



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

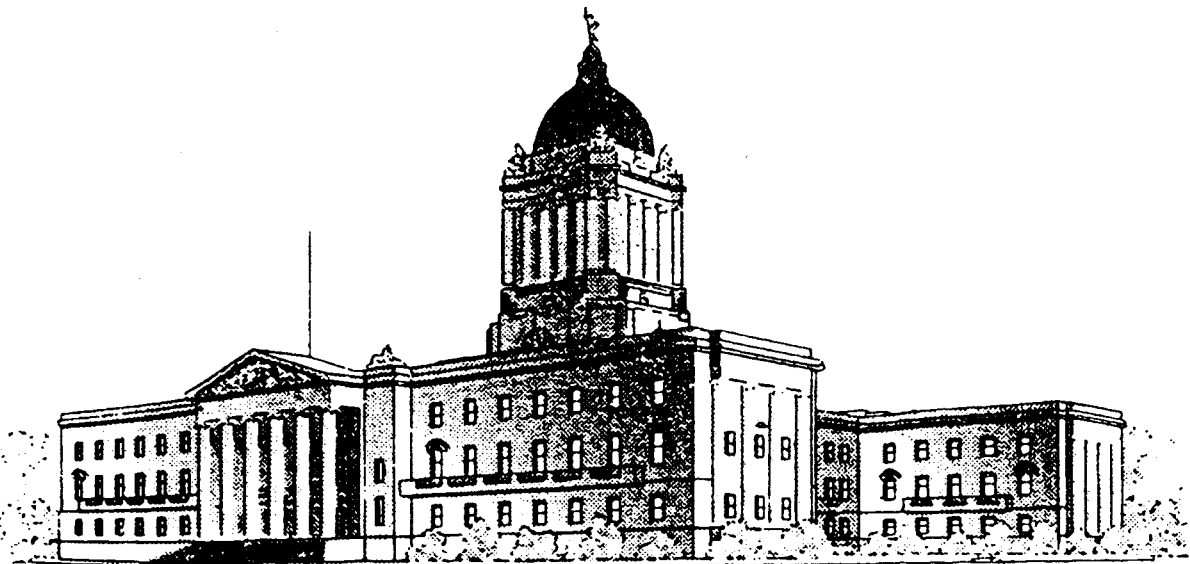
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, July 18, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.**PRAYERS****ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS****PRESENTING REPORTS BY
STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES****Standing Committee on Law Amendments
Fourth Report**

Mr. Doug Martindale (Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the Fourth Report of the Committee on Law Amendments.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Law Amendments presents the following as its Fourth Report.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Law Amendments presents the following as its Fourth Report.

Your committee met on Monday, July 17, 2000, at 10 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building to consider bills referred.

Your committee heard representation on bills as follows:

Bill 41—The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'équilibre budgétaire, le remboursement de la dette et la protection des contribuables et modifications corrélatives.

Victor Vrsnik, Canadian Taxpayers Federation

Your committee has considered:

Bill 41—The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'équilibre budgétaire, le

remboursement de la dette et la protection des contribuables et modifications corrélatives

and has agreed to report the same without amendment.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), that the report of the Committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Committee of Supply

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (Acting Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted a certain resolution, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), that the report of the Committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Ivan Maric and Stefika Maric, and Karl Godar and Mathilda Godar from Slovenia, accompanied by Rod McKenzie, Gavin Lawrie and Doug Webber.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**Elections Finances Act
Amendments—Justification**

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

Yesterday, in Estimates of Executive Council, the Premier indicated he had some personal views with regard to The Elections Finances Act, which motivated his actions to change this legislation. To confirm this, I would like to quote from a newsletter, *Manitoba Young New Democrats*: "It is also alarming to note that in many respects this legislation is motivated by a 'let's-screw-the-Tories mentality.' At the provincial council meeting of December 4, 1999, this issue was hotly debated by delegates. Premier Doer attempted to bolster his position by referring time and again to the amount of money the Tories stood to lose, and how it was important to pass this legislation as quickly as possible before the Tories had a chance to fill their war chest with quickie fundraisers."

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the document.

This is a very serious matter, a serious issue. My question for the Premier is: Would he confirm that his personal views have motivated his changes to The Elections Finances Act?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, in fact, I think yesterday in Estimates I promised to table—and I hope I have it here; yes, I do—an article from Graham Fraser, a journalist at the *Toronto Star* and a former Québec reporter for the *Globe and Mail*. Perhaps I could table that article as well, that I was bringing to Estimates later today.

Mr. Speaker, at the press conference announcing the legislation and at the press conference announcing our election promise, I believe in September, I said quite clearly that it is legislation I believe in. I also said that it is contentious within our own party. I have not read the article yet, but it is contentious within our own party.

* (13:35)

I also said at the press conference that any political party that received a considerable amount of money from corporations and unions, as opposed to individuals, would be restricted by this legislation. One of the journalists said: Well, do the Tories not receive more money from corporations than you do? I said: Yes, they do.

The amount of money that we receive between unions and corporations is less than how much money the Tories receive from corporations. That fact is well documented because it is in the returns from The Elections Act that had been passed in the 1980s by a previous government that was interested in electoral reform.

This legislation, Mr. Speaker, as Mr. Fraser has indicated, has worked in Québec because it has improved democracy. I believe that union and corporate donations should be banned. I made a promise in September, and we are delivering on it.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, but it is obvious that the Premier says one thing to the public and another thing behind closed doors to his party members.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to go on to quote from the *Young New Democrats*: "If the NDP is the governing party, then it has an obligation to do what is best for everybody in Manitoba. To pass—"

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would ask the cooperation of all honourable members. The Honourable Interim Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is obvious that the Young New Democrats are not clapping for this Premier and this government.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, it is understandable that the Government is embarrassed, and they are trying to deflect away from the

issue, but I want to go on to quote from the *Young New Democrats*, and they said: "To pass legislation with the expressed intent of humbling your political enemies is a betrayal of those democratic principles"

I would like to ask the Premier: Is he ramming through this legislation that, according to his own members, is not in the best interests of Manitobans but is merely intended to create, and I quote again: "an unfortunate lack of fair play."

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, unlike members opposite, our political party has vigorous debate internally and externally. When we have leadership races, it is not decided in the Manitoba Club. It is decided across the province.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, there are people in our party that do not agree with our election promise and our legislation to proceed to ban union and corporate donations. I respect their views. and I do not agree with their views. We made a promise on September 10, 1999. Now this is a foreign concept to members opposite, because this is a promise made and Bill 4 and Bill 17 are promises kept. I know it does not work that way with members opposite.

An Honourable Member: Put your glasses on, Gary, you are not that young anymore.

* (13:40)

Mr. Doer: Well, I would agree with the Member opposite. It is small print, Mr. Speaker. This has been part of our platform. It was debated throughout our party with a lot of disagreement. It was prepared as part of our platform and released to the public in September. The media asked me what the impact would be at the press conference. I said those people who received more money from unions and corporations would have, obviously, a bigger challenge, although one could argue that sometimes the donations flow, if you were to look across Canada, certainly not to this province--donations

might flow a little higher to incumbent governments as opposed to non-incumbent governments.

Mr. Fraser goes on to say that Mr. Lévesque was disgusted by contractors' influence on the Liberal Party, but since passing the legislation it has transformed Québec politics. It has made it more democratic. This is an independent analyst. I know there are members in our party that are opposed to this, but I promised in the election, and we are delivering it here in the Legislature.

Amendments--Withdrawal

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious, again, from the Premier's answer that he has one policy for the public and another policy behind closed doors at the New Democratic Party convention and a completely different agenda when he is speaking to the party faithful than when he is speaking to Manitobans.

I would like to quote again from the report of the *Young New Democrats*. It says, and I quote: "Of particular concern is the desire to ram this legislation through the House without the careful consideration that will be necessary to ensure its effectiveness." We have not even received the final report from Elections Manitoba on the 1999 election.

Will this Premier now listen to members of his own party and withdraw this legislation?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Fraser article goes on to talk about healing the wounds from the 1995 election issue and speaks to the record of members opposite and the Monnin inquiry.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe this article refers to a meeting that took place in December of 1999. A promise was made on September 10, 1999. The promise was to the public to reform The Elections Act; to ban all donations from union, corporate, and other organized sources; to establish an upper-dollar

limit on donations for political parties by individuals; to limit third-party spending during campaigns, and to reduce the special-interest influence as recommended by Elections Manitoba but not accepted by the Filmon Conservative government.

This was a promise made in the election campaign, and 100 percent of members of our party do not agree with the promise. That is part of a democratic process. I might say that the Member opposite did not read one sentence: "The intent of the Doer government is a noble one." Having said that, this is a promise we made—*[interjection]* The rest of the article is not that flattering, but that is okay. You have members of your party that disagree with you. We have a promise made to the public.

We have an independent journalist saying, and I quote: After the Liberals in Québec who received all this money from corporations had this restriction, they had to go out and work door-to-door to raise money because people did not want to send their money off to party headquarters with no strings attached. The people of the party got more involved. The conventions were more democratic. In other words, the party debates mattered. There is a kind of word for this activity; it is called democratic.

Let us join in democratic improvements to our elections laws, Mr. Speaker.

* (13:45)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Interim Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Order. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members. *Beauchesne's* Citation 168: "When rising to preserve order or to give a ruling the Speaker must always be heard in silence."

I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

The Honourable Interim Leader of the Official Opposition, with a new question.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We can see by the Premier's antics in his answers that he is very sensitive to this issue and rightly so when his own words are coming back to haunt him. Again, I will quote from the report that says "let's-screw-the-Tories." I mean that is the agenda and the motivation that was articulated to his party and the position he was trying—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, that obviously was his agenda behind closed doors at the New Democratic meeting. It is clear that that is the message that the Young New Democrats got from this leader who is supposed to be a statesperson and the Premier of this province. We have seen very much flawed legislation that has come forward that basically was born in the Premier's own mind, and he appears to be using government offices to further his own personal agenda. Will he now admit that that is the case and withdraw this bill?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, my answer to the Member opposite is Alfred Monnin.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would just like to remind all honourable members that the cameras are on and the clock is ticking. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Again, the arrogance of this First Minister shows. The Premier obviously is very embarrassed by the comments that the youth wing of his party has made and the condemnation of this Premier and his personal motives and personal agenda that is driving this legislation. In the best interests of the electorate of Manitoba, will this Premier now withdraw Bill 4, wait for the report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the 1999 election and ensure that he consults with third parties, including his own New Democratic youth?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I have never used the language about the legislation that the Member

opposite describes to me. I just had a review of that article to ensure that that is certainly the record in the article. We made this promise in September, September of 1999. It is July now. We had made this promise to the people of Manitoba, and we are going to eliminate third-party, special-interest-group donations; we are going to eliminate union and corporate donations, and that will be a more democratic process, as Graham Fraser has indicated from his review of the Québec practices. Let us get rid of the special interests in donating money to political parties and let us make this process more democratic here in Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (13:50)

Amendments—Justification

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, obviously there is a lot of sensitivity and embarrassment around this Premier's comments on the Government side of the House. And understandably so when they made an election promise and then they rushed out very quickly after the election and held a big fundraiser to try and get those quickie donations in their own coffers before they introduced this legislation. So let them not appear to be the saints that they are trying to portray today.

Mr. Speaker, as stated by the *Young New Democrats*, the members of this government are the governing party, and they do have an obligation to do what is best for everyone in Manitoba. We see the undemocratic principles, and we have seen them many times already in this first session of their mandate: by ramming casinos down the throats of communities who are opposed to them, by the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) ramming through legislation without consulting with the farmers that are affected, by taking away the powers of duly elected school trustees, by introducing regressive labour legislation that takes away the fundamental democratic right of workers to a secret ballot.

And now we see this government attempting to limit the role of third parties and limit the fundamental right of free speech in this province. Even the Young New Democrats, his own party members, are questioning the Premier's motives. Why, Mr. Speaker, is this Premier letting his own personal agenda override members of his own party and concerned citizens in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, listening to the Member opposite speak as if the opposite caucus are the friends of working people really stretches credibility a bit, and to hear them—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the Monnin report and inquiry, Mr. Speaker, I do not think members opposite should feign any concern about the democratic principles of running an election campaign.

There was some work required, given some of the court decisions dealing with third parties, but the issue of banning union and corporate donations was a promise made on September 10. It was a promise we were committed to coming into government. It was a promise made in our Speech from the Throne. I remember Mr. Kelly, from the small business community, saying that this was a bad bill, and then he surveyed the small businesses, and they said they were in favour of it. Let us get behind the people. Ban union and corporate donations. And I ask the Conservatives to join with us, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind the Honourable Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) and the Honourable Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) of *Beauchesne's* Citation 168: "When rising to preserve order or to give a ruling the Speaker must always be heard in silence." I would ask the co-operation of all members.

Elections Finances Act Amendments—Justification

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): It is obvious from the Premier's answers that this Premier does not have a high regard for the principles of

democracy, and he certainly does not have any respect for fair play as it relates to this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, his own party, this Premier's own youth wing, his party's youth wing have condemned the motivation and the intentions of this Premier with regard to this legislation. It is clear as could be that the Minister's personal motivation for ramming through the changes to The Elections Finances Act is his own "let's-screw-the-Tories" mentality.

The youth membership, as I said, of the NDP party has said that this Premier is betraying the democratic principles of his party. This is becoming a reoccurring theme with this Premier and this party. They are becoming quickly the non-democratic party.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the First Minister: Can he explain to Manitobans why, despite not receiving the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer on the 1999 election, he is bent on moving so quickly, something his own party is warning him not to do?

*(13:55)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Our own party debates issues. Individuals speak for issues and speak against them. One individual in the YND, the Young New Democrats, opposes it and uses arguments to oppose it.

Mr. Speaker, the party is made up of a group of constituencies. Unlike members opposite, we work with all constituencies to develop our views of the future. The old ways of doing things where unions and corporations donated to political parties is going to be amended. It is going to be amended by an election promise we made on September 10. We made that promise to the people of Manitoba. If we had not kept that promise, members opposite legitimately would be standing up and saying: You are breaking your election word. Well, we are not. We made the promise on September 10. The whole party was involved in the development of our platform, which included fixing health care, giving hope to young people and cleaning up union and corporate donations.

Mr. Derkach: I can understand why the Premier would like to skirt this issue. As a matter of fact, he continues to refer to other issues instead of dealing with the issue—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please remind the Member that on a supplementary question there is no preamble. He is pursuing a preamble. I think there are a couple of sentences there.

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

* * *

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

Mr. Derkach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why does the First Minister defend rushing through this legislation to the NDP provincial council by referring time and again to the amount of money the Tories stood to lose?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I recall in a press conference getting asked the question. I mean, the documents and the numbers are fairly transparent because, under the elections laws passed by the previous government in the '80s, the intent of stopping private quiet donations to individuals or political parties or second candidates was negated by the requirement, almost negated, I am sorry. Some members can find a way to get around it, regrettably, but almost negated by the election laws of the 1980s.

I recall the testimony of members in the inquiry where developers and other business interests that would normally write cheques to the Progressive Conservative Party wrote cheques of \$249 to get under the radar and get beyond the election laws. We need no lectures from members opposite. It was not an inquiry about the conduct of the NDP in 1995. I daresay,

in 1999, we will again come out as the democratic party in this province.

The *Young New Democrats* publication has individual opinions. Often it criticizes us for not being this way or that way. There are hundreds of articles that criticize the Government. I, obviously, was stating what I stated in the press conference. The NDP is going to lose corporate donations. We are going to lose union donations, and the Conservatives are going to lose corporate donations, but the public is going to gain, because when we pass a law, it should be on the basis of what is best for the people of Manitoba, not who passes and writes the biggest cheque, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I believe "hypocrisy" is not a term I can use in the House, so I will not.

I want to ask the Premier why he allowed the fundraising dinner of last November for his party, which enticed corporate and other donations to his party, to take place if he truly and firmly believes in the concept of this legislation?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have had two corporate fundraising dinners since the change in government, and we believe in a level playing field. The level playing field is that under the existing laws—

* (14:00)

Point of Order

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

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): Yes, Mr. Speaker. The Premier references the two fundraising dinners that we have had, and I am wondering whether—the one that they held, the tickets were twice the price. Is that what he means when he talks about a level playing field?

Mr. Speaker: Order. A point of order is a very serious matter. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

On the point of order raised by the Interim Leader of the Official Opposition, she does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable First Minister, to conclude his comments.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A couple of days the members opposite ask questions about the influence of labour on the NDP, and then when we are taking a positive step forward and banning union and corporate donations, they cannot handle it. They cannot handle it. The last election was fought on the election laws of 1999 and 1998 and 1997. The last election was fought on those laws. The next election will be fought on the laws that are proposed in this House and subject to public hearings and possible amendments from members opposite and suggestions from the public. The new laws will be implemented on January 1, 2001, so the date will be fairly straightforward.

Contrary to the article and the comments made by members opposite, the meeting that is referred to in the individual's article was in December 1999. The law does not take effect until January 1, 2001. That is enough time for the public promise that we made to be implemented in a way that is consistent with the public interests and the interests of Manitobans which we believe are to ban union and corporate donations effective January 1, 2001, and moving into the next election campaign.

This is a positive step forward, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite talk about the Chief Electoral Officer. For three years running they had a recommendation to eliminate cabinet deciding who the returning officers would be in each constituency. We are proud of the fact we have taken the Cabinet out of appointing those people, those returning officers, and given it to the independent Chief Electoral Officer.

**Elections Finances Act
Amendments—Withdrawal**

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note that when the Premier had the opportunity to explain this legislation to his own party members, their impression of his explanation was that it was designed to screw the Tories, and I quote: It had an "unfortunate lack of fair play."

That is the judgment of his own party members on the explanation he offers today. I would like to ask the First Minister, if he truly believes in fair play, if he truly would like to demonstrate that he believes this should be done on a non-partisan basis, that it is important to be fair. Given that Mr. Justice Monnin recommended an all-party committee to develop a code of ethics, I would ask the Premier today: Is he prepared to demonstrate his commitment to fair play by withdrawing this bill and striking an all-party committee made up of New Democrats, Progressive Conservatives and Liberals to look at this whole issue and develop a bill that all parties can live with in this Legislature?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the opinions in the article are the opinions of one individual. But I would say there are some people, for example, in unions that do not agree with banning union and corporate donations. That is an honest answer to the issue, but on balance, we believe that a promise made in September—*[interjection]* You could have campaigned against our promise. You could have got the public opposed to this promise, but I daresay the public likes the idea.

We believe our contact with people in Manitoba, on the streets of Manitoba, in the coffee shops, they agree with banning union and corporate donations as an improvement to democracy here in Manitoba.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the reason the Young New Democrats have that opinion of the Premier is he fails to answer their questions. I ask him again: Will he make a commitment to fairness to all Manitobans by withdrawing this bill from this session and striking a committee of this Legislature with all parties represented on it, accepting his principle, but to draft the bill on a

non-partisan basis that all parties can live with and will be proven to Manitobans to be fair? Will he make that commitment today to Manitobans?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the recommendations contained within the Chief Electoral Officer's report that were supposed to go to the Privileges and Elections Committee all the way through the 1990s, the members opposite never once called together the Privileges and Elections Committee of the Legislature to deal with the recommendations.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): The First Minister says that the Committee had never been called, but the Committee is supposed to have been called in 60 days after the report came, by a law which was passed when we were in government, which they supported. That law was not in place before. That law was just put in place last session, and you supported that law. When will you call that committee so we can see the Elections officer?

