Premier has used brokers in his answers in Hansard in '96. He has used other people in his comments. Who conducted the appraisal to the provincial government of the value of the corporation?

Mr. Filmon: My recollection, Mr. Chair, was certainly that there were several brokerage firms who gave opinions on the value of the corporation, and, as I indicated, the amount that we eventually did receive

was more than \$100 million more than their estimates. As an objective, third-party check, we also saw an evaluation that was done for the telephone company by a chartered accounting firm that placed a value based on assets and business value. In all cases, we were confident that we were getting at least a reasonable price for the company based on those evaluations.

Mr. Doer: Will the Premier make those evaluation documents public and table those evaluation documents in this Chamber?

Mr. Filmon: Those evaluations were done by the company and are the property of the company, and I do not think I have any authority to release that information.

Mr. Doer: At the time that the evaluations were prepared for the company and for the ultimate shareholders, which was this Legislature at the time, the company was publicly owned. The documents were prepared prior to, I would imagine, it should be, prepared prior to January 1, 1997, and therefore would have been prepared for a public Crown corporation whose shareholders were this legislative body. So could the Premier not make those documents public because they were, as I say, prepared at a time when the Crown corporation was, in fact, a publicly owned nonprofit corporation, as opposed to today where it is obviously in a different status?

Mr. Filmon: I appreciate the point that the member is raising. Certainly, I am basing my response on advice that we have that it is the property of the corporation, but I will take another look at it based on his approach and see whether or not it is information that can be shared.

Mr. Doer: Can the Premier indicate what accounting firm prepared the information for the telephone system, and was it made available to government?

Mr. Filmon: I do not recall, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Doer: Can the Premier undertake to get that information to us?

Mr. Filmon: I indicated that I would look into that, and I would treat all of the evaluations in the same way.

If it is feasible to do so, I would undertake to investigate that.

Mr. Doer: The individual who did the legal work for the telephone system, was that Mr. Falk who was then working for Pitblado & Hoskin?

* (1650)

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Falk was an outside counsel for the telephone system, but in terms of doing the legal work surrounding the initial public offering, Aikins, MacAulay did one section of it, and Pitblado & Hoskin, principally Duncan Jessiman, did another section of it because Mr. Falk's expertise was not in that area so he did not work on the IPO, to my knowledge. Then Thompson Dorfman Sweatman worked on another facet of it.

One of the companies worked for the government, one of the companies worked for the telephone system, and one of the companies worked for the brokerage houses, and I do not recall which was which in the whole process.

Mr. Doer: But Mr. Falk worked for the telephone system, as he was an employee. He was a member of the Pitblado & Hoskin legal firm and then was hired by the telephone system to provide legal advice to the telephone system. He has subsequently become inside counsel for the new private company.

Mr. Filmon: Yes, he was the outside counsel doing the legal work for the telephone system as an outside counsel. He has now been taken in as inside counsel, which is not an unusual thing. This often happens in corporations where the person who is the outside accountant gets hired as the inside accountant, the person who is the outside lawyer gets hired as the inside lawyer, because they have the most knowledge of the corporation, having worked on the file for many years.

Mr. Doer: This, Mr. Chairperson, would conclude just a few of the questions we had to ask the Premier over the last couple of days in his Estimates, and we are prepared to pass the Estimates. There are no surprises this year, I regret to say, but we sought some information in the last two days.

We will continue to have major disagreements with the Premier on areas of health care, areas of dealing with the education policies of Manitoba, the whole area of the telephone sale, which we will continue to pursue. The Premier knows our disagreements in the past on the area of flood policy and compensation policy. It was not my intent today to repeat all our disagreements in the Chamber in the Premier's Estimates but to raise some questions that will help us debate matters in the future.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 2.1.(b) Management and Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,950,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$392,000—pass.

2.1.(c) Inter-governmental Relations Secretariat (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$345,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$66,400—pass.

2.1.(d) Government Hospitality \$10,000—pass.

2.1.(e) International Development Program \$475,000—pass.

At this time, we would ask the First Minister's staff if they could please leave the room, and we will now move onto the Premier's line, which is

2.1(a) Premier and President of the Council's Salary \$42,000—pass.

Resolution 2.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,280,700 for Executive Council for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

This concludes the Executive Council. It is five minutes to five. Is it the will of the committee to call it five o'clock?

Mr. Doer: Well, I do not think it is, because, well, I do not know how we could do it, but with the committee, if you call it five o'clock, then the matter has to be dealt with. It is leave to recess for four minutes until the private member's resolution.

Mr. Chairperson: All right, the committee will recess for four minutes.