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On the same point of order. Mr. Speaker. The law in this province has been that the reports of the Chief Electoral Officer should be referred to the standing committee, and we are prepared for the first time in Manitoba history to refer the reports, not only of the 1999 general election, when that report is ready, but 1988, 1990, 1991, 1995, 1997 and 1998 will be done.

The point of order, Mr. Speaker, is a dispute over the facts in any event.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts. I would remind all honourable members, when raising a point of

order, they should not use the opportunity to ask a question.

* * *

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I already indicated to the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), when he asked the question about the statutory reports, that a number of reports have not been referred by the previous government to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. We are willing to, and feel that it is necessary to refer all the past reports from '88 on to the standing committee.

We inquired about the progress on the '99 report, that it is subject to the new 60-day law. It is not yet completed, but certainly I am absolutely prepared to either go with the existing reports, which would not include the '99 report because it is not completed, or all the other past reports, the 1988, '90, '91, '95, and '97 reports.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, the governments in the past have—and the members opposite may not have wanted to go to those all-party committees in the past because they wanted to maintain the right of cabinet to determine the returning officers in the individual constituencies, which would have the right to break a tie. They wanted to keep that in cabinet. We have now moved that power.

*(14:10)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we have now adopted the Chief Electoral Officer's report to remove the returning officers from cabinet appointees. They are now going to be hired by the Chief Electoral Officer, and all political parties will be consulted on that recommendation.

Mr. Speaker, on the recommendations made to the people of Manitoba, we made a promise to the people of Manitoba. That is a promise we made to the people. It did not say we are going to make this subject to whether the Tories agree

with it. They can choose to vote for or against corporate donations to political parties. That is the democratic choice they have, and that is the democratic mandate we received in the election.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is time for members' statements. If honourable members wish to continue discussions, they can use the loge, or maybe out in the hallway.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Oak Valley Productions

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): On Thursday evening, I was one of the privileged invitees to take in the première staging of *The Carpenter* by the new Oak Valley Productions outdoor theatre. *The Carpenter* is a passion play that unfolds an intriguing dramatic portrayal of the last days of Jesus Christ on Earth. It was a tremendous presentation featuring an almost entirely local cast. The play ran throughout the weekend and will be featured again next week. The site is La Rivière, Pembina Valley. It is a very picturesque setting.

As impressive as the play itself was the incredible effort that was put forward by volunteers to make the presentation possible. Over 150 individuals from all over the Pembina constituency contributed their time to the event, helping out with everything from props and costumes to preparing the site by providing food and billeting to participants.

*(14:20)

The production also benefited from the contributions of many sponsors, including the Government of Manitoba. I want to offer my sincerest congratulations to all those who contributed, whether as a part of the cast, the crew or as volunteers. I am sure the thousands who took in the passion play over the weekend will agree with me in saying that it was a fantastic evening.

Prendergast Community Kitchen

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the staff and the volunteers of the Child and Family Services Resource Centre for Windsor Park/Southdale, as well as the St. Boniface ad hoc committee on poverty, for initiating a community kitchen at the Prendergast Centre.

So far, there have been two community kitchens held before the group took their break for the summer. They are going to be cooking every second week, with child care provided while family members cook together. They are also serving lunch to the building tenants to help fund purchases for the kitchen, and they are combining the community kitchen with a clothing depot.

I want to recognize the women, many who live in the area, who helped to get this off the ground, and I want to recognize that two have already gone on to pursue a career in social work.

Mr. Speaker, community kitchens are being recognized as a good vehicle for community development where people from the community come together not only to prepare low-cost and nutritious meals but to develop friendships, learn new recipes, learn to plan meals, have fun and meet new people.

The way that community kitchen works is resources are pooled. Food is bought in bulk. People cook collectively in a public space and then share the home-cooked food among all the participating households. This is really catching on, and recently this past spring in Winnipeg there was actually a conference to help organizations and interested neighbourhoods in organizing a community kitchen. It is a wonderful alternative or supplement to a food bank, which is also, unfortunately, necessary in many of the communities across our province.

In closing, I just want to say that I fully support this initiative and look forward to visiting there many times in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Silver Courts Seniors Complex

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): I am pleased to inform the House about another important project which is progressing in my constituency. On Tuesday, July 11, I had the pleasure of joining with Niverville Mayor Clare Braun and Mary Zacharias, secretary of Silver Courts Seniors Complex, to turn the sod and begin construction of Phase III of Niverville's Silver Courts Seniors Complex. This phase will add an additional 10 units to the 20 that currently exist in the community. I would note that this is a marked improvement from what existed only a few years ago when seniors were forced to leave the community of Niverville for lack of available housing.

Mr. Speaker, a special note of thanks goes out to Mr. Abe Goertzen who is the president of the Silver Courts board and the project organizer. He has worked tirelessly to see this project develop and grow and is deserving of recognition for the special part he played in making this community project a reality. As well, I would note that Mr. Goertzen serves as the seniors' resource co-ordinator for Niverville, so has truly committed himself to improving the lives of seniors in our area.

The town of Niverville is a very progressive community which has seen strong growth in recent years. It has been active in promoting itself as a tremendous place to raise a family. Yet, while it is a community which is working hard to better itself, it still lacks some important amenities for a town its size, such as a primary health unit. I know that our Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) is aware of this need, and I am certain that he is working hard to ensure it becomes a reality in the very near future.

I would like to commend the citizens of Niverville, along with the Mayor and council, for helping to better Manitoba by improving their community. They have set an example for what a community can achieve by working together.

Manitoba Centennial Foundation

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): On July 13, 2000, I had the pleasure of attending a unique

celebration, the official meeting of the directors of the Manitoba Centennial Foundation for the Future Board. The Premier brought greetings to the centennial babies then and directors today, a very special group of people who have the responsibility of selecting a project for people of Manitoba. Chaired by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. McGifford), the three-hour meeting focused on deciding how the money set aside in a trust fund since the year of the centennial babies' births would be used.

This meeting was the fulfilment of a 30-year-old dream held by the Manitoba Centennial Corporation, chaired by the late Maitland Steinkopf, whose wife Helen is still on the Board and was at the meeting. Mr. Steinkopf and others played a pivotal role in the development of the Centennial Concert Hall where the July 13 event was held. Thirty years ago they believed that an investment in the future would pay off, and indeed it had, for the trust fund grew to \$49,000. This initiative created a special sense of responsibility among the centennial babies.

The Manitoba Centennial Foundation for the Future started by the Board donating \$10 for every baby born in Manitoba on six specific birthdays during 1970—a total of 305 children. It proved difficult over the years to keep track of them, but 103 of the 150 located still live in Manitoba; 50 attended the July 13 meeting. The centennial babies decided to dedicate the trust fund of \$49,000 for an annual celebration towards the arts and culture of children in Manitoba. They also decided to continue by keeping in touch with one another. The 1970 board members' dream was fulfilled. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Missing Youth—Community Search

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I had a happy announcement to make with regard to the homecomings in my constituency, but I am going to set those aside and ask all members of this House to join me in a statement that I want to make and a message that I want to send to the people of the Dauphin community, specifically the Mallard area, in the search that is now being undertaken for a young boy who was lost in the woods last Saturday evening. I would ask all members of this House to join me in

extending hope to the family and in extending our best wishes to the communities and the people who are involved in the search for this young boy.

Now this young boy is only eight years old. According to his grandmother, and I think we all join her in believing that indeed he is still out there alive and is surviving because, as his grandmother said, he is a very smart boy.

Mr. Speaker, we go through this from time to time where our young children sometimes wander away and are lost, and it is just amazing how quickly communities come together and organize themselves to search for these lost little children who sometimes go astray either on picnics or on excursions into the woods. Today I simply want to ask the House to join me in extending our very best wishes to that community and certainly in extending hope to the family and to the friends of this family that their young boy will come back home safe to them.

Committee Changes

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I have two committee changes. I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: Southdale (Mr. Reimer) for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer).

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Pembina with a committee change?

* (14:30)

Mr. Dyck: Yes, another committee change.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments for July 25 be amended as follows: Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith) for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen); Russell (Mr. Derkach) for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner); Springfield (Mr. Schuler) for

Morris (Mr. Pitura); and Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik).

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): I move, seconded by the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli); The Maples (Aglugub) for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff).

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please call the following: first, on second readings, Bills 45 and 48; second, on debate on second readings, Bills 6 and 21.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 45—The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk), that Bill 45, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la pension de retraite des enseignants), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Manitoba is pleased to be able to respond positively to concerns raised by female teachers in the province. Their concern relates primarily to the fact that women who take leave from their teaching positions or similar professional jobs in the public school system in order to have children are precluded by existing legislation from purchasing maternity leave up to 17 weeks as pensionable service.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment to The Teachers' Pensions Act provides that opportunity

for purchase of service and to do so at regular contribution rates. Regular rates mean that government will pay what is commonly known as the employer's share; in other words, a contribution which matches that paid by the individual teacher.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Manitoba believes that such an amendment is long overdue, serving as it does to address an issue of gender and to provide equity where none has previously existed.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 48—The Rural Development Bonds Amendment Act

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I move, seconded by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. McGifford), that The Rural Development Bonds Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les obligations de développement rural, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Friesen: It is my pleasure to introduce today amendments to The Rural Development Bonds Act. This act is being amended to enable us to look at potential projects in the city of Winnipeg. Under the current act, the program excludes the city of Winnipeg, and with these amendments we are proposing that the Grow Bonds Program will be available more broadly. Hence the new name proposed for The Rural Development Bonds Act is The Community Development Bonds Act.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the achievements Manitobans have made through the use of development bonds to establish or expand local industries.

Currently, rural-based entrepreneurs can gain the financial support of local investors who purchase bonds through a community bond

corporation which makes an investment in the entrepreneur's venture. This locally based approach to economic development has contributed to the growth of small businesses that has benefited some parts of rural Manitoba's economy.

The program, Mr. Speaker, has been used in many other parts of the world. Most closely it was developed by our neighbour province Saskatchewan, but I think wherever it has been used successfully, it suggests that when people have an opportunity to invest in themselves and people they know, that it can lead to the growth of strong and healthy communities.

Mr. Speaker, we heard at our economic summit about the importance of raising capital in Manitoba, and our government is committed to helping to create the conditions that will attract new investment to Manitoba. In particular, we want to provide a vehicle through which Winnipeggers may invest in the future economy of their city.

Winnipeg is our major city, Mr. Speaker. It is not the only one, but it is one of the most important gateways for new money, for new entrepreneurs, as well as for citizens who want to invest at home. It is important that it grow and that it prosper and that its benefits can be applied to all of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, when I am speaking in rural Manitoba, I emphasize there the importance of the health of the city of Winnipeg to all Manitobans, and, equally, when I speak to urban Manitobans, I emphasize to them the importance of a healthy rural economy and the direct impact it has upon the economies of both Brandon and Winnipeg.

The broader context for the change and the opportunity for Winnipeggers to look at Grow Bonds as an instrument of economic development, the context of that is exactly that, the importance of the growth and the future economy of Winnipeg.

In this context we should look at the initiative that our government has announced to promote and encourage inner city revitalization through Neighbourhoods Alive!.

Neighbourhoods Alive! is aimed at addressing the social, economic, educational, and safety issues that have an impact on many of our neighbourhoods. It is making the links between all of these programs, going beyond building houses to building communities and rebuilding hope. By reorienting our thinking toward a more community-based model, we will be giving neighbours, neighbourhoods including businesses, the opportunity to build and grow in the city of Winnipeg, as well as giving Manitobans a chance to support investment opportunities in the city.

Mr. Speaker, amendments to The Rural Development Bonds Act also go beyond this. Other proposed amendments are aimed at specifying that the Province receive some security for providing financial guarantees for bond corporations. We are also in proposing these amendments to maximize returns to Manitobans who invest in bond corporations and to protect the Government's position on our bond guarantees. It also provides the Government with greater flexibility in being able to appoint an agent who would be able to manage and administer the bond corporation's investment. Under the current act, there are not specific provisions to do this. We also want to expand participation in community development bonds by allowing co-operatives to participate in the program.

I look forward to having these amendments move forward, so that we may give Manitobans the opportunity to consider the possibility of these tools to invest in businesses in the city of Winnipeg. We shall be taking this one step at a time, working with many community partners in the city of Winnipeg who are involved in economic and community development.

I want to finally emphasize that this will not take away from rural Manitoba. We are very aware of the value this has had in some parts of rural Manitoba. We intend to maintain the office for the Grow Bonds Program in Altona, and we want to be very supportive of all kinds of economic development outside of the city of Winnipeg.

I hope that members will understand, as we have explained in press releases and as I have

tried to explain in these brief comments, this is not intended to take away in any way, in any measure at all, from the Grow Bonds Program in rural Manitoba. This is intended to expand it, to enable us step-by-step to look at its potential for the city of Winnipeg. Thank you.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 6—The Water Resources Conservation and Protection and Consequential Amendments Act

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on second readings, on the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin), Bill 6, The Water Resources Conservation and Protection and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur la conservation et la protection des ressources hydriques et modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire).

Is it the will of the House to keep it remained standing?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Leave has been denied.

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, there is a saying about a leopard not changing his spots or something like that.

An Honourable Member: That is right. I remember.

Mr. Enns: Remember that? We have a debate here about old Democrats and New Democrats that takes place every once in a while. This bill kind of reminds me of the old Democrats of

Howard Pawley in a time, regrettably, that had some legitimate reasons for concern in the world when the super powers, the Soviet Union, that evil empire—as my friend the then-President of United States liked to refer to it—was standing and threatening the freedom of the world as represented by the United States.

The old New Democrats were going to do something about it here in Manitoba, and they declared Manitoba to be a nuclear-free zone. I think, Mr. Speaker, if we check, that legislation is still on the books. We were going to be a nuclear-free zone. I mean, it does not matter what Moscow is going to do or what Washington is going to do, but here in Manitoba, we were going to be a nuclear-free zone.

Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, you have to understand the times. Those were the times when the ban the bombers and the peace movement could rally five, six, ten thousand people on the streets on a fine Sunday afternoon to march.

But how does that relate to this bill, Mr. Speaker? This bill is a pandering to the Maude Barlows of this world, the ultranationalists who concern themselves and who pass silly legislation that piggybacks on the fear that these people put on innocent Manitobans and Canadians that we are about to rid ourselves of a natural resource that is a renewable resource that we have an abundant quantity of.

But to tap into that little bit of politics that is out there, that concern about the exportation of water, we are passing a bill to ban water out of Manitoba. And when are we doing it? We are doing it in a year when if you asked a lot of average Manitobans, they would say, good Lord, how much water do we have to put up with?

And you, Mr. Speaker, know better than perhaps anybody in this chamber how all of that water draining from one of the world's largest watershed districts; from the Rockies, where the Churchill finds its roots; from the North Saskatchewan, the South Saskatchewan pouring into Lake Winnipeg; from Ontario through to Wisconsin, where the Winnipeg river system pulls out all its water and pours it into the east side of Lake Winnipeg; and from our own rivers

on the Prairies here, the Assiniboine, the Red River pouring into Lake Manitoba, all of that fresh, potable water empties out into the saltwaters of the oceans up at Hudson Bay through our mighty rivers, the Nelson, Churchill, the Hayes, and is forever lost to us, forever lost to mankind for any potential possible use.

This is the kind of thing that the New Democrats are very good at, pandering to the politics out there but makes little, little common sense. It will be interesting to hear this bill being debated at the committee stage. I would assume that the Government will have its fair share of support coming to the Committee to debate the Bill, but it is not a bill of substance. The Bill does allow for the exportation of all kinds of water, bottled water, tanker water and so forth, but in essence it is a bill that is not unlike Bill 5, for instance, that we will be debating in committee tomorrow. They put their finger out in the general public, they sense that there is a concern about panned hunting, and, bingo, they come in with a bill. Mind you, the Bill does not mention panned hunting, but it enables them to say that they are doing something in this regard.

For reasons that I could never understand, Canadians have a paranoia about the exportation of freshwater. When I say a paranoia, I really do not understand it. It is, as I said, a renewable resource and in some years comes to us with a quantity that we can hardly handle, like this year. If we in Manitoba, quite frankly, could export a bit of water and reduce our taxes, take the taxes off gasoline, water could do for Manitoba what oil has done for other jurisdictions. Water could improve our health care system. Water could improve our education system. Water could help all our farmers in need, Mr. Speaker. But, no, we are so concerned about the real scary thing that we might actually even be helping our American neighbours, you know, by providing them in times of need with some water. I mean that is a terrible thing. You know, beggar your neighbour is what we have to be concerned about.

So this government, having protected us in the years gone by from any nuclear problems by passing a law that said Manitoba is going to be nuclear free, I mean, there may be hundreds of bombs exploding all around us, but the NDP

government under Howard Pawley did the political thing and told Manitobans not to worry about nuclear wars or nuclear explosions; Manitoba is nuclear free. I classify this piece of legislation as this kind of nonsense-type of legislation that panders to that kind of paranoia that regrettably is out there in some Manitobans' minds, but we will see what happens at committee stage. We are prepared to let it move on to committee stage.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to stand today and provide some hopefully sobering second thoughts in regard to Bill 6.

This particular bill, as I have had the opportunity to review, I am very much dismayed in regard to why this bill has even come forward at this point in time. I know it is very much to this government's liking to do things that are politically expedient. I believe at the present time that there is a push from the federal government to have provinces jump on board with this type of legislation that is in fact much in keeping with the present federal government's stance on the national joint commission as it pertains to boundary waters and watersheds.

I believe that this bill is to, in fact, show that Manitoba is wanting to be very much a follower in this respect. This particular legislation, as we have been able to review here, is totally redundant as to the powers of the Minister as they exist today under other bills. The Minister has within his powers all that this legislation is providing for in print already. To have another piece of legislation on the books is not only cluttering the library of this Chamber but all other government offices that must have the records of legislation that are passed within this Chamber.

This particular bill refers to the bulk export of water. A resource that is wholly owned by the Province of Manitoba, a resource, Mr. Speaker, that I believe is one that we have yet to examine of its full potential for not only the residents of this province but residents throughout the globe.

I might just make most specific reference to the waterways of size that dump their waters into the Hudson Bay, which is an extension of the

Atlantic Ocean and a saltwater body. The two water systems, that being the Nelson and the Churchill Rivers, in fact, provide to the basin an extensive amount of water on a second-by-second basis. I do not know whether members can really truly imagine the volume of water that travels into the Bay, and I will be more specific in regard to the Churchill River itself.

Recently, the Churchill River, with the co-operation of Manitoba Hydro, a weir was constructed just up from Churchill, which provided a basin of water for the town's freshwater source domestic use, as well as provided for a definition between the freshwater and the saltwater of the bay. That particular weir before its construction, there was a great deal of study of the estuary around the Churchill town and the Churchill River mouth. It was most interesting that the estuary is a minor one and, in fact, the waters that travel from the Churchill River into the bay as freshwater really do not have a great deal of impact because of the significant tidal surge at that part of the bay. In fact, the saltwater is indeed right at the shoreline and even the amounts discharged at the Churchill River has very, very little effect.

* (14:50)

We talk of freshwater resource. Imagine the cool, pristine waters of the Churchill River that are used by the town of Churchill with very, very minor processing, little chlorination before the residents of Churchill can consume the water. Throughout the globe, there are many, many areas that are drought-ravaged, and many residents throughout our global community are going without clear, clean drinking water. The water that is dispensed into the bay by the Churchill River is significant. I might just perhaps draw the Speaker's attention that the reason this bill is before us today was out of a permit that was issued by the Province of Ontario to Nova Group Limited. There seemed to be such an outcry by those persons who had little or no knowledge of water and the recharge and the amount of potential exportable resource that this country has.

This particular permit that was issued by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources was soon rescinded because of the media attention it

garnered. The environmentalists without any knowledge or research had in fact drawn such attention. It was attention that should not in fact have been drawn, because the amount of water that was in fact permitted by Nova Group Limited to be exported out of this country by a tanker loading in the Lake Superior was so miniscule. In fact, the amount of water that we were talking about being exported under this permit reflected a mere 31 seconds of Churchill River. Thirty-one seconds of Churchill River flow was the amount of water that was going to be allowed to be exported by the permit that the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Province of Ontario that caused all this national upheaval. That all provincial governments were requested by the federal government to pass companion legislation that in fact was the thrust to prevent any bulk export of water.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as far as those that have studied the waters that travel through our province that are part of the Hudson Bay drainage basin, these waters are significant and these waters, once they hit the bay, are lost to domestic consumption because they immediately mix with the saltwaters of the Hudson Bay, which is an extension of the Atlantic Ocean.

Effectively, these waters are spent. They are of no further value to the domestic consumption. As I mentioned earlier, Hydro commissioned a very, very in-depth study of the estuary around the Town of Churchill and the Port of Churchill before the construction of the Churchill River weir. The estuary is, as I say, at best minor because of the tidal action. So if in fact one was to consider exporting water from the Port of Churchill, which we have as a viable deep water port that other provinces do not have, we in this Legislature should be very, very considerate of that potential. As I mentioned, we are talking a mere 31 seconds of water flow out of the Churchill River, cool, clear, pristine water of the Churchill River that could very easily be a natural resource that we in the province of Manitoba can share within our global community. I think it is a terrible, terrible action of this legislature to consider passage of this bill.

In fact, there are second sobering thoughts happening in other provinces as well. Québec had similar legislation to what we are debating

here in the House. They have taken that legislation and set it aside at this time and are no longer progressing with it, because they too have rivers that dispense significant amounts of water into the bay as well as into the strait and into the Atlantic ocean as well, where waters are lost. One has to consider the shortage that much of the globe has experienced. One wants to be able to take that natural resource and that natural resource can be shared with those areas that are in distress.

The Honourable Minister of Family Services says water is not lost. Water is a renewable resource and is, however, in different states throughout the globe. One can only use certain states of that particular water. When one is looking at water within the oceans and significant amounts of salt, it takes a great deal of processing to remove that salt and to make it a domestically consumable liquid.

I know the Minister of Family Services is critical of me standing in the House today opposing this particular piece of legislation, but he also must recognize that there is another state of water that exists in a body of water known to all of us in this Chamber as Devil's Lake. Yet he is very, very against seeing any of that water come within the confines of our Red River system. As much as he is concerned about Devil's Lake, I am concerned about the loss of the spent waters of both the Nelson and the Churchill River systems into the bay without real, clear consideration of the potential for export of this natural resource.

I know another honourable colleague of the Chamber said, for what price? Well, I am not considerate of price at this time. I am not considerate of what revenues this would draw to the Treasury of this province. What I am concerned is about losing a valuable resource to the global community, because to recoup that resource once it is mixed with saltwater takes an immense amount of energy and processing. So one has to reconsider why we have this particular piece of legislation in front of us today. Are we going to be part of the herd of provinces that have fallen into line with the federal government because it is politically expedient, or are we going to join perhaps the ranks of those in the Québec legislature that are

sitting back for the moment and examining their legislation as to whether or not it is a piece of legislation that they want to have in their province? I say, Mr. Speaker, that I personally do not believe that this legislation is something that we as Manitobans want as law within our province.

If one is wanting to manage our natural resources, all they have to do is look at The Water Resources Act that is already in place as law within this province. The Minister has all of the responsibilities already within his power that is referred to in this bill, Bill 6, The Water Resources Conservation and Protection and Consequential Amendments Act.

As I stand here this afternoon addressing the debate regarding Bill 6, I stand as a member of this Legislative Assembly without political motive, specifically stating my concerns that anyone, if they take time to examine all of the information would have. I challenge the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) to sit down but an hour or two and examine the potential of this valuable natural resource that is effectively being spent and lost to the global community and to this province as we could provide for humanitarian and other potential means to the global community.

I just ask, Mr. Speaker, that all members of this Chamber give significant thought to this particular bill prior to their commitment to either defeating it or passage into law, because I believe that there should be due consideration given by this Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) truly in the spirit of the name of his department, that being Conservation, to conserve and make best use of a natural resource of this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know I could go on, because I am very, very concerned about this legislation. I truly believe that it is a bill that is unnecessary. One must give all consideration possible for the future and be not led by the hand—if I might say—of the federal government into providing legislation that is for no other intents and purposes other than politically expedient. So with those few words on the record, I ask all honourable members of this Chamber to truly give this piece of legislation its

just time for its evaluation and consideration. I think that they will all find that this particular bill is one that should remain upon the Order Paper and never see law in this particular province. Thank you.

* (15:00)

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I want, also, to put a few comments on the record about Bill 6, and I appreciate the opportunity to do so. I want to echo the comments of the two previous speakers, the Honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) and the Honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou). There is absolutely no need for this bill to be before the House. In some ways, it is a bit of a catch-22, because here I am taking up time speaking to a bill which by all means should not even be here, because there is absolutely no reason for this bill to be here, with one exception. That exception became fairly obvious to me very soon after I was newly elected to this House.

After the election on September 21, as most new members, I became very diligent about reading all the mail that came my way. As we all know, in this House there certainly is a lot of paper that passes over our desks as the day goes on. Sure enough, lo and behold, on November 16, I received a letter from Paul Moist, President of CUPE Manitoba explaining to me in great detail Mr. Moist's and the view of other members of the union that their next big fight, the next fight for this union is going to revolve around water. No doubt they staked their line in the sand at a national water summit that was put on by CUPE and the Environmental Law Association and, of course, the Council of Canadians.

So this, Mr. Speaker, fully explained to me why the Government put this bill before the House at this time. Again, all it is is pandering to their union bosses, something that we have seen day in and day out as this House has been sitting. This is a government that for some reason thinks it is necessary to put a spin on everything they bring before this House and is for some reason reticent to tell the people why some of their legislation is really here.

We see that day in and day out. We saw the spin on the Budget and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) standing up day after day trying to convince people that, lo and behold, he had reduced taxes, when, in fact, he had increased taxes. We find the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) now, day after day, standing up, telling us about Bill 44, how she consulted widely and how business had lots of opportunity to have input on her legislation, when, in fact, we know that her legislation was simply drafted to meet the requirements of the union bosses.

Here we are, right from Day One, one of the very first bills that was introduced to this House by this new government is nothing more than pandering to their union friends, to their union bosses. I mean, it is right here, right here in the literature that came from Mr. Moist. Some of it even appears to be plagiarized directly in the Bill, I am sure with his permission, but certainly in terms of Mr. Moist's view. What is this all about? This is about union jobs.

So that, at the end of the day, is what the Government is pandering to. They are pandering to the head of the union who has taken up a crusade, and, you know, from his perspective, quite rightly. His job is to ensure that his union grows and that more and more employees are subject to his union. That is the nature of his business, so why would he not jump on an opportunity to drive a stake in the sand and fight anybody who comes along with any idea to benefit the citizens of this country or of this province through some reasonable economic proposal regarding water?

Mind you, no one has come along with that. Certainly there has been no indication in the province of Manitoba that anybody is interested in the bulk removal of water. We have no corporations asking for licences on a regular basis. I mean, there is nothing here. So there is no reason for this bill, other than to provide some comfort to Mr. Moist that, well, thanks for his support over the years, that this government will turn around and pass legislation at his request.

There is no doubt that it is at his request. It is at the request of the union. It is at the request of CUPE, because when they talk about the three

major strategies, sure enough, there, No. 2 in terms of the CUPE strategies for their next great fight for saving union jobs is the strategy to pass legislation banning the bulk removal and export of water.

So what has this government done? They have come along with a hastily drafted piece of legislation. Fundamentally, it is kind of wrapped in motherhood. It is not a bad issue for this Legislature to discuss at some point in terms of our future use of this great resource which we have been blessed with bountifully in this province. Even in Mr. Moist's document that he sent along, he admits readily that water may become the oil of the next millennium. Well, when used properly, it is a resource that could be captured for the benefit of all Manitobans.

So I would say to this House, I would say to the people in this Legislature, let us keep our eyes open. Let us think outside the box. Let us look for opportunities that will benefit all Manitobans. But, no, the NDP Government cannot do that. They have to listen to their bosses. They have to listen to their supporters, and I guess do as they have been requested.

I am sure Mr. Christophe and Mr. Moist had a lot to do with the labour legislation, what was brought before this House. I am sure Mr. Kostyra had a lot to do with the Budget that was brought before this House.

I think it is unfortunate that this government does not just stand up and tell the people of Manitoba exactly what they are doing. Why does this government not just have the courage to stand up and say: Look, the next big union fight, the next big fight for union jobs is water, and we are going to help them along? We are going to pass a bill which really has no ramification to anybody in the province of Manitoba except that narrow, self-centred interest group which has supported us over the years and which we are going to pay back.

* (15:10)

I am sure the people of Manitoba would understand that. They would say, well, look, that makes a certain amount of sense. We understand that Mr. Moist and CUPE have been strong

supporters of your party over the years, particularly over the last 11.5 years in opposition. Now that you are in power, it is understandable maybe that you want to pander to them a little bit and throw this piece of legislation, which is really pretty meaningless at this present point out to them. But, no, they do not. They cannot stand up and tell the people that. Their spin doctors will not allow it, so they have to stand up and coat themselves in motherhood and invent reasons for this legislation being brought before this House. So that is what they have done.

We are glad to move this bill along to a committee, but let us discuss it there openly. Let us have a free discussion on what it actually is. Let us talk about the role that Mr. Moist and the unions had in drafting this bill. Let us have Mr. Moist come to committee and tell us what it is actually all about and how he is trying to use this government and use this bill to ensure that he is able to increase his base in his union, to increase his sphere of influence, and maybe at the same time we could hear from some other labour leaders in terms of what their actual agenda is as they are in cahoots with this government.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to speak to this bill. I wanted to put on the record what this bill is really all about and who this government is pandering to. It is a little bit ironic that we have the same old NDP Government, who has introduced a bill talking about water conservation and the perils of the bulk export of water when most of their members, the vast majority of their members represent a city which gets all of its drinking water from another province. Maybe this government should look at a bill regarding the bulk importation of water, if that is something they are really serious about, the environment, really serious about having a long-term plan, and really serious about providing the infrastructure that Mr. Moist calls for. Let us talk about the bulk importation of water and see where that goes.

This bill is going to move on to committee. I hope that we have a full and open discussion on this bill and its future ramifications. It is also another indication to any of the entrepreneurs in this province, to any businesses that the doors are closed. It is not the time in the province's

history to be thinking outside the box. It is not the time to be innovative, to try and create new economic opportunities, new jobs, new industry for this province. It is a time to put our heads, some might say, back in the sand, I would say underneath the water in this case, and once again, as we have seen with the recent labour legislation, revert to the past.

Let us all go back to 1946 and try and figure out what the world should be like today. Unfortunately we do not have that luxury. We have to look to the future with an open mind. We have to be innovative in our thinking. We have to allow Manitobans to create opportunities in this province. Certainly there is no doubt, we see it already, what a tremendous resource the water is in this province in terms of Manitoba Hydro and the success it has had in exporting power, particularly to the U.S. and also to Ontario. It just shows where this government is at and how deep in the past they are mired.

We examined Hydro the other day in committee. Lo and behold, when you looked at the books of Hydro through the 10 years of the '80s that this government was in power for most of those years, six out of ten years that corporation suffered a loss. The total loss when you added up everything for the 10 years was \$7 million. Then you look into the '90s, when certainly sound management and innovative thinking took over when that organization was put on a solid foundation. The people of Manitoba benefited to the tune of \$570 million, so a big difference in management styles.

So this government can go back to the '80s. This government can go back to the '40s in their labour legislation. This government can go back as much as they want. They can go back to regressive taxation. They can go back to crippling the business community in this province. But say what it is to the people of Manitoba. Have the courage, have the intestinal fortitude to stand up and say, well, look, Paul Moist wanted this bill, he called for this bill, and so we gave it to him because he has been a good friend of ours, and let us leave it at that.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 6, The Water Resources Conservation and Protection and Consequential Amendments Act. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

An Honourable Member: On division.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

* (15:20)

Bill 21—The Water Resources Administration Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin), Bill 21, The Water Resources Administration Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement hydraulique), standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire).

Is there a will of the House to leave it remain standing?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, Her Majesty's Official Opposition has examined the contents of this bill and recommends it to speedy passage at the committee stage.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 21, The Water Resources Administration Amendment Act.

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wish to obtain the unanimous consent of the House to vary the sequence of Estimates consideration, to consider in Room 254 the Estimates of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs ahead of the Estimates of the Department of Conservation for today only.

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to vary the sequence of Estimates in Room 254, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs ahead of Conservation for today only? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Mr. Speaker: Because of the unavailability of the Deputy Speaker, as well as one of the deputy chairpersons, the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg), the Honourable Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) will chair the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in the Chamber, and the honourable members for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) and Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) will chair the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255. The Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) will chair the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254.

The question before the House is that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty. Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

ABORIGINAL AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

* (15:30)

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Stan Struthers): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. Does the Honourable Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs have an opening statement?

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I would like to make a few opening remarks regarding the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

Allow me to say, first of all, that I am very pleased to present the 2000-2001 Estimates of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. As the Minister of this department of the Government of Manitoba, I hope to preside over a time of great change. It is our desire and the desire of our department to help bring about a new era of trust and partnership with Aboriginal people throughout the province of Manitoba and especially with residents of the northern regions of our province.

It is our department's objective to bring a new focus to the future development of northern Manitoba. These are exciting times for the North and the people who live there. The decisions we make now will have long-range impact and will lead to improved living conditions and opportunities we believe in northern communities.

Our mandate is to co-ordinate and to promote initiatives relating to Aboriginal peoples in northern communities. In order to address this dynamic environment of change, our approach has been to develop partnerships and co-operative approaches with communities, Aboriginal organizations, government departments and agencies, other levels of government and non-government bodies.

As the Minister responsible for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, I hope that we will be able to encourage contributions to the changes and to the processes of change that are affecting Aboriginal people. We would like to improve economic and social opportunities and the quality of life for Aboriginal people in our province.

Our government is committed to working government to government with First Nations and other Aboriginal peoples across Manitoba. We have begun to move on several areas in both action and consultation.

I would like to speak briefly, Mr. Chairperson, about one of the more important areas in which we have made progress and which we intend to continue to progress in many ways. It sort of sets the tone for our administration of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

As you are aware, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry was established, in April 1988, to investigate the condition of Aboriginal people in the justice system. This was partly due to the unsolved or for the long-standing issue of the Helen Betty Osborne murder, and also the J. J. Harper shooting of that same year.

The scope of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry included all aspects of the system, which includes policing, courts and correctional services. The findings and recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry were released in the wide-ranging report of 1991, I indicated earlier. One of the main recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry was to set up a commission to oversee implementation, and shortly after this government was formed last year, we established the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission, the AJIC, to develop an action plan based on the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry.

Wendy Whitecloud and Paul Chartrand are two co-chairs of the Commission, and these two people are very prominent people in the province of Manitoba, particularly in the Aboriginal community. Wendy Whitecloud is a member of the Dakota Nation from Sioux Valley, and Mr.

Paul Chartrand, of course, is a noted Métis Nation member.

The Manitoba Government has since received the first quarterly report of the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission and has begun acting on its four main recommendations. These recommendations include: entering into agreements with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the Manitoba Métis Federation to develop a plan that would result in First Nations and Métis communities developing and delivering Aboriginal child welfare services; secondly, amending The Interpretation Act of Manitoba to provide that all legislation be interpreted subject to Aboriginal and Treaty Rights; thirdly, renouncing the provincial government's 50% interest in minerals on Indian reserves; and fourthly, initiating discussions with the Manitoba Métis Federation to address matters within the jurisdiction of Manitoba that have been the subject of recommendations by the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

The AJIC has also identified 10 priority areas for government action, including child welfare, equity across government, police, community justice, early support and crime prevention measures for youth, family violence, Aboriginal rights, Northern Flood Agreements, treaty land entitlements and Métis issues. These priority areas match a number of initiatives already announced by the province, specifically Neighbourhoods Alive! and the Healthy Child Initiative.

These strategies will focus on programs such as parent-child centres, prenatal and early childhood nutrition, as well as housing, employment, recreation and safety initiatives that aid in building safe, stable and healthy communities. The establishment of the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission is a solid first step, but a decade of neglect of Aboriginal justice concerns means that we have a lot of ground to make up. It is meaningful changes in our systems that are needed if we are to restore trust and rebuild hope among Aboriginal people living in Manitoba. Our aim is to put in place comprehensive strategies that will deal with long-term inequities and injustices.

Mr. Chairperson, I would like to take this opportunity to provide an overview of our government's recently announced budget commitments in northern and Aboriginal Manitobans in the form of enhanced support for northern and Aboriginal programs, and new community and economic development initiatives. The new budget provides the necessary funding to carry out the government's plans to improve the infrastructure, community services and economic development of northern Manitoba. The Budget is providing additional resources this year for the repair and construction of winter roads to some of Manitoba's most remote communities. Northern communities will also benefit from the \$201 million dedicated in the Budget for highway construction and maintenance across the province.

Vital health care services such as medical emergency transport will be enhanced through \$5 million in additional funding for northern, rural, and urban ambulance services. Health care services will be more equitable for northern residents with the elimination of the \$50 fee charged to northern patients who are transported to southern medical facilities. Support for northern communities will rise as part of the 10% increase in support to local governments. Manitoba's VLT revenue-sharing program will also provide \$6 million this year to northern and rural communities.

Small business growth in northern Manitoba will be supported through a new team micro-enterprise development program that provides micro-credit loans for northern entrepreneurs. The Manitoba Self-Reliance Initiative will help 12 more northern communities provide sustainable local government services while also maintaining community infrastructure and revitalizing Manitoba communities as a key theme of this government and this department.

* (15:40)

Northern Manitoba's largest urban centre, Thompson, will benefit from budget funding from the recently announced Neighbourhoods Alive! program. Neighbourhoods Alive! is a long-term, community-based development strategy that provides community organizations

with the support they need to rebuild neighbourhoods in Thompson, Brandon and also in the city of Winnipeg. As part of the Neighbourhoods Alive! program, the Budget provides \$1 million for housing initiatives outside of Winnipeg, including Thompson. Additional funding is also provided under the program for unemployment training, education, recreation and safety, and crime prevention initiatives. Our government recognizes that a revitalized relationship with local governments is vital to our community and economic development efforts, and our plan includes a provision of significant resources to this end.