* (1700)

Five o'clock, time for private members' hour, committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Res. 10—Physician Recruitment and Retention

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I move, seconded by the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck),

“WHEREAS physician recruitment and retention in rural and northern areas is an ongoing issue of concern recognized by the Government of Manitoba; and

“WHEREAS Manitoba Health is committed to working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons to maintain the high standards we have all come to expect as well as being proactive with multiple new initiatives; and

“WHEREAS Manitoba Health has increased off-shore recruitment initiatives, announced a Locum Tenans Program and has lobbied the Manitoba College of Physicians and Surgeons to bring their rules in line with other provinces; and

“WHEREAS Manitoba Health, Rural Health Authorities, the Manitoba Medical Association and other stakeholders have developed a new and unique model for remunerating emergency physicians; and

“WHEREAS Manitoba Health will continue to work with foreign medical graduates by reviewing current tutoring and resident programs; and

“WHEREAS starting in the 1998/99 academic year all family medicine residents will be required to do 2 rotations in rural or northern communities; and

“WHEREAS rural and northern communities have a role in the long-term plan for retention of new physician; and

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the

Department of Health in its efforts to find sustainable and innovative solutions in recruiting and retaining physicians for rural and northern Manitobans.”

Motion presented.

Mr. Tweed: Madam Speaker, I certainly rise today to speak on this issue. I think that it is an issue of great importance to rural and northern Manitobans, and I think it gives an opportunity for members on both sides to put some of their concerns and issues on the table regarding doctor recruitment, particularly in the rural and northern areas.

I would like to just start out by explaining some of the things that have happened in recent months within the department and with the rural RHAs that have been involved in the recruitment and the retention of physician services.

The RHA, in conjunction with Manitoba Health, provided a list of doctors that were needed in communities in rural and northern Manitoba and provided that list to the Department of Health at which time we took the list and refined it down to what the needs of each RHA and community, developed a plan to address those needs on the immediate issue which we saw was the recruitment.

Government and the RHAs worked together to set up a plan in which a recruitment mission took place. In that period of time there were a series of presentations made to, at this point in time, particularly South African doctors who met all the requirements of the Province of Manitoba to allow them to come here to work. This recruitment process stretched over a period of six days, at which time we had approximately 59 doctors from South Africa make application to come to Manitoba, of which upon credential checks and over the period of time I believe boiled down to about 33 of them being qualified and capable or available to us out of that number, of which to date we have managed to recruit and the paperwork is now being finalized to have these people come to rural and northern Manitoba. I believe it is 23 physicians.

So I think that in the next little while, it is my understanding this recruitment drive, the initial arrival of the first doctors I believe is April 15, and then over

the next period of six to eight weeks the total of 23 will show up. I know from my communities particularly, where it is certainly I think a real positive signal to the communities of the viability and the survival of the health care that they have come to know and expect, it is a very positive step. I certainly know that other areas—and I think that was one of the real benefits and probably pleasures from my involvement in this particular project was the fact that we had communities from all over Manitoba with requirements, and we were able to fill many of those voids that they saw in their system. I know that some areas were short as many as three and four doctors and were able to fill their rosters. Those doctors will be showing up in the very near future.

Some of the other things that we have tried to do in the department to enhance the direction of health care in rural and northern Manitoba, the province had signed a new emergency agreement with the MMA and other stakeholders. It is a new model, and I would suggest to you that this model of remuneration is one that is being studied by other provinces throughout Canada. In return for the emergency services, concerns expressed to us by physicians, through extended clinics they will increase their access to doctors and also increase the compensation side for the physicians.

There is new contract negotiations on right now. Alternate payment contracts for rural and northern physicians are currently under negotiation. I think by continuing to explore and discover new options and new ideas and listening to what people are telling us, listening to what the doctors are telling us, we have been able to come up with some pretty positive plans to recruit new physicians to these areas, not only recruitment but to retain them. I think probably one of the most important aspects of this project was the fact that quite often when doctors move to a community, be they a Canadian doctor or a foreign doctor, the contact with the community had to be ongoing or, it was explained to us by these people, that they enjoyed becoming a part of the community. We, through the RHAs and the communities directly involved, have developed some plans, and we are working on a model for all communities in Manitoba that they will be able to see a process that has worked and could work for any and all communities.

I do know that the community of Arborg in particular have been very, very aggressive in their recruitment process, not just at the recruitment level but at the retention level, how they are planning to keep doctors in their communities, how they introduce them to certain aspects of their communities and responsibility of the people that once they come they are not just going to be left standing. They will be looked after by the people.

Another initiative that we have taken is to ask the University of Manitoba to work on a re-entry program which gives graduating doctors an opportunity to work in rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba for a period of time with the idea that for the time that they serve or spend in rural and northern Manitoba, they will be allowed a re-entry back into the university at the end of that time to complete their specialist training that they wish to choose. I think the benefits that we see for this is the fact that these young doctors will have an opportunity to work in rural Manitoba.

We will have an opportunity as rural Manitobans and northern Manitobans to give us an opportunity to spend time with these people and let them see and experience what we have to offer and perhaps captivate a few of them to continue to work in the communities and hopefully spend their lives there and serve the people of the communities. I think all communities in rural and northern Manitoba have lots to offer people. What we have to do is get these young doctors to our communities and get them to experience what we have to offer, and I think we stand a lot better chance of sustaining our doctors in our communities.

The re-entry plan is a new plan. It has been discussed in several provinces across Canada, and, if I am not mistaken, when this comes to fruition for the government and for the university, this will be the first project of the provinces. I can stand to be corrected on that, but that is my understanding at this point, that it is just under discussion with other provinces.

Some of the other things that have happened in the area of initiatives that have taken place is with the international medical graduates who are currently working on a process to have more of them involved in the learning process through the university site, that they can upgrade and bring their levels to our standards.

A lot of it is not that they are not capable or are not qualified. It is just a matter of getting the hands-on experience that they need to bring their qualifications back up to par. They certainly served as doctors in the communities that they came from.

* (1710)

They are Canadians, they are Manitobans, and I certainly feel that they should be given an opportunity with some training to bring their skill levels up to the qualifications that we need. Plus they have made a commitment to us, and I think it is very positive that they would be willing to work in the rural and northern communities as part of their commitment to the training that we would provide. We are working very closely right now with the university to try and help these programs, to get them set up and make them happen so that it gives us another pool of qualified people to move into our rural and northern communities to serve the people of those communities in the health care field.

Also, one of the things that we discovered in the undergraduate program with doctors is that the students in their third and fourth year have been supported with a dollar amount based on a return-of-service agreement. The discussion that we had ongoing, and continues to on go and I believe will come to an end in the near future, quite often what happened was the third- and fourth-year students were financed by us with a return-of-service agreement but upon becoming doctors had the opportunities to explore, particularly into the United States, at which time the recruitment teams down there were picking up the coverage, the costs of the third and fourth year that we were paying here. It is a fair agreement that they do that, but what we tried to do was set up some sort of a program, either by increasing the amount of funding or extending the period of time to the second year, so that it would be a larger amount of money at that time which may discourage some of the recruiting that is going on.

I think all countries are recruiting from each other. We find that wherever we went with the recruitment process, be it across Canada, be it to other countries, there were always other countries there recruiting, and also in Canada we found that there were several countries recruiting our graduate doctors and practising physicians. I think the way the world is today that is

something we can come to continue to expect, but I think what we have to do is try and put systems and programs in place that at least give us the ability to continue to recruit doctors. I think we really need to continue to try and recruit Canadian and Manitoban doctors. I think that is something that a lot of these new initiatives we will be seeing in the near future and that we are undertaking and exploring right now will bring forth. I think the benefit to us is that we will have Canadian doctors working in Canada and, hopefully, we will have Manitoban doctors working in Manitoba, and I think that is very important to us all.

One of the other programs that we have introduced is the rural and northern resident education program. In the past, there was one University of Manitoba professor, residing outside of the city of Winnipeg, providing the resident education services. Starting in 1998-99, we have increased that number to five, and these people will be working in the communities and dealing with the resident students. Again, by going to five, we were able to allow each student to do two rotations in rural and northern Manitoba as opposed to one, and it will also increase the number of students that are accessible to this program, so I think it has been a real positive thing.

I think many of the members opposite, as well as on this side, will all agree that we all represent great communities, but probably one of the biggest obstacles we have is getting people to come for the first time and see what we have to offer. I think this again will provide another opportunity to bring young graduate doctors or young practising doctors to our communities and again have them experience what we are and what we are all about and what we have to offer, and again it enhances our opportunities to captivate these young doctors.

One of the other things that we have initiated and has been ongoing in the past few years was the rural students entering medicine. We felt that as a province, and we are certainly encouraging the RHAs now to go out and start making presentations to the communities, particularly the schools, and start talking to the schools to encourage high school graduates to consider the field of medicine, the practice of medicine.

We have allowed for 10 spaces in the university program to be designated for rural Manitobans, for rural

students, and I think that is another opportunity for us to enhance our chances of recruiting doctors for rural Manitoba. The studies have shown us that rural students graduating quite often will return to rural areas of the province, or of Canada, and we certainly want to give them that opportunity in Manitoba as well.

It is certainly my pleasure to speak on this resolution, and I would ask that all members stand and wholeheartedly support it. Thank you.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) as he made his comments, and he was certainly trying to give his government a pat on the back for what they have done. I do not blame him for doing that. It is his government. They have been in power for 10 years, and the situation of doctor shortages in rural Manitoba is worse than it has ever been. So I do not blame him for wanting to—[interjection]

The member across the way says it is not as bad in rural Manitoba. I would ask him to look across the province, in northern and rural Manitoba, and really look at the situation. I mean, just the other day, we heard about pediatricians leaving Brandon, withdrawing their services in Brandon, because there is not enough support there. They just cannot handle the workload, and this government does not recognize that they have to take the necessary steps to ensure that there are adequate doctors.