In particular, I would like to make mention of several new and expanded programs specifically designed to benefit Aboriginal Manitobans. First of all, a new Aboriginal economic and resource development fund will provide \$1 million in additional funding to address economic, cultural, recreational and social needs. Addressing the long-neglected needs of Aboriginal people in this province will help us build on societies that will no doubt present tremendous economic potential for all of Manitoba in years to come.

Core funding to Aboriginal organizations will be restored to help promote self-reliance and economic development. We have recently begun this process with our initiative concerning funding for the 11 Aboriginal friendship centres in the province of Manitoba. Diabetes and dialysis programs in Aboriginal communities will be improved in partnership with the federal government. The first emphasis of these initiatives will be on education regarding treatment, prevention and early detection of disease symptoms. We are also interested in examining the potential for research, the nature and the causes of the diseases in our Aboriginal populations. The emphasis is on keeping Aboriginal families together by offering Aboriginal community-based treatment programs whenever possible, as they deal with the implications of these diseases. Aboriginal participation in apprenticeship and training programs will be increased. Additional programs will ensure Aboriginal youth are able to benefit from available job opportunities and fully participate in future economic growth.

At this time, I would like to elaborate on some of the initiatives in which our government is involved. Mr. Chairman, we recently announced \$700,000 in core funding for 11 friendship centres to promote self-reliance and economic development. The funding will be administered through the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres, which represents the 11 facilities across this province. This announcement fulfils our budget commitment to restore core funding to Manitoba Aboriginal organizations.

The friendship centres play a vital role for urban Aboriginal people in this province. Since they were founded over 40 years ago, the volunteers and staff at the various facilities have helped thousands of men, women and children with the often difficult and confusing transition to life in larger urban centres. The centres have grown through each generation and now serve 11 communities across this province.

The unique Aboriginal perspective of the organization has been key to its success. As an organization built by Aboriginal people to meet the needs of Aboriginal people, it has never lost sight of its primary goal to serve the urban Aboriginal population. It has striven always to provide for its clients effective, community-driven, relevant and culturally sensitive programming. It has not always been an easy process, and financial fortunes frequently shifted, not always for the better. This core funding we are providing will be a significant step forward in the promotion of Aboriginal self-reliance and economic development. These funds will help the friendship centres to expand their services to Aboriginal communities and develop long-term strategies to improve many aspects of life for urban Aboriginal people.

Under this initiative, the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres will use the first-year funding to develop a five-year program development action plan to identify community priorities and create long-term strategies. This could include the development, implementation and evaluation of pilot programs in the areas of culture, health, education, substance abuse, justice, social, recreation, housing, economic development, children, youth, family and elders.

Staff from the Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat of Manitoba, Aboriginal and Native affairs, will be meeting with MAC officials in the coming weeks to work out the details, review processes and budget requirements.

I believe that we are all aware of the tremendous amount of work that still has to be done in urban and non-urban Aboriginal communities on many, many levels. However, every step forward, such as this funding, needs to be acknowledged as an important accomplishment in our shared struggle to move forward and build better communities with greater opportunities. Together, through organizations such as the MAC and the individual friendship centres, we will continue to build upon the foundations we have built for our culture and for our people. We are delighted to be able to restore this provincial support to the community-based organizations that are in the forefront of helping Aboriginal people to preserve their culture and participate in economic opportunities.

The 11 friendship centres are located in Brandon, Dauphin, Flin Flon, Lynn Lake, Portage la Prairie, Riverton, Selkirk, Swan River, The Pas, Thompson and Winnipeg. The centres were originally created in the 1950s as the Indian and Métis friendship centres to assist Aboriginal people moving to urban communities, to provide a variety of support services. The Winnipeg Friendship Centre, founded in 1958, was the first such friendship centre in the country of Canada, and the movement to have a provincial organization was initiated by The Pas Friendship Centre in the early 1970s. As a result, MAC was formed to represent and lobby for the program and service needs of all centres in the province of Manitoba.

This is the oldest Aboriginal organization that we have in the country and certainly in the province of Manitoba, because from the friendship centre movement came the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, the forerunner to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the Manitoba Métis Federation.

I would like to now turn to the issue of jobs and education for Aboriginal people in Manitoba. This past December, we attended a

federal-provincial-territorial conference of ministers responsible for Aboriginal Affairs. Our official Manitoba delegation included the leaders of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg. This is how we see the need for partnership in government-to-government negotiations.

One of the most important areas for joint initiatives with First Nations and their organizations is preparing our young people for the workplaces and workplace challenges of the future. This includes ensuring that Aboriginal young people will have equal opportunities for education, training and meaningful careers. We support and are working to fulfil the desire of young Aboriginal people to become actively and meaningfully involved in the Manitoba economy. Our government is pleased that we have been able to join with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to increase the numbers of Aboriginal people qualifying in apprenticeship and training programs.

Back in November, we signed a financial support agreement with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs by which they will promote increased enrolment of Aboriginal trainees in apprenticeship and trade programs. Of course, we did that announcement with the Department of Education and Training. We intend to make this agreement reflect a new relationship with AMC and other Aboriginal organizations. We will work with them to identify and deal with skill shortages in First Nations communities. Our agreement will also facilitate identification of high-demand occupations and increasing Aboriginal participation in apprenticeship and trades qualifications programs.

We are also assisting a Winnipeg construction firm in a project to train 20 Aboriginal people as heavy equipment operators in the construction field. Training will give them certification as heavy-duty construction equipment operators.

Manitoba is already a partner with the federal government in the field of Aboriginal employment training. We want to work with Ottawa and with Aboriginal organizations to strengthen such programs. We also want to build

on the success of initiatives like the Partners for Careers program, which is an excellent example of how a partnership of governments, the private sector and Aboriginal organizations can work for the benefit of Aboriginal young people.

In nearly three years, this federal-Manitoba program has helped place 1130 Aboriginal graduates in careers. The pace of success has stepped up in recent months in keeping with the program's target for this fiscal year, and that by placing 800 graduates.

These placements are conducted through two agencies, the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres, which serves clients in urban, rural and northern Manitoba; and the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development, which serves Winnipeg clients.

In recent months the Manitoba Métis Federation and the province have signed a historic memorandum of understanding which will lead to the creation of a child and family service system for Métis people throughout Manitoba. As well, an agreement between the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the province has resulted in the signing of a similar MOU which will expand delivery of child and family services to First Nations people living off reserve in Manitoba. Both agreements are based on recommendations put forward by the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission.

The agreement between the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Province of Manitoba is the first of its kind in Canada. It means that Métis people will now be able to work towards delivering services under The Child and Family Services Act as well as adoption services under The Adoption Act.

* (15:50)

In the AMC agreement, five First Nations agencies provide services to 35 southern First Nations communities. They will see their jurisdictions expanded province-wide. The agreement will make it possible for First Nations agencies as well to deliver a full range of services under The Child and Family Services Act, as well the adoption services under The Adoption Act.

These agreements acknowledge that both Métis and First Nations families have the right to control the delivery of child and family services. It creates hope for elders, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, and, most importantly, children to be raised within their own cultural traditions and beliefs. Both agreements place the responsibility for children with their families and communities, where it has always belonged, and both agreements recognize that locally developed solutions are the most effective and practical approach to ensuring self-determination and healthy communities.

Negotiations for a self-government agreement with Sioux Valley Dakota Nation and the federal government are progressing. We are confident that there will soon be an agreement in principle between the three parties, that being the federal government, the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, and the Province of Manitoba.

I would also like to provide some details about the Aboriginal and Northern Affairs activity in the area of government or local government development. Since forming this new government our administration has demonstrated its commitment to northern and Aboriginal peoples in numerous and tangible ways. The Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, under our direction, has undertaken to redress issues long neglected. To accommodate this we are increasing the Department's budget by 19 percent.

For example, within the budget we are committing an additional \$100,000 for community development and training to address community-identified training priorities and also to provide authority to increased honorarium rates for mayors and council members who are assuming ever greater responsibility for the economic development and sustainability of their communities; also an \$838,000 in funding to northern communities for the provision and maintenance of municipal services. This department and this budget strongly supports good governance through the development and empowerment of responsible local government by community councils and also through planning fiscal management in the delivery of municipal services and accountability to local electors.

It also aims to improve the quality of life by ensuring a safe, healthy community environment through supporting communities; compliance with Canadian drinking water standards through environmental regulations related to the management of waste and waste water; through the development and implementation of recreation programs and opportunities for youth; and through support for crime prevention, fire safety and emergency planning.

We support community development through the creation of policy and program alternatives that respond to community-identified needs. We are doing this by partnering with other departments, jurisdictions and agencies in serving northern communities in a holistic manner to add respect to their culture, history and aspirations.

To further improve communication, I have asked departmental staff in partnership with the Northern Association of Community Councils to undertake comprehensive consultations with community leaders and citizens, to identify their priorities and their concerns with past policies and practice. Further to planning, our department is reviewing accounting and property tax collection systems, with a view of improving these systems to better serve communities. Our department is rebuilding our capacity to provide technical and engineering support services to communities in the planning and delivery of infrastructure projects.

To complement this initiative and to facilitate long-term planning, we are also undertaking a comprehensive analysis of water treatment requirements and internal roads. This is consistent with the priority that this government places and what we place on safety and health of northern constituents and what we feel will lead to better planning and better solutions to the problems of water quality and aging infrastructure.

So, Mr. Chairperson, I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak today about some of the many goals and important initiatives currently being worked on by the Government of Manitoba's Ministry of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): We thank the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. I would ask the Official Opposition critic, the Honourable Member for Morris, if he has any comments to make at this time.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): I just have a few comments and then we can get into the more in-depth discussion of the Department itself. I will just maybe cover some of the areas that are within the Estimates process themselves, but before I do that I would like to congratulate the Minister. I think I congratulated the Minister the last time when we had a one-minute session on being appointed as Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. I thank the Minister for the comments that he has made in his opening remarks.

Some of the areas that I would like to spend a little bit of time in discussion, first in the area of urban reserves and the treaty land entitlement process. Also, the Minister did reference the urban Aboriginal strategy. I think that we could maybe spend some time discussing that. Also, I am very interested how the status of the Northern Flood Agreement is taking place and what stages we are at.

Then some of the other issues, basically the Minister talked about training, education for First Nations to spend some time discussing graduation rates for First Nations students; then going on to the federal-provincial relations, it always seems that there is always a jurisdictional dispute or a hand-off in terms of jurisdiction, and how that is coming together; as well as the situation with the development of the titanium mine at Cross Lake and some areas; then into the viability of the Port at Churchill; whether or not the expansion of Manitoba Hydro operations in the north; the incorporation of municipalities such as South Indian Lake in the North; as well as, I think the Minister, just at the latter end of his remarks, talked about capital infrastructure programs for northern communities.

So those are just some of the areas that I think as we go through the departmental Estimates, Mr. Chairman, that we can spend some time having a discussion. I just hope that we have adequate time.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): I thank the Honourable Member for Morris for those remarks.

Under Manitoba practice, the debate of the Minister's Salary is traditionally the last item considered for the Estimates of the Department. Accordingly, we shall defer consideration of this item and now proceed with the consideration of the next line.

Before we do that, we invite the Minister's staff to join us at the table and ask the Minister to introduce his staff when they arrive at the table.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairman, with me today is the Deputy Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Oliver Boulette, as, I am sure, my colleague the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) well knows; also Mr. Harvey Bostrom, the Executive Director of our Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat. Mr. Gord Wakeling is the Director of the Communities Economic Development Fund, and Mr. Rene Gagnon is the Director of our administration and finance division within the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): I thank the Minister for those introductions. We will now proceed to line 19.1. Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Executive (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$605,800, on page 23 of the Main Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

* (16:00)

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Chairman, one question with respect to this subappropriation, I notice in the area of Other Expenditures transportation has increased from 66.1 to 96.1, and I was just wondering if there was any information to explain the increase.

Mr. Robinson: I thank the Member for that question. That primarily is to improve and to ensure that services reach the communities and what we are responsible for, the 51 communities under the jurisdiction of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

At the same time, why there may be a reflection or an increase is that before the change of government we shared staff with the old Energy and Mines division, so that is why it would appear that there has been an increase. But the level of services has remained and expanded to a large degree to give our department an opportunity to expand services to those areas of northern Manitoba that require it.

Mr. Pitura: So I am to understand then that the devolving of Energy and Mines from the Department, there was some shared transportation costs between the two, and now this is solely reflected in the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

Mr. Robinson: Yes, Mr. Chairman, that is correct.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): Shall the item pass? The item is accordingly passed.

Item 19.1.(b)(2) Other Expenditures \$240,800. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Chairman, I had a question with regard to the operations with Aboriginal and Northern Affairs which I have on my page 18. Is that within that area? [*interjection*] Other Expenditures, I will pass that.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): Item 19.1.(b)(2) Other Expenditures \$240,800—pass.

19.2. Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Operations (a) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$349,100. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Chairman, looking in terms of some of the aspects of the Aboriginal and Northern Affairs operations, it indicates here: "Promotes development of innovative policy options, which represent a fundamental change in the way government relates to Aboriginal people."

I was wondering if the Minister would care to expand on that particular goal, in ways that he sees how government will change in terms of how it relates to Aboriginal people.

Mr. Robinson: I believe that it is important that Aboriginal people, particularly the communities that we represent, the 51 communities under our jurisdiction of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, are given an opportunity. I know that my colleague and my critic earlier indicated that he wanted to embark upon a bit of a discussion on some of the relations, including the federal-provincial relations, some work that we were doing in the area of urban reserves and TLE. I think it is very important with respect to his question directly that we embark upon a new relationship with Aboriginal people, not only the ones we represent in the 51 NACC communities, but definitely with First Nations people. We have been trying to relate to First Nations people in the nine months we have been a part of this process.

Being a part of the Government in the province of Manitoba is to deal with First Nations, as an example, on a government-to-government basis. We want to be able to make some changes in our department. It is one of the smaller departments within the Government of Manitoba.

There are many needs in these communities that we represent. We have a dramatic shortage of housing. We have of course in First Nations communities many shortages including housing, which is probably the first and foremost issue. In some communities we do not have running water as such. It is still an item that is not realized by many communities. So we have to have a different approach, we feel, in dealing with Aboriginal people. We have to make them feel a part of the process. By that it gives us an opportunity to embark upon relationships with the federal government, as an example, in trying to make substantial changes in the way of life of Aboriginal people in the province of Manitoba.

An example would be the recent announcement that we made in Garden Hill for the Island Lake Reserves. The four Island Lake communities, of course, are Waasagemach, Red Sucker Lake, St. Theresa Point, and Garden Hill. Garden Hill is an example of a community, a reserve, a First Nations community that has 3300 First Nations people resident in the community, and not one of the housing units has running

water. There are 350-plus people at last count that require housing. That is the immediate need.

So we need to work with these communities and also find partners, whether it be from the private sector or from the federal government, to begin addressing these long-standing issues that have existed. I do not think I would be realistic in saying that we are going to achieve all those things, but certainly we have to make an effort.

Further to the Island Lake area we recently signed a memorandum of understanding that will address the needs of Aboriginal people with respect to dialysis treatment that is needed. In that area, which they tell me is populated by 10 000 First Nations, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people from the Island Lake region, over 500 people have had to relocate to the city of Winnipeg as a result of the requirement for dialysis treatment. We find that to be unacceptable in this day and age. What the people in that area require is definitely improved health services. We must begin addressing those long-standing issues.

* (16:10)

We therefore are committed to addressing three things. First of all the urban support services that are required, we need to begin addressing that, those people that have had to be relocated as a result of their circumstances in their home reserves and home communities, that have had to relocate to Winnipeg, have had to leave loved ones, have had to readjust to the city way of life, if you will.

We have begun dealing with the issue of dialogue, at the very least, on the need for a regional health facility in the Island Lake region. That is needed badly. We also, in partnership with the federal government and the First Nations communities of the Island Lake region, want to ensure that people have accessibility to dialysis treatment. This is one of the areas that we are wanting to be a partner in.

My colleague correctly points out, many times we have a call on the federal government saying that this is a responsibility. In fact, many people living on reserves, and that is not to take away from the unique and special relationship

that First Nations people have with the federal government based and stemming from our treaties, but definitely they are Manitobans as well. As well as that they are Canadians. They too have to be provided. Also, partnerships have to be developed with them to ensure that they enjoy what services other Canadians enjoy. That includes health care as well.

It is not a good sight to go to any boarding care home in the City of Winnipeg or other areas where people have had to relocate from northern and isolated communities in order to receive dialysis treatment.

Those are the three things our government is committed to with the federal government and with the First Nations communities. Certainly we cannot do it all ourselves as a provincial government, but those three things are: the need for a regional health care facility, to improve that; a dialysis treatment unit, which is immediately required so no more people will have to be relocated to urban areas such as Winnipeg; and, thirdly, the need for urban support services for those people who have had to move.

We believe that the programming we are doing is innovative with respect to our friendship centres. We will be asking them to deliver culturally appropriate programs, and I know I am going on here with my colleague's questions, but certainly we have to avail ourselves to making available to Aboriginal people training opportunities and, as an example, employment placement, literacy training in some cases. We want to get away from the mentality of Aboriginal people having to rely on welfare as a way of life. We do not want to have to be faced with the situation of having the next generation having to rely on social services as a way of life.

I think that First Nations leaders have told us very clearly that they want to break away from that dependence and move into the area of providing for themselves, be self-sustaining and be able to create opportunities within their own communities, within their own boundaries so therefore creating a more optimistic future for people that will require definitely some of these things.

So I apologize if I went on too long, but I think that I have tried to encompass some of the needs that exist in Aboriginal communities, not only in First Nations communities, but in fact the communities we represent and are the responsibility of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to follow up on some of the comments that the Minister made. He was referencing housing and the lack of water, and I was just wondering if the Minister would be able to comment as to negotiations, if any, with the federal government with respect to housing, or does he anticipate having some provincial initiatives with regard to housing in those communities as well as some of the infrastructure, such as water, perhaps sewer in some cases. I am just wondering if the Minister could comment on that.

Mr. Robinson: I thank my colleague for that because that is a very important issue. I know, when we were at the Aboriginal ministers' meeting in Ottawa back in December, together with the staff of our department and myself raising housing as probably the No. 1 issue that is affecting Aboriginal people in Canada today and certainly in the Province of Manitoba. There have been some rough estimates that have been given to us over the years.

In the communities that the MKO, as an example, represents, there is a shortage of over 4500 housing units that are required immediately, and that is not even counting the needs in southern Manitoba. That is simply to catch up with the immediate need. There are many communities that have two and three families living in one two-bedroom housing unit in many of the communities that we are responsible for, both NACC communities and First Nations communities, I was going to say. We have made this a priority, and if there is a way that we as a provincial government are able to play a partnership role with the national government, we will definitely explore that. In fact, in my discussions with the federal Indian Affairs minister, this definitely has been a priority issue, together with the Deputy Minister and the Director of the Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat as recent as last week. In Ottawa, both Mr. Bostrom and Mr. Boulette had an

opportunity to meet with the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Department of Indian Affairs, and again this issue was raised.

There are three priority areas that we believe we require, that being education and training and also the need for economic opportunities, and health care as well is definitely a requirement, but topping that list always is housing. In our discussions with the federal Department of Indian Affairs, the dialogue, if I could say it this way, has been productive. We would like to have the federal government take the leading role on this, and because of the circumstances of we being a provincial government, we will have to determine where it will be applicable for us to invest in many of these activities that we want to pursue.