Another example, Madam Speaker, is in Stonewall, just 30 miles out of the city. Doctors were threatening to go on strike there, again, because they could not work in the conditions that have been created by this government. This government has not created a very good environment or a very attractive environment for doctors to want to practise, and we are losing them at a very great rate. My colleague, the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) raised the issue of neurologist, and in my own constituency I have a patient who has to go to Saskatoon. And, of course, the government has to pay the costs of sending that patient to Saskatoon because there are no neurologists in Manitoba.

So I know that the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) would like to paint a very pleasant picture, as

if they have done so much to attract doctors to rural and northern Manitoba, but, in fact, they have failed quite dismally. One of the areas that they failed in—he talks about recruiting and educating more Manitobans, and I agree. We have to educate more rural Manitobans and northern Manitobans.

An Honourable Member: Right.

Ms. Wowchuk: One of the programs that we had was the Access program which was a very good program and people trained under it. People from northern Manitoba were encouraged to go into medicine, because we know that, if people from the north or rural areas are trained in a specific field, they always want, most often want to go back to their communities.

* (1720)

But this government fails to recognize that we are spending 50 percent more to treat children in northern Manitoba, and they refuse to recognize the importance of training northern people, so that they can go back to their communities.

The other thing, he talked about creating 10 more spaces for rural students. Well, along with creating spaces for rural students, I think the government should recognize the cost of getting a medical education, and that it costs a rural person a heck of a lot more than it does for an urban person. This government has not seriously addressed education funding and, in fact, the changes that they have made to student loans is going to put even a greater burden on students from rural Manitoba and, in many cases, will discourage them from entering those fields that require a lot of years of studying. We have to recognize that although the government tries to paint the picture that they are doing a lot, in fact they are not.

The other area where they are not putting their money where their mouth, so to speak, is bringing doctors back to Manitoba. This morning we heard about a doctor who is from northern Manitoba, who wants to come back to northern Manitoba, but the health authority in The Pas does not have the resources to bring him back; the funds are not there. They could use the extra doctors, but, again, this government does not recognize that there have to be special incentives.

Now, if you look at other provinces such as Saskatchewan, where they have an excellent incentive program to bring doctors—

An Honourable Member: Yes, they are doing a good job there.

Ms. Wowchuk: Saskatchewan is recognizing that to bring doctors into rural and northern Saskatchewan, there have to be special incentives. I believe in Saskatchewan the incentive is somewhere around \$20,000 or \$30,000. They have also put in place a team of people that will support the doctors in rural areas, so that they can have time off and have a family life.

Under this government's administration, doctors really do not have the opportunity for family life because they are working continually. There is not the staff for replacement. As a result, we are losing very good people from the city and we are having a difficult time to attract people to northern Manitoba.

I have to say that, in my constituency the program brought in to remunerate for emergency physicians has worked for one of the doctors in my area, and that is Dr. Johnson of Winnipegosis, who is the only doctor in the community. As a result of this funding, he has been able to have some time off, take one day off a week to spend with his family and do his own personal business. So in that sense it is good, but, again, it is not long term. It is put in. Last week, the people of Winnipegosis did not even know whether they were going to have emergency services, because nobody had communicated with them as to whether this funding was going to continue on or was this one of those usual stopgap things that this government does when they see that there is a crisis out there.

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess the other area, Madam Speaker, the member talked about doctors from South Africa and the recruiting that they had done. I am very pleased that we have been able to recruit doctors from South Africa, but I am very disappointed in this government in their lack of action when it comes to foreign doctors who are right here in Manitoba right now. We have lots of foreign doctors, but this

government refuses to address this, people who have their training, people who are willing to take the necessary testing to ensure that they can practise.

Again, government is not recognizing that there are people who are trained who are now sweeping floors or working selling hamburgers trying to keep their family alive, and this government will not look at a solution to get these people working. If these people could get their accreditation, then they could work in rural and northern Manitoba where there is a shortage.

Now, my colleague the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), our Health critic, worked with the foreign doctors and foreign physicians and came up with a plan. The plan says that these foreign doctors that provide Canadian doctors who have trained and practised in other countries and who have passed evaluations exams would have residency positions in Manitoba. They also suggested that the government offer contracts to these physicians to oblige them to practise in underserved regions, following their residency, for a specific period of time. After passing their licensing, during their time of residency and filling full licence requirements according to the existing policies, doctors would be offered full licences if they returned to their contracted areas.

So here is a solution. Now, I heard somebody say that there is money for all kinds of things. Well, yes, there is money for all kinds of things by this government. This government has money to make millionaires out of their friends and relatives of government. They have money for that. They have money to sock away in their stabilization fund so they can make election promises, but they do not have money to address the real problems that are facing rural and northern Manitobans. They do not believe in preventative health, they will just look after their friends.

So, Madam Speaker, I cannot support the member on this resolution because really they are just trying to pat themselves on the back and really camouflage what they have really done and that is to ignore the many suggestions that have been put forward by various groups as to how we could address the shortages of doctors in rural and northern Manitoba. If they were serious about having healthy communities in rural and

northern Manitoba, they would take some of these suggestions very seriously, for example the suggestion of establishing more nursing stations and using nurses to a much greater degree than they have.

I guess the one other issue that I want to address is the lack of commitment of this government to recognize women physicians who just recently said that it was becoming much more difficult to work in this province. Many, too, are looking to other provinces. So we train people, and then other provinces benefit from the education that they get in this province. We definitely have a shortage. This government does not have a good record. Ten years of their administration has not improved the health care system and has not—I should say, Madam Speaker, 10 years of this administration has not improved the situation for doctors in rural and northern Manitoba, therefore I move, seconded by the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers),

THAT the resolution be amended by deleting all words after the word 'Manitoba' in the THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED clause and substituting the following: “condemn the Provincial Government for failing to deal seriously with problems in recruiting and retaining physicians for rural and northern Manitobans.”

Madam Speaker: I will take the amendment under advisement.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Madam Speaker, first of all I would like to speak in support of the resolution and against the amendment. But what I would like to do is put on record the situation as it currently stands within our own area, and that is the Pembina constituency. With that, I would like to congratulate the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) for his resolution and the fact that he has, through his efforts, been contributing towards the good health within Pembina. That is not saying there could not be better health and better opportunities there. However, the work that has taken place over the last number of months has certainly contributed towards the well-being of the people within the Pembina constituency.

As you are aware, the Pembina constituency, comprising Winkler, Morden, and Manitou, the three towns, is one of the fastest growing areas within the

province of Manitoba in the rural area. Consequently, we are in need of good staff and good physicians, and I want to applaud our doctors, our physicians out there, for the work that they are doing. The work that they are doing is certainly at times under trying circumstances, but doing a very good job in meeting the needs of the people.

As I indicated, this is the fastest growing area rurally and, consequently, the need for staff is great, and they are meeting the needs out there as they are required. Now, that does not mean to say that we do not need the efforts of more physicians and also the fact that we are not recruiting them. It has been brought to my attention and, certainly as of today, we have been given another seven doctors, who are going to be coming to the area known as Boundary Trails region and are going to be able to assist the doctors who are out there in order to meet the health needs of the community.

* (1730)

I would like to just at this point relate a little story. This is regarding in direct response to what the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) was saying regarding the poor health, as she indicated, and the things that we hear about the awful things that are taking place within the province.

I have a very good story to tell, and that is of my father-in-law, who had his hip replaced at the Misericordia Hospital about a month ago. I went to visit him after he had had his hip replaced. It was about four days after the operation.

I think, as the story would go, our news media, they have a habit of, as do some members opposite, of showing all the people who are out in the hallways and the terrible situation that is out there. Well, my father-in-law was on the second floor and I went to visit him and, yes, as I rounded the bend, I saw that he, together with three other people, were in their beds in the hallway, and I thought, my goodness, this is very interesting.

So, I went to visit with him and I asked him during the course of our conversation, why are you in the hallway? The comment was very straightforward. Because I want to be. I checked this out with the other

three people lying in their beds, and they all indicated that they want to be. As I am visiting, a nurse comes along and asks them whether they would like to go back to their rooms as of yet, and they said, no, we like it here, we like the activity that is in the hall, and this is where the action is. So I found this very interesting, because I could have taken a very beautiful picture out there of people lying in the hallway.

So just to add to this, I have a brother-in-law who is working in palliative care and has been working in the Misericordia and at Concordia hospitals. He has been working in the palliative care area for the last four years. He is a retired schoolteacher and, as a result of his wife passing away about seven years ago, he committed himself to working with palliative care, and I admire him for doing that. So he spends on the average anywhere from eight to 10 hours a day in the hospital, in both the Misericordia and Concordia hospitals.

So I asked him, you know, tell me what you see as the situation being here in the last year, the last two years, the last few months. Is it as bad as it is said to be, as we read in the newspapers and also as we see on television? After a few moments of hesitancy he said, you know, he says, I have to be very honest, he says, I cannot in one instance fault our health care system for the way they are treating the patients in the hospital or for the log jams, if you can use that term, that they have had within the system here. Now, that does not mean to say that when an emergency, when there are a number of people who come for treatment, that you do not have a waiting list of a few people, but generally speaking they have been moved through very quickly, and he was very appreciative of the health care that we have.