Having said that, there are initiatives under way in the Province of Manitoba, the very initial stages of development. As an example, there are people in some communities that want to examine log-building initiatives, and we believe that to have a lot of merit and have a lot of potential. We certainly support that sort of initiative where people will not have to rely on builders from outside the community, and the Member will know that in many instances we require the winter road system to deliver the housing supplies that have to go into these communities. Many times that is impossible to do because of the weather conditions that have been fluctuating in recent years. I know that this is shared by all of Manitobans, not only people living in northern Manitoba. So we are continuing to press the issue, and I will be asking my colleague and critic to join with me at some point in addressing this issue with our national government.

* (16:20)

In the month of September, there is going to be a meeting of ministers responsible for Northern Affairs in Goose Bay, Labrador. Again, our staff has made it known to the staff of the federal Department of Indian Affairs that housing definitely is a priority in this province, and we have to find innovative ways to meet the challenges that are out there to address the housing shortages that exist in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Pitura: The Minister indicated that in the MKO communities that there were some 4500 needs for housing. He also mentioned earlier a figure of housing needs. I just want to know: Is this total housing needs for the entire Aboriginal communities, or is it the 4500?

Mr. Robinson: What I was referencing earlier was that in the one community alone of Garden Hill, there is an immediate need for 350 housing units. In the communities that are represented by the MKO, which is 26 First Nations communities, there is a need for 45 housing units in that one area alone. That is not factoring in the southern communities, communities that are represented by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, as an example, or the Southern Chiefs Organization. So I am only factoring in the needs of MKO communities, which are the 26 in northern Manitoba. If we are to factor in the First Nations communities in southern Manitoba, I am sure the numbers will double and more for the housing needs that are required, the shortages that are being experienced by reserves in the province of Manitoba entirely.

Mr. Pitura: I would then like to ask the Minister: With the housing needs as being a very critical situation in the province, is the federal government developing a strategy? If they are developing that strategy, are they developing that strategy on the basis of the federal government funding the provision of housing, or is the intention of the federal government, as they are in some other areas, attempting to partner with the province?

Mr. Robinson: There are many possibilities, but I believe in our discussions with the federal government—and they ultimately, of course, have the responsibility for First Nations communities—I would have to say that in my discussions with the federal Minister responsible for Indian Affairs we have also shared our views on the needs that exist out there: the need for economic opportunities, education, training. Certainly, housing is one of the biggest needs that we have right now, as I indicated earlier.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Although there have been no commitments made by the federal government, we will

continue, on our part anyway, to address the need for housing. There have got to be efforts made to begin addressing the long-standing needs. I believe that all of us around this table would know that with the conditions of some of the houses that exist on First Nations communities, overcrowded conditions and so on, health problems then become a problem as a result of that. We have seen the incidence of tuberculosis, as an example, resurface. A disease that was once said to have left the face of the earth, however, has made a comeback in numbers that are much too many. I believe that even with one it is too many.

So, if we want to say partnership, we have to do it in a partnership way, but in a partnership way where the provincial government is in a position to do so. I believe that the provincial government is in a position to facilitate dialogue with respect to this. However, we definitely need our federal government to be a partner in these initiatives, particularly in the area of housing. We have our own needs in our communities that we are responsible for and in the NACC communities.

The whole issue could perhaps take up an afternoon of discussion alone, but I know that the Minister responsible for Housing has also undertaken discussions with his federal counterpart in addressing these many long-standing issues that exist on reserves, but also on a broader scale in urban environments such as Winnipeg, Thompson, Brandon and other areas in this province. So the whole issue of housing is broad. I will say, in concluding my remarks, that housing definitely has to be one of the priority areas. It has to continue to be one of the priority areas in the province of Manitoba with respect to Aboriginal people.

Mr. Pitura: I was wondering, just on housing for a little bit longer, if the Minister could indicate how many new homes are being built at the present time on the MKO reserves, communities.

Mr. Robinson: There are varying numbers. I cannot give a precise number on new housing starts, as an example, in this fiscal year, because one of the problems, as I indicated earlier, was the inability for the winter road system to

accommodate the building supplies to go into some communities.

Mr. Stan Struthers, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Based on a formula developed by the Department of Indian Affairs, allocations are made to First Nations communities. Depending on the number that are approved for a certain community, then those are the number that are ordinarily built. There are some communities I am familiar with that perhaps will only have two housing starts this year. There are some on the other hand that perhaps may have the benefit of a transportation system, meaning an all-weather road, which will be able to put up ten. But to give a definite number for this coming year, I have no idea. Certainly the need still exists. The need is tremendous in order for us to catch up on the housing stock required in First Nations communities.

Mr. Pitura: Just going on the basis of the Minister's last response, if the number of housing starts are at such a low number and if we were to be maybe generous, that it was 45, it would take 100 years to replace the 4500 MKO communities with housing. So it will be a never ending process in terms of catch-up. That is why I was pursuing as to where the federal government was as to whether they were laying out a strategy that over the next decade that they would address the housing needs and put in a plan to attempt to address this need over, say, a minimum of a decade. Because at the rate they are going right now it looks like it is infinity in terms of being able to address the housing crisis situation.

* (16:30)

Has the federal government indicated any kind of willingness to attempt to put that kind of a strategy in place where they are going to look at this crisis and try to resolve it over a decade?

Mr. Robinson: We certainly want the federal government to address this seriously. I certainly cannot speak for them either. However, in our discussions with the federal minister, he certainly has indicated his priority areas to include housing.

The Member is right. If we go at the pace we are going, it will take over a hundred years to catch up. As the population grows, we will never catch up, so we will be in a perpetual crisis in many communities. I think what I was telling the Member earlier, my colleague, is that we have to insist to the federal government, given that it is their responsibility first and foremost, based on treaty obligations, that they must make their effort a little more vigorous, if you will, in attempting to meet the need.

We as a provincial government, given the fact that First Nations people are Manitobans as well, must assist in whatever manner we can. As I indicated to my colleague, I want him to be a part of this discussion. At a point in the future we would like to determine to insist that the federal government must be the lead player in this and that they have to seriously address the long-standing issues with respect to housing that exist in Manitoba.

Mr. Pitura: I might leave this with the Minister in that I recall when his party first formed government it indicated that dealing with the federal government would be easier than what it has been historically, I guess the challenges there with regard to this housing issue of bringing that one home as a result of being able to negotiate with the federal government.

I would just like to pursue another area with the Minister's comments when he answered the first question on this area. He made reference to the dialysis for Island Lake. I understand, by looking at the story in the *Grassroots News* that it is anticipated that that dialysis unit will be in Island Lake in six months. I was just wondering if I could get some comments from the Minister with respect to, are there discussions going on with those communities up there with regard to a health care facility, i.e., a hospital?

Mr. Robinson: The Minister of Health is the lead minister on this initiative. But, certainly, being that we are responsible for Aboriginal affairs in the Province of Manitoba, we definitely want to—this is a new approach. This is a new initiative in Manitoba. There are three areas that I pointed out to my colleague that have been identified for the Island Lake area, that is, the expansion of urban support services; the

need for accessibility to health care facilities, meaning a regional hospital; and the immediate need for a dialysis unit. So every effort is an ongoing exercise with provincial government representation.

The federal government is represented, and, as well, the First Nations communities of the Island Lake area, at the same time, are partners in this approach to find practical ways to address the long-standing health needs of those people in that area. We are very hopeful that with the three parties we will see some good results in a short period of time.

Every day, it would seem, we lose somebody from that area due to diabetes and because of kidney failure. It is unfortunate, but those are the realities that the people from the Island Lake area are faced with each and every day. I believe that we are making every effort to ensure that this work is speedy, but at the same time done carefully, with the view that we do not get ahead of ourselves.

I believe that we are off to a good start, because this is innovative and it is the first time that provincial jurisdiction will become involved with a federal government in trying to attempt to address the needs of the health concerns of First Nations people, particularly in an impoverished area like the Island Lake area. The need is definitely there.

Mr. Pitura: I think the Minister also identified education and training as very much of a priority for First Nations communities. I am wondering if he would just mind elaborating on some of the initiatives that his department is carrying out in that area. *[interjection]*

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): Can I have some order in the committee room, please?

Mr. Robinson: One of the areas that we are examining right now is the possibility of expanding training and opportunities. The port of Churchill is one good example, Churchill being formerly the service centre for the Kivalliq region of what is now in Nunavut, formerly the Keewatin region of the Northwest Territories.

A trade school is something that is being examined and worked on at this current time in the community of Churchill, in partnership with the Keewatin Community College and the community, and also partly with the support of the new Nunavut government. For example, in Nunavut, there are not many plumbers and other trades such as that. In education, we would like to see more Aboriginal people graduate from high schools. We would like to be able to have these people get into a trade school or a university, if at all possible. We have made this another priority of this government to ensure that there are training and employment opportunities in the long run for people in northern Manitoba, and particularly in northern Manitoba communities.

There has been the creation of a working group, with the Nisichawayasihk Cree nation and the Keewatin Community College and the Manitoba Government, and the Aboriginal community. It was struck in 1999, March, I believe, to work with the MKO and others in assessing the educational needs, as far as post-secondary education is concerned. This initiative is ongoing. We certainly await the results. The results we have been getting is that the dialogue has been fruitful, and it is ongoing with the parties mentioned in northern communities. Definitely, I think that education and training needs of Aboriginal communities are something we have to improve.

It was not that many years ago that the number of graduates from high school, as an example, or even university, post-secondary institutions, could be counted on one hand in a province. Here we are in the year 2000, and we are graduating people in the hundreds now, thankfully, from high schools, and the numbers are increasing every day from post-secondary institutions, places like the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, the various colleges in this province. I was delighted to have the opportunity to see dozens of people graduate from the University of Manitoba this spring from various disciplines that they undertook studies in, and we embrace that. To give other people training opportunities certainly is something that we want to continue monitoring and to continue to champion on behalf of the Government of Manitoba as well.

Mr. Pitura: I am prepared to pass, what is it, 19.2.(a)(1) and (2).

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): Line 19.2. Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Operations (a) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$349,100—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$126,700—pass.

Line 19.2.(b) Program and Operational Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$90,200. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Pitura: I would just like to ask a question here with regard to line 19.2.(b)(3) Community Operations, the increase of approximately \$1 million there, if there is an explanation.

* (16:40)

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): Line 19.2.(b)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$90,200. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Pitura: I changed my mind. I was just wondering, there is a reduction of about \$90,000 for Salaries and Employee Benefits. Is that a resulting reduction in FTE?

Mr. Robinson: Part of the Government's plans when we were sworn into office on October 5, 1999, was that we would try and reduce the size of bureaucracy. This particular figure that my colleague is asking about would be the position of an ADM that we eliminated in this department.

As a matter of fact, we do not have ADMs in our department. We just have a deputy minister, and the remainder are directors of their various divisions.

Mr. Pitura: I am prepared to pass it then, Mr. Chairperson.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): Line 19.2.(b)(1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$90,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$92,500—pass.

Line 19.2.(b)(3) Community Operations \$7,556,200. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Pitura: Now I am on the right line. I just wanted to ask the question of the Minister: The increase there of approximately a little over \$1 million in that budget line, Community Operations, if I could get an explanation on that.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairman, the reason why we have had an increase in that one area is to assist the communities that are embarking upon the Self-Reliance Initiative which was something we inherited from the previous government. The intent of the Self-Reliance Initiative is to allow communities more autonomy and more opportunities for them to plan in ensuring a better future for themselves. It also lays out a plan to encourage how these communities can increase revenues in a phased-in approach.

There are also community staff that we want to have in place to assist many of these communities in their development. As we move forward on the Self-Reliance Initiative, it is hoped that autonomy will be given to the communities as opposed to them being totally reliant on the Government of Manitoba, which has been the case for a long time. As I indicated, it was introduced by the previous government. In doing that, we must assist these communities in making that adjustment and in ensuring that there is a phased-in approach, so the investment now will pay dividends in the long run.

The Self-Reliance Initiative, therefore, is several fold. It is to ensure that there is a meeting of essential basic needs and services, which ties in to the quality of life of these communities. It is also developing confidence in exercising the powers of these communities and judgment as they see applicable in their own given situation and having the right and will to be responsible to themselves.

With respect to sustainability, it is to provide constant, continuing permanent support services in the communities that we have identified and also to provide leadership in their community, financial management and adequate resources to support the services and economic requirements of that community.

So these are some of the reasons why there has been an increase in this and at the same time an increase in honorariums to mayors and also to

the councillors of some of these communities. Now the current honorarium for council members for their meetings is roughly \$40 a month, and we are increasing that to \$50 a month for some councillors in some communities. We are increasing it to \$50 from \$40. It, therefore, is part of what we are trying to do in developing the notion of making these local governments self-sustaining. So that is the reflection of that \$1-million increase that my colleague has correctly pointed out.

Mr. Pitura: I thank the Minister for those comments. I realize that, over the last number of years, there has been some movement for the incorporation of municipalities that culminated in the incorporation of South Indian Lake in April of 1999. I was wondering, Mr. Chairperson, if the Minister would comment or could comment on the status of other communities. Are some of the other communities getting close to being incorporated, and in fact ask the Minister if he is going to continue to promote the devolvement of his department in pursuing the incorporation of these northern communities, some more northern communities?

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairman, in response to the question by my colleague, he is correct. The incorporation of South Indian Lake—it was the first community to do that. Also indicates that other communities are wanting to pursue that initiative, but it has got to be a gradually phased-in process because not many communities have the economic base to be able to come up with the percentage required for their own budgets. The phase-in, Phase I in 1998-99 included the communities of Bissett, Camperville, Cormorant, Island Lake, Pikwitonei, Pine Dock, Wabowden, Waterhen.

The Phase II projects in the current year we are in now, 1999-2000, include Duck Bay, Manigotagan, Matheson Island, Meadow Portage, Norway House, South Indian Lake. In the coming months, the Phase III part of this self-reliance initiative will involve Barrows, Berens River, Brochet, Crane River, Cross Lake, Easterville, Gods Lake Narrows, Ilford, Mallard, Moose Lake, Nelson House, Pelican Rapids, Seymourville, Sherridon, Thicket Portage and Granville Lake.

Wabowden has passed a motion to incorporate very recently, so they will be moving into the area of incorporation, but this gives the communities more opportunities in trying to achieve the requirements that they face in their own respective situations.

Mr. Pitura: I would like to follow up with the Minister. He indicated that Wabowden had passed a resolution that they would like to pursue incorporation of their community. If we were taking a look at a time line, say, on average, from the time of this resolution to the time of full incorporation, how many months or years are we looking at until the community is at a stage where they can be incorporated?

Mr. Robinson: I am told that from the time—this one particular community—they moved their council resolution to the time they could potentially incorporate, it could be within this fiscal year, by the end of the fiscal year. Consideration has to be given to the community of Wabowden on their time lines and what they view to be important to them. But, certainly, I think that the respect will be given to them, but I am advised that we would be able to have that community incorporate by the end of the fiscal year that we are currently in.

Mr. Pitura: I am prepared to pass this line.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): Line 2. Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Operations (b) Program and Operational Support (3) Community Operations \$7,556,200—pass; (4) Regional Services \$691,300—pass; (5) Grants \$253,700—pass.

Line 2.(c) Community Support Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,293,500. Shall the item pass?

* (16:50)

Mr. Pitura: When I am looking through the Supplementary Information and looking through the Objective of the Community Support Services and through the Activity Identification, and then I was going through the Expected Results. I have to admit I had a difficult time with the Expected Results. When I took a look at

some of the results like "have good fiscal management" as an expected result, or "be safer from crime," or "have good leadership," or "enjoy an acceptable quality of life," I had difficulty with those because they were not measurable outcomes.

I was just wondering, for example, to have a community be safer from crime, how is that going to be quantified; or have good leadership, how do you quantify people with good leadership? It is probably a judgmental thing. So I was just wondering if the Minister could elaborate on some of these Expected Results to be achieved with Community Support Services.

Mr. Robinson: I believe I incorrectly pointed out earlier that we were responsible for 51 communities under the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. In fact, we are responsible for 52; I forgot one.

However, with respect to this, the 52 communities, there have only been two or three communities that have experienced deficits, and I find that to be commendable. Many of these communities have learned to manage within their own needs. When you compare these figures with the Department of Indian Affairs, I am very proud of these Northern Affairs communities for what they have been able to achieve with sometimes limited resources that they have. So, based on that, two or three of the 52 have experienced deficit situations, and I think that is indeed remarkable, given the limited resources that they sometimes have to work with.

In some of our communities, in the area of justice, as an example, we do have community constables that have been operating within the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and previously, by its previous name, Northern and Native Affairs, for a number of years. These constables have done a tremendous job in being able to maintain law and order in their jurisdictions. They are vastly underpaid and overworked in a lot of situations, but I believe that overall, yes, we have expected results.

At the same time, I think that these communities have to be commended for doing a good job, given the circumstances that they have

to work with at some time on some occasions. So I am very proud of the communities that are a part of the NACC. Although problems will arise from time to time, overall I believe that they have done a tremendous job in administering and governing their communities.

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to ask the Minister, through you, some of these Expected Results are very difficult to measure. Therefore, with regard to the objectives as set out under Community Support Services and the results as laid out in terms of certain activities taking place and that certain results are expected, some of them, as they are laid out, are very difficult to measure. So, when I read it, I said I had a lot of difficulty with this because we are going to spend the money in this area, and yet I do not have results that I can measure.

Mr. Robinson: Certainly we want to see communities succeed as well. One of the areas that we have been concentrating on is to have staff work with the community representatives in ensuring that they are able to achieve attainable goals and to be able to live within the restrictions that are placed in front of them. We have, to a large degree, I believe, met with a lot of success in being able to deal with these issues. Although our department is maybe short-staffed in a lot of ways, nevertheless, I believe that our staff has done a tremendous job in working with the communities to ensure that the Expected Results are achieved.

Yes, we will fail in some areas, I agree with my colleague, but I believe that we will be able to advance a lot of issues, particularly with the self-reliance initiative that I was describing earlier, by giving communities more opportunity to govern themselves in a much better way than has been since The Northern Affairs Act was proclaimed just about 30 years ago.

Mr. Pitura: I am prepared to pass these lines then, Mr. Chair.

* (17:00)

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): Line 19.2.(c) Community Support Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,293,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$499,400—pass.

Line 2. Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Operations (d) Technical Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$130,900. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Pitura: I would just like to follow up with a bit discussion, Mr. Chair, with the Minister in this area with the technical services that are available to communities. How many projects are on the go right now in terms of providing technical services? Maybe the Minister will have to correct me, but I am assuming that these services are available to communities with regard to the capital infrastructure and the local municipal services that they receive. I was just wondering how many projects are on the go with respect to northern communities with regard to, say, capital infrastructure.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairman, I will attempt to give a definite answer on the question. Currently, in our Technical Services area, we do have two staff members, one engineer and one technical engineering technician, and they deal with communities on the needs of the communities.