So members opposite are using all kinds of instances of how terrible the system is out there. I would agree that we need to continue to work on improving the system, though I fail to see that it is as terrible as members opposite say it is. So that is one instance, Madam Speaker, that I just want to put on record, because I was very surprised at what was taking place. Yet, though, if I had not checked out what really had happened in this case, I myself would have been appalled at the situation.

Yes, we need to continue; we need to look at the recruitment of doctors. Certainly we want to assist our medical people in the field in the work that they are doing. I also know—I have several friends who are physicians—the work and the time and effort that they put in. Again, it is interesting, as you talk to some of the senior doctors who have retired, you know, they will categorically state that times have changed. They went into the area of medicine in order to help people, in order to assist them, and they did this very often to the detriment of their own families, in having spent the time there, and they recognize that.

I believe that today's doctor is saying that, generally speaking, they would like to have more of a family life, that they need a little more of that free time, and certainly they should have that. So, consequently, we are in changing times. We have changing times in every area of our economy but, specifically in health, we are looking at some of the changes that need to take place.

In order to accommodate these changes certainly we need to bring more doctors into Manitoba. We need to bring more doctors into our communities to be able to assist those who are out there and to accommodate their needs. As I indicated before, I believe it is within Boundary Trails that we are going to be receiving seven extra doctors. These are coming in from South Africa. I had the opportunity several months ago to meet with some of them, had an opportunity to talk to them and certainly they are highly recommended, and I believe they would fit in very well into our community.

Just to add to that, within our community presently we have several doctors who have come from South Africa who are residents of the community and who have been there for a number of years and fit in very well and have certainly integrated well into the community. So we look forward to the efforts of our member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) for the work that he has done in recruiting these doctors and bringing them into the community.

The comment that was made here about needing to retain and to keep the doctors within the area reminded me of building walls. You know, we have people within our communities, within our province, and we need to keep them here. Certainly, we want to do

everything possible to accommodate them, but we still live in a democratic world and a democratic country. People choose to live where they want to live, and they will move.

Madam Speaker, it also reminds me of the opportunity I have had to speak with a lady who is an administrator of a large hospital in North Carolina. In fact, she is the administrator of a 400-bed hospital, and we were talking about physicians and the mobility that physicians experience nowadays. I think on this as well, it is interesting how it is always greener on the other side of the fence. As we were comparing notes, she also indicated that some of the doctors who were moving from the North and going south were finding that the contracts certainly were fairly lucrative. However, the work that was demanded of them was also very directly related to the amount of work that they did. Meaning that if they had a contract—and I will just use the term for \$300,000—there was a certain quota that they would need to meet, and this was not always possible because of the time that they spent in filling out forms and also defending some of the situations that they were in. So the bottom line was that many of them were starting to look at Canada and Manitoba again as possibilities for practising the talents that they had.

So people certainly have the opportunity to move where they want. We would like to see them stay in Manitoba. I, personally, would like to see them stay within the rural area because I believe that rural areas have a lot to offer. We have the mobility of driving to the city within an hour and a half and, yet, being able to enjoy some of the features of country living.

I believe the resolution, as the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) has brought forward, certainly does speak for it in a positive way towards the recruitment of doctors and the work that they are doing, and I certainly do support that.

* (1740)

One other area I would just like to briefly mention on, and that is the whole area of change as we see it in the area in the health care field. On the one hand, we have a situation where our doctors and certainly the people involved in health care want the latest in

technology, and so they should have it. I believe as any one of us involved in business or in whatever profession we are in, we like to use the latest in technology and have that at our disposal. Certainly, we see the same thing happening in the field of health care. We want to supply our medical people with the best tools possible, so that is the one side.

The other side that I see and find it fairly interesting is the fact that we need to also have a way of tracking this system, so that we know exactly where our health care is going in that we know exactly what is taking place. The introduction, as I see it, with the SmartHealth card would certainly be something that would accommodate this process, so that we could have a very quick way of tracking the health care needs within the province.

I know members opposite in the few years that I have been here and when this issue has come up have spoken against it. I see it a way in today's world of being able to accommodate our health people in being able to track what is taking place, and on the other hand also, though, financially to be accountable for the dollars that are used.

I would encourage all members present that we continue to encourage this concept of moving towards a SmartHealth card and use this in a way that we would be able to track the system, so I ask you to do that.

In conclusion, I just want to say that I support the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) and the resolution that he brought forward. I would ask members opposite to take a real serious look. I know that they have put an amendment out there, but I speak in favour of this resolution and would ask them to support it. Thank you very much.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the motion that the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) put forward to try to amend. I do not speak in favour of the attempt by the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed). I do not support the attempt of the member for Turtle Mountain in papering over what is a serious issue in this province. What this province needs is a government that is going to show some leadership in bringing doctors out to rural and northern Manitoba. What we do not need is a

government, and a member from Turtle Mountain, bringing forth simply a self-congratulatory document that he will probably be using in some political way come the next election.