With respect to projects in this current year, I would like to give the following examples: Easterville, for example, an allocation there for a water truck \$60,000; Bissett, sewer and water \$300,000; Norway House, waste study \$20,000; the Ilford internal road system \$56,000; the Dawson Bay tractor attachment \$2,600; the Duck Bay office equipment \$5,600; Dauphin River, access road \$10,000; Homebrook, gravel \$20,000; Gods Lake Narrows, road upgrade \$80,000; Ilford, garage \$180,000; Moose Lake, roads \$20,000; Brochet, hall \$200,000; Cross Lake, water truck \$54,000; Norway House, water truck \$48,000; Matheson Island, upgrade \$36,000; the Island Lake STP \$700,000, that is the sewer treatment plant; the Dauphin River upgrade waste disposal site just over \$4,000; South Indian Lake, nursing station repairs \$40,000; Moose Lake, fire truck services \$95,000; Pine Dock, breakwater construction \$22,000, the sulphur line supplement payback \$171.3 thousand, the engineering and design \$50,000, fire equipment \$50,000, calcium chloride \$30,000, surveys and subdivisions \$40,000, emergencies \$83,000.

So I believe that is currently the projects that the Member requested and, at the same time, a breakdown of staff members available to work with these communities.

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Chairman, I was wondering if the Minister would be willing to share that information with his colleague from the constituency of Morris.

Mr. Robinson: I believe that there has been a long-standing practice in this House that, to protect the tendering process, we have to be careful. However, I will say, Mr. Chairman, if I may, I will write a letter to the Member for Morris and give him the information that I have outlined but, at the same time, keeping in mind that we must protect the tendering process.

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Chairman, all that I would be interested in obtaining would be the project, what community and the dollar value if it is there. Other information would not be that important, just to get an idea of what is going on in each of the communities.

The question I had here is: These projects are all funded through the Capital Grants line?

Mr. Robinson: In response to my colleague, yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Pitura: We can move on, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): Line 2. Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Operations (d) Technical Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$130,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$55,300—pass.

Line 2.(e) Northern Affairs Fund (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$218,900. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Chairman, in this particular area with the Northern Affairs Fund, this fund is administered on behalf of unincorporated communities and cottage subdivisions. I was just wondering if the Minister could indicate or share some expanded information with regard to the role that the Department does play in that area.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairman, in response, currently the Department administers two communities that are under the Department's jurisdiction, meaning that we administer the books. We also collect on behalf of all the communities under our responsibility all property and school taxes, or municipal taxes, I suppose, would be another word, so that is the response I have for my colleague in that regard.

Mr. Pitura: I am prepared to go on, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): Line 19.2. Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Operations (e) Northern Affairs Fund (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$218,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$67,900—pass.

2.(f) Inter-Regional Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$419,400. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Pitura: Just a couple of things here, Mr. Chairman. Under the Activity Identification, it indicates that the Department provides the function of a principal electoral officer for community elections. Does this simply apply to northern communities, or does it apply to Aboriginal communities as well?

Mr. Robinson: With respect to this, just in communities under the jurisdiction of the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

* (17:10)

Mr. Pitura: It also indicates that the Department provides support for subdivision applications and prepares native documentation for approval, and I was just wondering if the Department does this under a cost-recovery system or is this service provided free of charge?

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairman, that constitutes part of the services that we extend from the Department.

Mr. Pitura: I am also interested in one of the aspects of the, actually two aspects, I guess, of the Expected Results. It indicates the development of sustainable recreational opportunities at the community level, and I was

just wondering if the Minister could expand on that as to what that entails and what it means.

Mr. Robinson: Because of the circumstances of some communities where there is no full-time recreational co-ordinator, our co-ordinator from the Department works with volunteers from many of these communities to assist communities expand recreational activities, therefore filling a much-needed activity for youth and children in some of these communities, and that is one of the reasons why we do have that position of co-ordinator to concentrate on recreation.

Mr. Pitura: I am prepared to move on, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Struthers): 2.(f) Inter-Regional Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$419,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$122,900—pass.

2.(g) Agreements Management and Co-ordination (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$712,100. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Chairman, this is one of the areas where I think there is probably some interesting discussion could take place. I am looking at the first paragraph in the Activity Identification and it says: Promotes the development of better relations and an atmosphere of partnership and trust between government and the Aboriginal community based on a common understanding of goals and issues.

I would just like to ask the Minister how he envisions this being accomplished and maintained, and whether there is some confusion, possible confusion, with the federal and provincial responsibility in terms of government and relations with Aboriginal communities.

Mr. Robinson: This comes under the area of the Northern Flood Agreement, Mr. Chairman. Certainly what we have been trying to do is have a meaningful dialogue. As the critic knows, the comprehensive implementation agreements have been signed by four of the five NFA First Nations communities: Split Lake, York Factory,

Nelson House and Norway House. That was done prior to us coming into government in this province. The total combined value of the four signed agreements is \$220 million.

Under the comprehensive implementation agreements, over 168 000 acres of Crown land are to be transferred to reserve status for the First Nations. These, of course, include provisions for approximately 4800 acres of permit or fee simple land. Most of the implementation is undertaken by First Nations through a community approval process for agreement related projects. As the Member knows, on this Northern Flood Agreement, one of the other two partners on Cross Lake specifically, as with the other four, would be Manitoba Hydro, the federal government, the provincial government and the five affected communities under the Northern Flood Agreement. Cross Lake is the community that remains.

We are hopeful that we will carry on with the dialogue that has been initiated and that we will be able to meet some of the demands that have been placed before us, including programs that are needed in an area such as Cross Lake where there have been a lot of needs identified by the community leadership. I believe that staff from our department have been very accessible in dealing with the First Nation community of Cross Lake in trying to address the many long-standing issues that result from the Northern Flood Agreement that was signed some years ago. We are faced with that challenge and the work carries on.

Mr. Pitura: With regard to the Northern Flood Agreement and negotiation with Cross Lake, I would like to ask the Minister: I realize that negotiations are ongoing but is there a light at the end of the tunnel on this negotiation, or is this going to be a long time coming yet? I just wanted to get his comments on this.

Mr. Robinson: As the critic for our department identified in his opening remarks, this will give me an opportunity to talk about some of the things that he wanted to talk about, the NFA titanium mining potential in Cross Lake. The current status of our dialogue with Cross Lake is that there is negotiation happening on primary concerns of the community, on employment and training, recreation, the whole issue of land exchange, which again is what I described

earlier, at the same time reviewing proposed funding requirements for a formal process.

As my colleague knows, the arena operation and maintenance capital amounts cover costs of \$9.1 million; Cross Lake won that through an arbitration ruling, which was not challenged by our government, so that will proceed. The domestic fishing program, the providing fish to community alternative foods component is happening. It is assisting local gardens in providing foods for households on a quarterly basis. We are currently supporting a school lunch program for children. It is part of the domestic fishing programs; we are providing fish and alternative food for lunches and doing some pre-engineering work on a bridge, which I believe that the Minister of Highways and Government Services (Mr. Ashton) is much more familiar with than I am at this current time, given that this falls under his responsibility. There are currently discussions on those fronts that are going on.

As with the Member, we certainly want to proceed with the implementation of many of these outstanding issues. The work carries on. I am very confident in a staff that has been working on this file. We have some very capable people working on behalf of the Government of Manitoba through our department that have been working on this file for a number of years. We have some very competent people from the federal government as well as representatives from Manitoba Hydro that have been working.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Chairperson, in the Chair

To answer the question whether I see light at the end of the tunnel, I prefer not to comment on that because I have not seen the light yet. So I would hope that we will be able to address many of the needs that are required, not only by Cross Lake, but also the other NFA communities: Split Lake, York Landing, Nelson House and Norway House. Titanium is a possibility, and our government would work with the Cross Lake community. A lot depends.

* (17:20)

Cross Lake has indicated that they would like to, and we have certainly said the same

thing, that we would work government to government with Cross Lake. The offer has been there. Given their governance structure, we have not always had the opportunity to have open dialogue with the leadership in the community. However, we will continue to do the work that is required. Upgrading the road system for the safety of the travelling public is important, roads that lead to Cross Lake. The bridge initiative, which is also an obligation under the Northern Flood Agreement, will also carry on, at the same time addressing these other issues that I identified earlier.

Mr. Pitura: In spending some more time with Cross Lake and knowing that the one aspect is the Northern Flood Agreement, which is the federal government, Manitoba Hydro, provincial government, dealing with that in terms of compensation to Cross Lake for the flooding that occurred as a result of Manitoba Hydro development. On the other side is the potential that exists for upwards of 1100 jobs, somewhere in there, with the titanium deposit if it were to go ahead and be developed, because I understand it is a large deposit.

There is also the issue of the Treaty Land Entitlement process that is taking place. The Minister can correct me if I am wrong, but my understanding is that the mining company that would develop that particular site would like to be assured that its assets are well protected in terms of developing that site. At the same time, the Cross Lake First Nation, I understand, was negotiating to have that particular area of land as part of the Treaty Land Entitlement agreement. I would just like to bridge with the Minister and ask the Minister what he sees as a possible resolve to those issues that seem to be arising all the time. Yet I guess of concern to many people is seeing a titanium deposit with the potential of employing a lot of people and creating a lot of economic activity for Cross Lake not getting developed.

So I was just wondering if the Minister has any perspective, or is there any kind of resolve that he sees down the way in terms of having that titanium deposit developed, creating that economic opportunity for the people of Cross Lake.

Mr. Robinson: This is one of the areas that we definitely want to see progress. We are so serious as a part of this government that we do have a cabinet committee which I have been given the responsibility of chairing, which includes: Highways and Government Services; Conservation; Industry, Trade and Mining; Hydro and Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. In order for us to get to that step of the mining potential and fully realizing the opportunities that exist there and the creation of many, many jobs which will begin addressing the socio-economic issues that have been there for a long time in the community of Cross Lake, there are several obstacles that have to be overcome. First of all, the efforts have been made by the staff, as I indicated earlier, on some of the outstanding issues.

At the same time, with respect to the land exchange that is required, we have to continue work on that. There is a land transfer process which requires time, requires eventually the federal government to designate it as reserved land. We will require that initiative, but certainly, on the part of our government, I think that we have been willing to play ball on that whole issue. Given the opportunities that do exist in Cross Lake, we certainly want to move on that as well, but, when you enter into a partnership or into a relationship or when you are dealing government to government, there has got to be fairness on both sides. Certainly I think I can say on our part we have expressed a lot of fairness.

As an example, the federal government, for the first time in many years, has come back to the table to talk about some of these outstanding issues including Hydro. Certainly the government, and I commend my predecessor Mr. Newman who worked on this diligently in his time as minister responsible for this department, but we need Cross Lake to be there to have dialogue with us. We have certainly been open to that. We believe that, with the potential that exists there in the area, that has been identified as having a good deposit of titanium, that the potential is limitless, and we could do a lot of things in addressing the long-standing issues of the people in that community. I think we are committed to ensuring that the people of Cross Lake will fully benefit from that potential. In

order to get there, we have to attract mining companies that are interested in that resource and that will mine it without obstacles and without too many strings attached for them.

I have come to know that business works that way, that they will want some assurances and some guarantees before they will make an investment in the potential that does exist in Cross Lake. So we are moving to that end, and we want to ensure that the benefit is realized by the people that require jobs in Cross Lake to help them improve their lives in their different circumstances and their different situations. As a government and as part of this government, we are committed to doing that. I need not remind my colleague that the situation in Cross Lake has not been a very good one up until now, with deaths and suicides and other unfortunate occurrences that have happened in the past several years.

Some of these things can be attributed to the damage done by Hydro. But on the other hand, you cannot blame everything on Hydro either, because some of those problems were there prior to Hydro even coming to Cross Lake. I think that we have to keep things in perspective. However, I think at the same time, we are realistic in that, yes, the northern flood did cause an alteration of a way of life for Aboriginal people in northern Manitoba. We have to come to terms with that. We also want to be able to be in a position to correct the wrongs of the past but to do those things within reason.

* (17:30)

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the comments from the Minister. I think that this is probably one of those communities where we have talked about the education and training and housing and health care and the economic development opportunities that exist, that it is somewhat sad to see that there is not more willingness to co-operate and partner to move the project along for the betterment of everybody.

I would like to ask the Minister (Mr. Robinson), going to the treaty land entitlement process, to ask the status of that process right now. How many communities have settled or are

in the process of establishing their treaty land entitlement, and how many First Nations communities are remaining?

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) for that question.

Currently in Manitoba, there are 31 First Nations with treaty land entitlement claims. Of these, 27 claims have been validated by Canada, which include: Seven First Nations with individual TLE agreements, 19 First Nations represented by the TLE Committee of Manitoba. One First Nation, that being Peguis, has received validation from Canada. On March 7 of this year, a negotiation protocol was entered into between Canada, Manitoba and Peguis related to this claim.

The total acreage available for selection: Crown land is over a million acres and acquisition of 170 000 acres by the 26 TLE First Nations, not including Peguis, which is after 1 256 316 acres. Of the 19 First Nations represented by the TLE Committee under the Manitoba TLE framework agreement, 14 of the First Nations have held First Nation specific TLE agreements under the framework agreement.

Five First Nations which have not signed are: Fox Lake; Shamattawa; the Sayisi Dene; York Factory; and Mathias, which includes the Marcel Colomb community in Lynn Lake. Those are the communities that have not signed.

To date, 557 307 acres of Crown land have been selected by the framework agreement First Nations, of which 1275 acres have been transferred to reserve status. Mr. Chairman, 116 809 acres have been selected by the Island Lake First Nations with individual TLE settlements, of which 87 272 acres have been transferred to reserve status. In addition, approximately 9 500 acres have been purchased by the Roseau River community. Eighteen hundred for Swan Lake. I am sorry, I am reading this wrong, but I believe I will conclude my lengthy response by saying that 9 500 acres have been purchased by the Roseau River First Nation.

Mr. Pitura: Mr. Chairman, just to follow up with the treaty land entitlement, I also took note that I believe the Minister indicated in his opening comments about the Sioux Valley Dakota and the federal government working on a self-government process. Is that correct?

Mr. Robinson: The discussions with the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation have been ongoing for about eight years now by my predecessors, ministers responsible for this department. Since 1991, just about nine years, they have been going on between Canada and Sioux Valley. It is what is regarded as a community-based self-government policy under the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. This policy was designed to guide negotiations between Canada and First Nations that would result in agreements and amendments to legislation that would enhance the powers of First Nations communities from powers contained in the Indian Act.

Sioux Valley would be the first in Manitoba that would enter into a self-government arrangement in the province of Manitoba, to my knowledge. On our part, the Province of Manitoba is to play a supportive role and certainly they want to retain their language, which is Dakota. They want to be able to have a say in education, and they have their own unique way of alternative justice disputes. They gave us a history lesson on the way the Dakota people did business with respect to how they governed people such as pedophiles in their communities and specifically in Sioux Valley.

We joined the process in 1992; we continue to be a partner in this, an observer in this process. Funding for it is being provided by the federal government, and this initiative could turn into a model for community-based self-government in Manitoba and across Canada. So we are fully supportive of it. We want it to succeed and we anticipate, depending on the federal government's response, we would like to sign the self-government model agreement for Sioux Valley hopefully by August or September at the latest. We will be doing that upon the agreement of the federal government when they are available to do that with Chief Ken Whitecloud and his council of Sioux Valley.

Mr. Pitura: The Minister made some interesting observations there, and I thank the Minister for his comments. I believe the Minister said that the Province of Manitoba was an observer to this process. I was just wondering if he could clarify that, because I have been under the understanding that Manitoba is not part of that negotiating process between the federal government and the Dakota Sioux Nation. So, if you are implementing a self-government process, which means that they would virtually take over the delivery of health, education, justice and so many other services available to their community, that could have an impact on the Province of Manitoba. I was wondering if the Province is, at this point in time, a full partner in this process establishing a self-government framework or is Manitoba still on the outside as an observer looking in.

Mr. Robinson: The main object of our participation in this arrangement with Sioux Valley is to ensure that there be co-operation with the parties. The main agreement ultimately, which will be signed sometime down the road, will be ultimately between Sioux Valley and the Government of Canada.

The agreement in principle, which will give this initiative a kick-start, will be between the Province of Manitoba, Canada and Sioux Valley. Because Sioux Valley must adhere to the laws of Manitoba on a number of different fronts, including justice issues and educational issues, that is why we are a partner at this point in time. But ultimately, when Sioux Valley, and it could be some time down the road when they are prepared, the agreement will be between themselves and the Government of Canada. In the interim, because we, as a government in this province have an interest in this area as well and given that Sioux Valley is a nation in itself, we are going to be a partner in the agreement-in-principle signing that we hope will occur in either August or no later than September.

At this point in time, there has been no commitment of money on the part of the Government of Manitoba towards this initiative. Our role is strictly to be a monitor and to ensure that good dialogue is held between Sioux Valley and the Government of Canada.

Mr. Pitura: I would like to pass the questioning over to my colleague from Portage la Prairie, if I may.

Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie): I appreciate the opportunity to be here the afternoon and ask questions in regard to the Aboriginal community. As a member of Portage la Prairie, we certainly are well aware of the aboriginal community's needs and of having three recognized bands within the confines of the constituency.

* (17:40)

I would like to first off ask a question in regard to the land entitlement treaties that are still yet to be worked out, but just for a clarification, has the Department had a legal opinion or are they considering a legal opinion in regard to former Chief Peter YellowQuill's court challenge in regard to entitlement moneys that have been provided to First Nations peoples as to the actual nature to which those moneys can be expended? More clearly, can land entitlement monies be spent on the construction of hotel and convention facilities?

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairman, if the Member would allow me, I would like to study that question. I would like to ask him, if I may, to respond to him in a more comprehensive way. I would like to seek legal advice, especially on a court case, and I will write back to him. I will commit myself to writing back to him at the earliest opportunity with a complete response to the question that he raised with me today.

Mr. Faurchou: I appreciate the Minister's response. It was more or less to bring heads up to the Minister in this regard because it is a concern, and the Department perhaps best be prepared if in fact this does proceed. But I respect his response today.

In regard to the land dispute that took place—in fact, we just had the fourth anniversary of the Waterhen First Nations armed barricade incident here in the province—I was wondering whether or not the Minister, for the official record, had any particular comments he would like to make in that regard. I know that he has met with the individuals that were on both sides of the

barricade. He is aware of the situation. But having just passed this weekend, being the fourth anniversary of the movement of over 300 persons from that particular First Nations reserve to the city of Portage la Prairie, I wondered whether the Minister had any comment.

Mr. Robinson: I share the Member's concerns with respect to the—I guess we may as well say displaced people who live in Portage la Prairie that are originally from Waterhen. It was an unfortunate situation that occurred. I do not think in our wildest imagination we could have ever imagined that things would have wound up the way they wound up. Because of the potential of a court case coming down and how the Supreme Court ruled on the matter, our department will be engaging in discussions with the Department of Justice and analyzing what role we ought to be playing.

I have shared these thoughts with my colleague from Portage a number of times, and we must come to grips with this issue. I believe that we must have a much more co-ordinated effort, and I know that the Deputy Minister in my department has had dialogue with representatives that now reside in Portage la Prairie. Depending on the discussions we have with the Department of Justice and to see whether or not we are in line in speaking out about the issue with respect to the potential of their taking this matter further in the court of law, I am going to commit to the Member for Portage la Prairie that together with our department we must come up with an approach to deal with the outstanding issues that exist with the people that are originally from Waterhen and now resident in the city of Portage la Prairie. I know there have resulted numerous problems, and we believe that these people deserve to have an improved way of life, if you will.

So I will leave my answer at that, Mr. Chairman, but that is my commitment to my colleague.

Mr. Faurchou: Once again, I appreciate the sensitivity of this situation. The Minister's response is one of encouragement, certainly his expression of familiarity with the situation.

I do want to emphasize on behalf of those residing now in Portage la Prairie that four years have come and gone, and they are very, very concerned with their young people's urbanization, if I might say. They are gravely concerned that their way of life and traditions are being lost by residing in an urban environment. I think if the Minister took the posture of one of guidance and vision, it would be the leadership element that I believe the peoples in Portage la Prairie are wanting for. I think if the Minister were to take on understanding their concerns, and then perhaps providing a bit of a road map to them, whether it be within the federal jurisdiction or within the provincial jurisdiction, I think that is what is lacking most at this point in time.

If the Minister has any comment, otherwise I will go on to another question.

Mr. Robinson: I want to thank my colleague from Portage for the guidance he has provided us. As I said earlier, we will avail ourselves to addressing this problem. It has been long-standing, as we all know, and we do have to have some resolution at some point in addressing it. So I will be asking somebody from our department to work on this file or open a file on the issue and to work with not only myself but also the Member for Portage who has a direct interest in this matter. Hopefully, we will find some resolution to this matter at some point in the future.

*(17:50)

Mr. Faurichou: I thank the Minister for his response.

The program that was provided to those in the Aboriginal community who were wanting to farm—it may not be politically correct of me, but I believe it was the Manitoba Indian agricultural loans program. Now that has perhaps changed in its actual naming, but I wondered whether or not that particular program still exists.

Mr. Robinson: I would like to respond to that. The program was called MIAP. It was the Manitoba Indian Agriculture Program. It discontinued some years ago. It was not replaced by anything similar to it. It was a federal

program and operated to assist farmers of Indian ancestry, as First Nations people were called back then. But there has been no replacement to that program, although there are several programs from the federal government side to assist people who want to enter into industries. There has been no replacement for this specific program the Member talks about.

Mr. Faurichou: Thank you very much. Sorry for dating myself and not knowing about the program and its nonreplacement. The reason I asked that is, certainly, the Long Plains First Nation, with its acquisition of more fertile land, if I might use that terminology, because of their land entitlement treaty monies that have provided for further acquisition, there is a significant interest by the councillors and chief that there be a focus once again placed on agriculture and to keep the young people in touch with nature through that. So that was a question that I just wanted to ask.

Having said that, just moving on to another area, from my background with the Portage la Prairie School Division and the programming that probably paid the greatest dividend, if I might use that term, to the young people of the First Nations was that of a counsellor position that was afforded to the high schools and partially as well to the junior high. The Aboriginal young people, when they made the move into Portage la Prairie School Division's schooling, found themselves in not only a different set of social circumstances, but they certainly were challenged by the academic side of things as well. What we found was the position of someone in a counselling position that eased the stresses of both those areas was the most effective way of keeping young people within our schools.

I am wondering whether or not the Department is considerate of support of this type of program, because I made mention of it as well in the Department of Education Estimates too. This particular funded position has gone by the wayside. As far as the Portage la Prairie School Division's experience was, the results were absolutely extraordinary, and it is unfortunate that either they could not find the elders to fill this position or the dollars to support.

I would like to ask the Minister, the Minister's department, whether there is any consideration in this respect, because eventually the young people do venture out and away from their familiar surroundings to further their education, and I will say this support position as counsellor was immensely successful.

Mr. Robinson: I agree that sometimes it is a tremendous strain for students trying to advance in their high school and junior high school years. What I will tell my colleague is that, yes, I agree that we definitely need these people to have counselling to keep their interest in school and eventually, hopefully, into graduation and ultimately into post-secondary education.

I will ask my deputy minister to avail himself to having discussions with the regional Director of Indian Affairs, and perhaps together with the federal Department of Indian Affairs and our department and our government, we will be able to find some solution, and perhaps if indeed that was a successful program in the past, we should probably give it consideration. But I will certainly ask my deputy to talk with the regional Director of Indian affairs in this province, Mr. Cochrane, and talk about some ideas.

Upon completion of that process, I will get back to the Member for Portage on that.

Mr. Faurichou: I thank the Minister for his response. We sometimes get focussed so much on our own departments that we do not see the crossover, that when you move individuals away from their familiar reserve settings and do move into the public school system, we cross over to another department. I think with the raising of this topic here today, it will go a long way perhaps to making that leap.

One last question I have for the Minister is in regard to a very unfortunate situation in Portage la Prairie involving the DOPS, the Dakota Ojibway Police Service, involving officers in the Long Plain First Nation reserve. It involved a shooting incident which the officers were subsequently cleared of any misdeed or inappropriate action. However, the stresses were immense on the officers involved, and they had to take time away under stress leave, which left

the policing situation open and unfilled. So the RCMP detachment out of Portage la Prairie was requested to form a small detachment to take care of that situation. However, as it came to funding, it was found that we were, in fact, paying for the same service twice.

I am wondering whether the Minister's department has seen this as a situation and potentially reviewed it. I know when I mentioned it to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), he said it was a concern and was looking into it. But that is the way it was left. I wonder whether the Minister and the policing funding formula has been thought out by your department.

Mr. Robinson: Not to slough off any responsibility, but I believe that this would fall under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh). Certainly the details are probably more comprehensive than what the Member for Portage (Mr. Faurichou) has told us.

I will certainly study Hansard in the days ahead and pursue that and present it to the Minister of Justice for a response, because I know he has been working on the First Nations policing file and I am sure that upon my insistence will reply to the Member for Portage.

Mr. Faurichou: I appreciate that, and, yes, it was more or less again an awareness issue. I believe that there is a great deal of opportunity right now for our young people seeking law enforcement as a career or vocation. I know that the Department should be aware of that and potentially be able to support and guide individuals into an upgrading or rounding out their education, so that they can be considered for that career opportunity.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 6 p.m., the Committee will rise.

HEALTH

* (15:40)

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Jim Rondeau): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will now resume

consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Health. Consideration of these Estimates left off on page 91 of the Estimates book. Resolution 21.4 Health Services Insurance Fund. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the Minister could assist me with some answers to questions that I had asked 10 days ago, and I would like to pursue some of those.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I will endeavour to do so.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The last time I had the opportunity to sit in on Health Estimates I had asked some questions about Victoria Park Lodge, and the Minister indicated that he would provide me with specifics at the next meeting. I wonder if the Minister could give me an update on Victoria Park Lodge at this time.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I have been advised the remaining residents and staff at Victoria Park Lodge were transferred to Souris PCH on June 4 and 5, and that the lodge is in the process of being transferred to the Town and R.M. Council who intend to convert it to seniors' housing.

Mr. Gilleshammer: So the Minister has made a decision that the Department of Health is no longer going to make use of this facility as a seniors' residence, contrary to what he had put on the record last year.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, upon assuming office and review of this issue, the process was so far along and so far gone, I had actually inquired about specific residents. So many residents had been moved and so few were still resident in the facility and the RHA had a process in place that they had recommended and wanted to follow, and they continued that process.

Mr. Gilleshammer: So is the Minister agreeing that the RHA had made the appropriate decision?

Mr. Chomiak: The decision was made and the decision took place.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The ownership of the lodge then is reverting to the town and the R.M.? Is that correct?

Mr. Chomiak: The note that was provided to me indicated the lodge is in the process of being transferred to the Town and the R.M. Council, who intend to convert it to seniors' housing.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am given to understand that the Mayor and Council and Reeve and Council had written to the Minister for some clarification, hopefully to speed this process along that seemed to be bogged down in bureaucracy. Has that process now been completed?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I recall that there was correspondence previous in our office with respect to that matter, and I note from the update from the Department that there is still a process that is being put in place and that it seems from the note that has been provided to me that there is a process for the transferring to the Town and R.M. Council for conversion to seniors' housing.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I wonder if the Minister would make a commitment to have this process stepped up a bit. The local governments are not in a position where they want to get into the housing business, but because of the history of the lodge, the ownership will revert to them. It appears it is tied up within the bureaucracy and does not afford them the opportunity to put this property on the market or have somebody come in and manage it. As a result, the unit is sitting there, and the town and the R.M., I believe, feel that they are in limbo. They do not want to be in the housing business. That is not what their mandate is. I am wondering if the Minister would agree to take some steps to have this severance take place and move the process along a little quicker.

Mr. Chomiak: I will have the Department review the process for the purposes of trying to provide some clarity.

Mr. Gilleshammer: This facility has been used both for housing and personal care clients in the past. It appears that the facility, after a number of years, probably needs to be upgraded before it

can be used in terms of housing senior citizens. Is the Minister of the mind that his department has any responsibility for any of the upgrades that need to take place?

Mr. Chomiak: The issue of seniors housing, issue of capital requirements, is a part of the capital process that is done on a regular basis with respect to review of needs of particular communities, and I am certain that the RHA has reviewed its needs and requirements in this regard.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I will leave that topic then, and I would urge the Minister to have his department officials try and have this situation finalized. I would like to ask about the template that the Minister has before him on the existence of rural acute care facilities. He indicated when we last met that it had been revised and that he would provide a copy for me. I am wondering if I could have a copy of that today.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I do not have a copy with me today.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am wondering if one of his staffpersons could have it delivered to our caucus for my benefit.

Mr. Chomiak: I will review the template, and as I indicated to the Member, I will be providing it to members opposite in due course.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The Minister seems to be changing his answer. He indicated he could not provide it simply because he did not have it with him. Now, he is saying he will only provide it after he reviews it. Is the revised template not available for public perusal at this time?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, contrary to practise when I was the Health critic during the previous government, we are making documents and information available. There was never, ever available by the previous government which the Member was a part of. We will provide that document to the Member, and the Member will have an opportunity to review that document.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I am asking the Minister, and I do not want him to get excited

about this, but the document, can it be made available today?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the document is not available today.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, the Minister is changing his story here as we sit. In his first answer, he said that he could not provide it simply because he did not have it with him. Now he is indicating that he is refusing to provide it.

What is the status of this template? Has it been revised as the Minister had indicated? He seemed to indicate that it had been finalized, and the only thing preventing him from providing it to me today is he did not have it with him. What is the story with this template?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the Member seems to be caught up in this refusal issue. I indicated when we last met that I would be providing the template to members opposite, which is a process that members opposite are not familiar with, that is, the providing of information to members opposite that is not kept and hidden away.

I said the template would be provided. The template will be provided. I do not have the template with me today. If the Member wants to ask me questions, I will endeavour to answer questions. As I indicated, the template will be provided in due course.

* (15:50)

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I wonder if the Honourable Minister would put some time frame on that, so that we could meet with our reeves and councils, our hospital administrators and, in fact, the general public out here. The Minister does not seem to take the concerns of rural Manitobans very seriously. This is something that has been in the news.

An Honourable Member: That is not true, and you know it.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), who walks out on meetings down East, gets nothing for Manitoba,

wants to participate in this. She can have a chance to ask questions when I am finished.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Rondeau): Order, please. Please address your questions and comments through the Chair. That provides the opportunity so that there is not debate at the table, it is to the Minister.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Chairman, members of the rural Manitoba community have a tremendous amount of interest in this issue, and the Minister is indicating that the template which his department and others have been working on that has been revised a number of times has now been revised again.

I can understand that he likes to play games in the House and in committee, but there is a serious concern by people who live in the southwest health region, the Marquette health region and I dare say all of the other health regions in Manitoba, and I am wondering if the Minister would have the courtesy of giving them some idea of what time lines he anticipates before he reveals this revised template.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, as I indicated to the Member in the House when the Member raised the question initially and the Member's colleagues were wandering around Manitoba saying, boy, the NDP intends to close hospitals by circulating a draft copy of a template, the process was started when the Member opposite sat around cabinet.

If the Member opposite had perhaps asked his cabinet colleagues and was as concerned then as he is now, perhaps the process would have been undertaken in a different fashion. The Member sat in cabinet when the process took place, when the process was launched by the Member opposite's government. The process commenced when the Member was a member of the former government's cabinet, and now the Member is coming to members opposite and trying to indicate concerns in rural Manitoba for a process that commenced under the auspices of that member as a member of Executive Council.

We have indicated, unlike members opposite, that we will not deep-six reports. We will not hide reports. There are still reports in the

Department of Health files initiated by members opposite that were never made public by members opposite, because part of the rationale, particularly leading up to the last election period, was to launch initiatives and launch processes and not provide that information to the public in the hopes that that information would not be used one way or the other, politically, in the process.

When we came into office, there was a series of reports launched by members opposite: the template review, the lab consolidation and two other reports--oh, the emergency services report. They were all launched when members opposite were government, and I dare say if members opposite were still in government would still not have been made public.

We took all of these reports and made them public, as we are going to do with the template report. We are having a process of opening it up. So the Member opposite has a legitimate concern about it. There are legitimate concerns in rural Manitoba, which is why members opposite launched the process in the first place. There were instances in the past several years when hospitals had to cover the "H" up on the highways because of concerns regarding the minimal standards in hospitals, so the process was launched. It was a process that was launched and put into place. The process began after we took office and continued to where there has now been a copy that has been forwarded to our office, which I indicated to the Member I will be providing to him.

What my intentions are, my general intentions, the general course of action we have chosen in all of these reports has been to take these reports and to circulate them to the affected regions and affected parties and ask for their advice and comments. I indicated in the Estimates previously that that was the course of action we would probably be undertaking. I am almost certain that is what we will undertake. I have not had a specific policy, an opportunity to determine that, but that has been our general policy. My intention will be to take the report and circulate it.

I also indicated to the Member we would provide him with a copy of the report, and I will

provide a copy to the Member in due course. The issues are significant. The issues do affect rural Manitoba. But for the Member to suggest somehow, to imply during the course of this particular Estimates debate or other Estimates debates that we are unwilling to provide information, in my experience in the Legislature, is simply not credible. The process is important. The issues are important.

There have been numerous reports that have been circulated. A report came out last week that was commissioned by the Member's government in 1994 dealing with rural hospitals, which we also intend to circulate widely. There was a report commissioned in 1994, and we also will circulate that report widely which we recently received. That process will take place, and we will have discussion with affected parties and determine what is in the best interests of Manitobans and what is in the best interests of health care.

Of course, it is a major concern. It has been a major concern for a decade, which is one of the reasons why I think at the waning years of the Member's mandate they decided to launch a process into this. They launched a process into this, and now we have inherited the process. We will continue a process of discussion and dialogue on these significant issues.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Chairman, well, without launching into another lengthy speech, can you give any guidelines, time frames, when you are going to release this? Are you going to release it before the House is over, or do you intend to release it after we adjourn? Communities out there are waiting for this information, the mayors and reeves, councillors, very anxious to see what the Minister's thinking is on this. He has been hiding behind his line that this was launched in August during the election campaign. Clearly, the documents that have been tabled, that we have seen, have been revised in November, revised in January. He is revising it again. There is some urgency out there, and all I am asking from the Minister is: Is he prepared to make that revised copy available today, this week, next week, the month of August? When can citizens of this province expect to see this document?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, firstly, is the Member suggesting that revised documents—the committee was the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Association of Registered Nurses, Association of Licensed Practical Nurses, rural physicians, Emergency Medical Services, the Provincial Health Programs and Services Executive Network with the regional health authorities of Manitoba. The council of Chief Executive Officers was part of the group and committee that made this report.

With respect to the final draft and the suggestion that—I have not even compared the leaked copy that went out with the final draft that we received. I do not even know if there were revisions. I am assuming there is a final draft that came forward, which may or may not be revised. I have not compared it with the leaked version that members opposite were trumpeting around rural Manitoba several months ago.

Mr. Chairperson, I do not know when the House is going to adjourn. I am going to review this as well as other issues. As has been the case generally with all reports, we have released them publicly. We have provided them to the affected parties.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, now the Minister has indicating he does not know if there is a revised copy or not. On July 10 in this Chamber he said: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, there is a revised copy that has now come in in the Department, and our intention is to farm it out. I went on to ask if he would provide me with a copy and he said yes. Some time has passed. I am just asking for some time lines on this, when the public, when we as opposition members will be able to see it.

Mr. Chomiak: In due course.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The Minister can play those games if he wants. I can tell him it will not make the decision making any easier when he is required to make this public and these decisions will be on the table. I would just remind him again that Manitobans are very, very interested in this and would like to see some definite answers from the Minister.

When we last met, the Mayor of Boissevain had indicated and quoted in the paper that he spoke to the Premier at an event and the Premier had indicated that there was no interest in this particular document, in following its recommendations. I asked the Minister in the House, the Minister of Health, whether he would talk to the Mayor of Boissevain. That was some three weeks ago. I would ask at this time whether he has done that.

Mr. Chomiak: No.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The R.M. of Glenwood had written the Minister some time ago to ask about some health care issues in the Souris area. They too wanted to meet with the Minister. Has he met with the Mayor of Souris or the Reeve of the R.M. of Glenwood?

Mr. Chomiak: I do not believe I have met with the Mayor of Souris. I am not sure if, I do not believe I have met with the R.M. of Glenwood. If the Member could forward a copy of that letter to me, I will to take a look at that.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The Reeve from the R.M. of Daly, Mr. Marlin Beaver, had written on behalf of his council to ask if he could have a meeting with the Minister over the future of the Rivers hospital. Has the Minister met with him yet?

Mr. Chomiak: No, I have not.

* (16:00)

Mr. Gilleshammer: The Mayor of Rivers, Mr. Roy Stevenson, and a group who have formed because of the possibility of dramatic changes to the Riverdale hospital have written to the Minister asking for a meeting. Has he met with them at this time?

Mr. Chomiak: Since the Member first asked the question in the Legislature two weeks ago, I believe, I do not think I have had an opportunity to meet with them.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I think we see a pattern that people with serious concerns about their facilities, people who are concerned about life in rural Manitoba, where the agricultural

situation has been very devastating, particularly in the southwest last year, who are seeking assistance from this government and the federal government, people who are looking for support in a number of areas are really running out of patience with this Minister and other members of this government.

Communities over the last number of decades have seen their schools reduced in size because of the fact that young people move away to urban centres. They have seen the business in the communities go through some difficult times. I would just say to the Minister that these people are very, very concerned about the future of health care in rural Manitoba. Not too many weeks ago many of them received letters from the Brandon regional hospital saying you cannot send your patients here at this time. In fact, some of them were transferred by ambulance from western Manitoba into Winnipeg at a tremendous cost in terms of paying for those ambulance fees.

I would urge the Minister of Health to take a very serious look at some of these issues. They are not going to go away. I know that he has a lot on his plate, but sometimes a phone call to these individuals, especially when you have made a commitment some weeks ago to call somebody like the Mayor of Boissevain—some attention to the correspondence from these groups would be welcome.

I do not think they are ready to give up on you yet, but I think you need to make some indication that you are hearing what they are saying and that you, in fact, are going to respond to them in a timely manner.

Mr. Chomiak: We are very conscious as the Government of what devastation the health care policies of the previous administration has wrought on all of Manitobans over the past decade. It is very difficult in the first nine months to undo some of the significant harm that has occurred over the past decade. We are endeavouring as best we can to be as accommodating and to provide as many services and to meet with as many individuals and groups as possible. There are very real concerns in rural and northern Manitoba that have not been dealt with for almost a decade, and there are some

serious problems that are facing rural Manitobans.