I listened very carefully to comments from both the member for Turtle Mountain and the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), and I must admit I was quite astonished to hear some of the remarks put on the record by the member for Pembina. It is beyond me how a member of this Legislature can stand and talk about one isolated case in his riding and then project that isolated case over the course of the whole province of Manitoba and then try to have people believe that everything is fine and dandy in the delivery of health care in the province of Manitoba. That seems to me to be exactly the way this government is approaching the health care issue, and that is the wrong approach to take.

Just because something happened in his riding that he can pawn off as being somehow a positive thing in health does not mean that there are not serious grave problems throughout the rest of this province. There have been too many cases come through my office in Dauphin of people who are coming across very strong needs in our health system, people who are being mistreated within the health system because of the decisions of this government. There have been too many people just in the Dauphin regional hospital alone who have suffered because of this government's action and, in some cases, inaction when it comes to health care for me to believe that the member from Pembina thinks that everything is hunky-dory across the province just because he came across one case in his local hospital that he considers to be possible. That is not the way to do public policy; that is not the way to put together health care decisions in the province of Manitoba. The member should know better than that.

Unfortunately, I think the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) operates the same way as what the member for Pembina and the member for Turtle Mountain have displayed in the Legislature here today. Manitobans want a serious approach to a very serious issue.

But, Madam Speaker, as well, I want to give some credit here to some of the people who are involved in health care delivery in our province, including doctors,

including nurses, including support staff, including orderlies, including all those people who volunteer and work with the regional health authorities, the people who have been appointed to regional health authorities, the CEOs in health authorities. These people are doing the best job they can despite the decisions that are being made on a day-to-day basis by this government. Despite the laying off of nurses of this government, the nurses continue to act in a very committed and caring way. Despite doctor shortages and despite bed shortages, despite funding cuts, despite the unfriendly, shortsighted approach of this government, there are some success stories, but I want this government to know that they are stretching these people to the limit. You want to know why doctors are leaving Manitoba? You have put the system in crisis. There is a crisis in Manitoba. You cannot wallpaper over this with fancy speeches in the Legislature and self-congratulatory, pat-on-the-back types of resolutions as we have before us here today. You have to do something to help people in rural and northern Manitoba.

The main thing that I want to get across is that you have put Manitoba Health into a crisis. You have now had 10 years to put the system into a crisis, and you have done very good at that. Now you have the responsibility of taking us out of this crisis. The decisions you make are putting us further into crisis, I am afraid. Several times since I have become an MLA I have listened as colleagues of mine in the opposition have approached this government to try to point out the urgency of this doctor shortage problem that we have in rural Manitoba. On several cases we have put forward to the government some good, positive ideas that we could use in order to solve this problem. Is any of that reflected in the resolution that the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) brings forth today? No, it is not.

Madam Speaker, this is the government who cut Access programs. They cut the Access program in this province, a program that was training northern people to take the positions as nurses, as doctors and as other professionals going back into rural and northern areas. This government cut that program. Is that a commitment to solving this doctor shortage program? If the member for Turtle Mountain had included a reinstatement of the Access funds, I could consider supporting this resolution. But you cannot, on the one

hand, cut a program that was serving well the needs of rural and northern Manitobans and then walk into this Legislature and expect me to support you. That is not being credible or realistic.

Madam Speaker, the member for Turtle Mountain talked about a new model, some kind of a new day for Manitoba. We are taking all this responsibility, and we are giving it to the regional health authorities. Well, I want to point out to the member for Turtle Mountain, he can talk all he likes about how good the regional health authorities are going to do, but if he does not and his Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) does not or if his Finance minister (Mr. Stefanson) does not provide the funds to these regional health authorities to recruit these doctors, then you are not going to see the regional health authorities solve this problem.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Dauphin has the floor.

Mr. Struthers: Madam Speaker, two years in a row the Parkland Regional Health Authority has sustained cuts from this government, two years in a row. If the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) doubts what I am saying, go and check it out with the CEO of the Parkland Regional Health Authority. Two years in a row: last year in excess of \$400,000; the year before in excess of \$400,000.

* (1750)

Point of Order

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): I wonder if the member would accept a question, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: On a point of order?

Mr. Downey: Yes, on a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Struthers: The Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism can go and check in the Parkland region. Maybe the minister should just simply turn around and ask the member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach), who falls within that Parkland Regional Health Authority, what has happened with the funding in the PRHA. He should be able to tell him that in our Parkland Regional Health Authority, two years in a row we have been cut; one year in excess of \$400,000; the next year in excess of \$400,000. How does this government expect the Parkland Regional Health Authority to do all the funding it is expected to do plus recruit for doctors?

Let us start taking a serious approach to this. Do not come into this Legislature waving a resolution to pat yourself on the back when you have cut that kind of funding out of the regional health authorities. It is not just the Parkland Health Authority; it is all the health authorities that are suffering through this.

I have mentioned the fact that several of our MLAs on this side of the House have brought forward these concerns to the minister. In 1995, my colleague for Flin Flon, just as one example, brought this to the House, brought this doctor shortage problem here to the House during Question Period, and he was told by the then Health minister that every resource possible available to resolve those issues before they become critical. Well, Madam Speaker, the government has done nothing. Now the time has become critical. It is fine to make fancy statements in Question Period as well, but now you have got to come through.

I want to touch on a couple of more issues. The one issue that I want to deal with is the way in which this government can actually take a tangible step towards solving this problem of doctor shortages. The member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) did say one thing in his speech that I did agree with, and that was that if you train local Manitobans in medicine, they will return more of a chance to returning back to their hometowns to provide medical services. That is good. I agree with that.

Why then does this government, on the one hand, say that, and then turn around and continue to increase tuition fees to universities for Manitoba students? Why has this government not twigged to the fact that many students in our public schools in rural and northern

Manitoba decide in junior high and the middle years and in the early high school that they are not going to be able afford to go to university, so they select courses that would not get them into university to begin with?

Finances are a major barrier for rural and northern students to attend university. Tuition is much too high, and it is increasing and will continue to increase under this government, and room and board costs are simply, in most cases, too much of a hurdle for rural students to jump over. Is it any wonder why there is a lack of rural students taking medicine? This does not add up with what the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) said in his comments here earlier today.

The other issue that I would like to deal with briefly is a course in Dauphin, the Parkland training centre in Dauphin, who despite the minister does have a good reputation and good results that they have produced throughout the course of this training program in Dauphin. Last summer, however, the minister got into a game of chicken with the University of Manitoba, putting in jeopardy the whole program.

Now, Madam Speaker, I find it really amazing that the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), who purports to be concerned about the rural doctor shortages and northern doctor shortages, would get into a fight with the University of Manitoba and put out into the record the words abysmal when it comes to the results that this program is producing. I just want to quote Dr. Peter Kirk, who rebutted many of the statements that this Health minister made last summer. Dr. Kirk said that we have graduated 120 residents over the past years between 1992 and '96. Of those 120 residents, some of them come from other provinces for training, so I want you to remember that 80 of the 120 are still in Manitoba, or 70 percent still in Manitoba. Of those 80 family doctors, 34 while I speak are presently practising in rural Manitoba and 46 are in what we would term urban Manitoba, which includes Portage and Brandon. So I think the minister, wherever he is getting his information from is entirely incorrect.

There are a lot of good reasons why doctors should choose to come to rural Manitoba to practice. One of them is the opportunity that these doctors will have to teach other doctors their skills. That is the advantage of the Parkland training program. That is one reason

doctors would choose to come out to rural Manitoba. So on the one hand, this government has a lot of flowery speeches and a lot of self-congratulations, but when you come right down to the hard cold facts, this government is failing rural and northern Manitobans in the area of medicine and rural and northern doctors. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be able to put a few comments on the record regarding the resolution by my friend the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed). I think it is an excellent resolution because it certainly talks about—

An Honourable Member: The vital spots.

Mr. Helwer: That is right. It talks about things that are important to us as members of the government.

But the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) made a few comments about my medical staff at Stonewall, and I want to inform her that she does not know what she is talking about because I met first hand with our medical staff at Stonewall. We have an excellent medical staff. Certainly, they did have a legitimate concern. It was sorted out and settled. [interjection]

Well, that is great, but I think that is part of the discussion. We can work with people. I think our Department of Health can work with the medical staff and make sure everything works.

Madam Speaker, I want to give you an example of how when the former government was in power, I was chairman of a hospital board, and I can assure you, that was when the confusion—it was just a disaster how the

former government was operating the Department of Health. I can tell you first-hand, I was the hospital chairman and saw first-hand how the former Minister of Health, Mr. Desjardins, at that time, who—I can give you one example of how the department was so mismanaged and there was such confusion in the whole of the department. He could not get a handle on the finances. One particular time he called us in for a meeting to talk about how he had to cut down the expenses in health care. Let me tell you.

Our government has never cut any costs, any money in health care. We keep putting more money into it to improve the system. I am glad the government changed when it did in 1988 so that we, our first Minister of Health, Mr. Orchard, and Mr. McCrae, and now the Honourable Darren Praznik, could straighten the system out. At least now we are making a system in health that is going to work and serve the people of Manitoba. The medical staff that we have in this province and my colleague from Turtle Mountain that worked on the doctors recruiting of some medical staff for Manitoba has certainly helped a lot of rural Manitobans and a lot of rural Manitoba communities.

Arborg, in the constituency of the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), that got some medical staff, there is a great community. They need the medical staff. This is what our government is doing, making the system better, improving the system.

Madam Speaker: Order please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Gimli will have 12 minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 7, 1998

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