The previous government undertook studies, for example, in emergency services after having undertaken various studies that showed a serious and woeful lack of resources. We have seen the study that was commissioned by the previous government with respect to rural and northern hospitals. We have seen the study, the process that began on the templates.

There are serious issues in rural and northern Manitoba. The members opposite put in place a system of regionalization three years ago with respect to governance of the health care system, and that system is now in place, Mr. Chairperson. There are a variety of issues that have to be addressed, and we have undertaken in the first nine months to address as many major issues as possible and to continue to address all of the issues facing Manitobans.

I know that people are anxious to talk about the specific issues, and we have met with literally hundreds of groups and hundreds of individuals and will continue to do so. All of the issues are important to all of those individuals and all of those communities. They are very significant to them, and we will continue to work with them and continue to meet with them in that regard.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The Minister chooses to get into his political rhetoric and deliberately misunderstand. The Mayor of Boissevain and the Mayor of Souris, the Mayor of Rivers, are not asking the Minister to undo anything. They are asking him to try and understand how important their facilities are, how important health care is to them and are not asking him to make any dramatic moves that would affect their facilities and their communities.

So, again, I would urge the Minister to pick up the phone, talk to these people, set up these meetings and try and understand their issues and their concerns and realize that he does have to be the Minister of Health for all of Manitoba and recognize the importance of the concerns that they want to bring to his attention.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I have thought about that when I recently flew up to Island Lake, an area that has never seen a Health minister I think during the last decade. I thought about that when I drove down to Emerson and visited the hospital down there. I thought about that when I drove up to Gimli and visited the facility there. I will think about that over the summer when I visit other communities and other localities and meet with individuals in those communities. I think those are significant factors for all those communities. They are significant to the lifestyle. They are significant to the health care of all Manitobans.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I will get back to time lines again, Mr. Chairman. When the Minister leaped to the Premier's defence in the House regarding the comments of the Mayor of Boissevain and said: Oh, yes, I will call him—that was three weeks ago. Do you not think that that is an unreasonable time to let pass before fulfilling that promise?

Mr. Chomiak: I also ask the Member if he would provide me with a copy of the information that he indicated that the Mayor of Boissevain had indicated, just for confirmation purposes.

Mr. Gilleshammer: That was sent over during Question Period on that day to the Premier. It was an article in the *Brandon Sun* with a direct quote. I am sure that, by talking to the Premier, he can acquire that particular document.

I would like to go back to this question of deficits. Can the Minister indicate what the deficit for the southwest health region was last year?

Mr. Chomiak: Those specific figures are still being compiled.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Can the Minister confirm that the deficit for the southwest health region last year is going to be picked up by the Government and that they can move forward making whatever adjustments that they have to do with the current-year budget? Will that deficit be taken care of by the Minister's department?

Mr. Chomiak: I believe we continue to have ongoing meetings with the community and with the RHA, between the Department of Health and the RHA.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, when I asked this question last time, and I can read this back into the record if you like, but the Minister left me with the impression that, yes, these deficits were going to be picked up. Are you telling me now that that is not the case?

Mr. Chomiak: It has probably slipped the Member's mind, but if the Member refers back to the discussion that we had on that in the previous Estimates period, I outlined that.

* (16:10)

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, my direct question then was: Were you going to accommodate deficits from previous years? The Minister said yes. Generally, that is the policy we adopted. Now is there a different answer today?

Mr. Chomiak: No, and I think if the Member refers back to the discussion we had in this committee yesterday, he will see I discussed that issue in depth.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would refer him to the July 10 discussion we had and the answers he gave at that time. I am not sure what he said yesterday. I was not here yesterday. But on July 10 you said yes in answer to that question. Now you are telling me that that may not be the case.

Mr. Chomiak: For the third time, I will indicate to the Member, no. The Member asked the initial question in the negative and I said no to the negative by indicating and I will make it clear. The general statement that I indicated on July 10 still holds.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Then the regional health authorities can proceed in their planning on the basis that the Government will be picking up these deficits.

You also indicated that the Budget for the coming year that has been given to them will accommodate any of the changes in the costs for

staffing within the hospitals, settlements with doctors, nurses and others. This is accommodated in their new budgets.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I dealt with that yesterday in the Estimates.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I do not want to have a difficult time with the Minister. Again, I would indicate to him that these are very serious issues that people in my part of the province are interested in, people that he is bound to serve as the Minister of Health and member of Executive Council.

I can tell you from talking to board members that are in place out there, not all of the ones that have been newly appointed, but they need some clear direction, they need a clear understanding of where this government is going with deficits from previous years, and they need an idea of what their budget for the coming year actually is. I can tell if they are getting the same sort of message that I am getting here today, I understand why there is some confusion out there. I would ask the Minister if he would be prepared to clarify the stance that he has as minister on deficits and on budgets for this coming year?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I clarified that during the Estimates debate yesterday.

Mr. Gilleshammer: So what the Minister is saying to Manitobans is run through the things that I have said in my speeches, search for comments that I have made, and all will be clear to you. I am giving the Minister an opportunity to clarify that now, and I am wondering if he wants to take that opportunity.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we discussed this yesterday in Estimates, and the Member need only read the Estimates debate.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I certainly will do so, and I will share that with those people out there who are looking for answers and looking for meetings with the Minister. If that is the best he can do for them, they will have to be satisfied with that and take whatever measures they feel would be necessary.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the Member seems to be leaving an impression that the Department of Health and officials have not met with members of the south Westman region. That is, in fact, not the case. There has been a series of ongoing meetings, and in my most recent meeting with the CEO of the south Westman or the past CEO, the process is continuing.

The Member has to appreciate the fact that we undertook a process that was in place and maintained a process that was in place, but intended to augment it with respect to dealing with the budgets, and that process is continuing.

Mr. Gilleshammer: With the greatest respect, if he wants to drag officials from the Department into this, I have the utmost respect for the civil servants we have in government in Manitoba. I think they do a wonderful job. The point that I was making is that mayors and reeves, councillors, the general public, want to meet the Minister. I know that we have civil servants. We have members of all departments who work very hard for the people of Manitoba every day. At no time did I indicate anything otherwise. It is the Minister that I am being critical of.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Could the Minister tell me whether he is prepared to table for us a breakdown of all of the deficits incurred by each of the RHAs?

Mr. Chomiak: I believe I gave a global figure to the Member. I do not think it was past practice to table that. It certainly was not past practice. I do not believe it was. I think the global figures and the fact that we are in negotiation with a number of the RHAs in this respect continues. I believe that the information is available through the annual reports when it is finalized, as well as the fact that we have provided those figures to the Member during the course of the discussions yesterday.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mrs. Driedger: Just to clarify, those particular figures were not provided but certainly \$60 million as a global operating deficit for all the RHAs was provided to us. Even though the

Minister has indicated that it was not past practice to provide that information, he is now indicating that it is clearly available within the annual reports. Is that correct?

Mr. Chomiak: I think that information does come within the annual report of the RHAs. I believe it is also provided in an Annual Report of the Department of Health.

Mrs. Driedger: I will certainly check the annual reports. I have just received all of them from the RHAs, so I will spend some time this summer reviewing them. I am wondering if the Minister could indicate, because no answer, I do not believe, was given to this question yesterday. I am wondering what the Minister intends to do if the RHAs do not live within their budgets this next go around?

Mr. Chomiak: We have put in place a process of financial accountability with the RHAs. We intend to refine that process, and we anticipate that the RHAs can and should live within their budgets.

Mrs. Driedger: I guess I would like to ask the Minister because having worked in a large tertiary care hospital I saw how hard the hospital tried to live within a budget, particularly it was in the '80s that I can recall this particular instance, and they were not able. No matter what efforts were made and how good the efforts were, they struggled very hard and were not able despite the best intentions to live within their budget.

I think it would be very good if hospitals could do that, but I also know that it can be very difficult. Certainly I would assume that the Minister would have some idea in mind or a strategy in mind, and I am wondering if he would share that with us if a hospital does not come within budget.

Mr. Chomiak: We are reviewing not only the process of budgetary allocation but the whole budgetary and financial accountability process. We have a team in place that is looking at the accountability and review of the accountability, and they are examining that specific issue.

The Member mentions hospitals, but we anticipate that the RHAs, because that is the funding body through which the funding flows, will live within their budgets.

* (16:20)

Mrs. Driedger: Last year when we were in government, we had put together a working group. Well, it was actually put together by the RHAs to develop a funding model, and they were going to work together with the Department of Health to provide a report to the Minister. Is this still the same process he is referring to right now?

Mr. Chomiak: I am advised that we have activated a review team in the last few months to review the entire funding model and the accountability issues.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me who is part of that review process?

Mr. Chomiak: I will undertake to provide the Member with that information.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me what happened to all of the work that had been done previously by the working group that had been struck by the RHAs to develop a funding model? How far did they get in their task, and were they able to table any reports?

Mr. Chomiak: I am advised that that committee ceased to operate in the summertime of last year.

Mrs. Driedger: When that group ceased to operate, did it table any reports?

Mr. Chomiak: Not that I am aware of.

Mrs. Driedger: Does the Minister have a time line on this particular group that is now looking at developing a funding model? When does he expect to see some results coming from them in terms of a first report? I realize this is quite an undertaking.

Mr. Chomiak: It is a working group, and I would not anticipate, now I am guesstimating, conclusive or final proof before next spring.

Just for purposes of clarification, I am advised that the work being done by the present committee is utilizing some of the work that had been started by the previous committee.

Mrs. Driedger: Does that particular committee that the Minister has now struck have certain terms of reference established? Guidelines? Direction that they are following? If so, I am wondering if the Minister could provide us with what those terms of reference would be.

Mr. Chomiak: There are terms of reference. They are internal review. If it is possible, I will provide the Member with copies of that.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Chairperson, I appreciate the opportunity to be here once again this afternoon. With some of the comments that have been relayed across the table this afternoon, I cannot help but just say one thing, insofar as I believe here in Manitoba, regardless if it is the past government or current government, there has to be some acknowledgment. The federal government pays a large part in the health care delivery services. One cannot underestimate the failings of the federal government to support our health care system. I think we all have to be cognizant of that fact and to place the responsibilities or lack thereof squarely in the right spot.

I want to say, Mr. Minister, the question relates to speech and language pathologists here in the province and in the employ of Manitoba Health. I believe he is familiar with a number of years ago that significant personnel time was spent with the school divisions and young people of the province. It was an administrative decision by Manitoba Health to transfer those individuals who had significant time frame allocated within the school divisions, to be administered by the school divisions.

Once that transferral took place, the individuals that delivered that service fell within the collective agreement of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, being employees of the school divisions. That constituted significant pay raises to those individuals that were now administered by the school divisions, leaving the individuals that remained with Manitoba Health signifi-

cantly wanting for similar treatment, if I might say that with a qualifier as being underscored. They were immensely concerned that colleagues were seeing \$10,000 increases in wages on an annual basis and an additional month in holidays.

I am wondering if the Minister can respond to that effect as to whether he is currently reviewing that situation, because clearly it is a significant bone of contention between colleagues within the same charge of responsibilities and expertise.

Mr. Chomiak: I will undertake to review the issue and get back specifically to the Member.

Mr. Faurshou: I appreciate the Minister's response to that effect. I speak with personal experience on this, having had a polyp removed from my vocal cords recently and having to have the services of Manitoba Health and the speech pathologist, an outstanding individual who has had additional responsibilities of teaching to physicians throughout the province as well her own duties, and to see a former colleague of hers being remunerated at significantly higher levels. Also, the delivery of those services must be one that is a co-ordinated effort rather than duplication of not only equipment but services in the various RHAs as well.

Now, one question: Have you had opportunity to talk yet about the emergency services? I know you were talking about stretcher cases and that yesterday. It is still a significant sore spot in Portage la Prairie where emergency services were delivered by an ambulance service vis-à-vis the first responder emergency services from the fire department and whether the Province is going to get to the bottom of it and have a template for the province.

Mr. Chomiak: There are numerous issues with respect to emergency services that have come up during the course of Estimates, including access to communications, access to emergency services and related matters, as well as specific issues in the Marquette region. I did undertake to indicate that I would try to put departmental staff together with members to discuss some of these concerns. I had anticipated earlier, but it might

take a few weeks to put it together. I thought that perhaps that would be the best way to try to deal with the range of issues that have come up.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me whether he is prepared to table his capital plan today?

Mr. Chomiak: No.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me whether he is intending to make that plan known on Friday? I understand there is a rumour floating around out there that this capital plan will be announced on Friday.

* (16:30)

Mr. Chomiak: If the plan was made public on Friday, it would be without my involvement.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me whether he is going to make the capital plan available while we are still in Estimates, so that the Health critic has an opportunity to ask questions?

Mr. Chomiak: I do not know how long the Estimates process is going to continue, so I cannot make that definitive statement other than the capital plan will be out as soon as we finalize the details.

Mrs. Driedger: I find that there is still significant information that the Minister has yet to table. Could he put some time lines on when I can expect some of that information?

Mr. Chomiak: Would the Member like some of it now?

Mrs. Driedger: Absolutely. Whatever the Minister has available, I would gladly receive.

Mr. Chomiak: I will go through a number of these items. With respect to rural physician supply, all health authorities have agreed to bulletin physician vacancies in the Manitoba Health recruitment Web site. Typically, 25 to 30 rural vacancies are posted on the Web site. Not all the positions are current vacancies but include employers seeking physicians for replacement. Currently, there are 20 positions on

the Web site for family practitioners and for two specialists. This is fewer vacancies than in the last several months.

As the Member knows and as I have indicated before, there will be additional information and additional announcements with respect to a physician recruitment and retention strategy that will be announced.

The Member asked about MRI, ultrasound and CT scanners in Manitoba. Manitoba Health purchases operating time in three MRI scanners. Two are located at St. Boniface Hospital; one machine at HSC. There are four MRI machines in Manitoba, all owned by research. The fourth machine located at St. Boniface Hospital is used only for research. It is very small and scans only the head.

There are a total of 79 ultrasound machines within Manitoba hospitals; 56 ultrasound machines are located within the WRHA, and 23 ultrasound machines are in northern and rural RHAs. There are 11 CT scanners currently operating in Manitoba. Nine are located within the WRHA, one at the Brandon General Hospital and one at the Dauphin Regional Health Centre. A new CT scanner is currently being installed at the Children's Hospital, and it is expected to be operational by October 2000. New CT scanners are also being installed at the Thompson General Hospital and the new Boundary Trails Health Centre in Morden and Winkler.

The Member asked for information on the prostate centre and prostate cancer screening. The prostate centre, a multidisciplinary centre of excellence, will provide high-quality, comprehensive and co-ordinated care to men with prostate diseases. Services to be provided at the centre will include a multidisciplinary clinic to assess and guide the treatment of men with prostate cancer, provision of diagnostic services for men with other prostate diseases, educational services for patients, the general public and health care providers, co-ordination of the clinical research protocols for this centre, collaboration with scientists in research in the area of prostate disease and a base for prostate cancer support groups. I might add we also will be undertaking the treatment of prostate cancer through the form of brachytherapy as well.

Now, this is an ongoing issue for the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) regarding patients from Wawanesa and Carberry being turned away because they could not be accommodated in urban tertiary centres. I am advised by staff that Manitoba Health staff has been in contact with both the Marquette and south Westman RHAs' management and the local community managers of both facilities.

Neither the manager of Carberry health centre nor the physicians are aware of any incidents where access to care was denied in either Brandon or Winnipeg. There have been delays for cardiac beds in Brandon because they were full, but the delays have been only until someone could be discharged. The Carberry physicians have not found this to be a problem. The local program co-ordinator at the Wawanesa health centre indicates she has not heard of any incident related to this issue. She is the contact for the health centre and generally would have been aware of this. If the Member has additional information for us to do further follow up, I am prepared to do that, because I know how difficult this is.

The Member asked if any RHA employees had been appointed to the regional health authorities board. The policies to allow RHA employees to be appointed to boards was changed effective June 1, 2000, by regulation. No RHA employees are presently members of boards at this time.

The Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), the note says Minnedosa, I believe it was the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) who requested information respecting the Erickson community and its physician component. I think for purposes of the nature of this particular issue, if I will convey to the Member I believe it is Russell who raised it perhaps through the Health critic, I will personally talk to the members for Russell and Minnedosa concerning this particular issue, as there are matters that I am not sure we necessarily want to put on the public record in this regard. If I were to do so and if I were not to provide an entire answer, the record would not have been an appropriate response. I believe it was the Member for Russell who asked about Erickson and the physician issue. It could have

been the Member for Minnedosa. I will talk to either/or them personally about that particular issue.

The Member asked about funding provided by Manitoba Health to the Prairie Women's Health Centre. I am advised Manitoba Health had a professional services agreement with the Prairie Women's Health Centre to manage a research project related to the service needs of pregnant and addicted women in Manitoba. The PWHCE was chosen as the sole supplier because of its specific expertise. The project was \$60,000, which was paid in the '99-2000 fiscal year. A sum of \$15,000 was paid to manage the project and \$45,000 to a researcher to undertake the particular project.

The Member also asked if we would table a copy of the memorandum of understanding between Island Lake First Nation communities, Manitoba and Canada. I have a copy of it here. I do not have three copies, so we will provide copies of the memorandum of understanding for the Member.

The Member for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner) requested the status of dialysis in the South Eastman region. I am advised the provincial dialysis program has not considered Steinbach as a potential hemodialysis local region for the upcoming year.

The Member asked about the \$20,000 increase in item 21.1.(c) Other Operating. I am advised that the \$20,000 increase is for full-year cost related for Desktop Management costs.

The Member asked for names of Drug Standards and Therapeutic Committee. The committee which is presently consisting of only four out of a normal six members consists of Doctor Koven, A. Eros, Clement Yeung, and G. Zhanel. There are two vacancies pending appointment.

On July 11 the Member asked the Minister to check into the increase in salary for the managerial position in Financial Services, whether or not this is a new position, who is in the job, or if it is just a raise for someone who is already there. The position had been vacant and was budgeted in '99-2000 at the minimum step

in the salary range. During the preliminary Estimates process it was increased to the maximum range of \$74,600 to give the Department flexibility depending on the qualifications of the successful candidate. The successful candidate is Mr. Stephen Willetts. He was hired at the second step in the range at \$62,300.

* (16:40)

On July 11 the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) requested information, the process for the release of information for untendered contracts. The contract process was detailed to all departments in a memo dated May 5, 1993, from Julian Benson, and indicates the following: Section 44 of The Financial Administration Act requires that the Government make information available to the public regarding all untendered contracts over \$1,000 in value. Specifically each minister is required to provide information on such contracts to the Minister of Finance within one month of awarding the contract. The Minister of Finance files this information in his office and provides public access to these files. Public access to the untendered contract information is provided via a workstation in the Legislative Library.

On July 11 the Member asked for a listing of evaluation projects and appeals carried out during the past year. I am advised that there were three completed evaluation projects and three active projects. The Member asked for the number of appeals in '99-2000. The Mental Health Review Board undertook 53; the appeal panel for home care undertook 36; the Manitoba Health Appeal Board heard 208 by the Board, and 106 were reviewed by the Health secretariat.

Yesterday there was some discussion about the physician recruitment fund that had been established. The Department approved a fund on July 2, 1999, on behalf of the regional health authorities of Manitoba to establish a physician recruitment fund, which would assist in the recruitment and retention of physician specialists in the province of Manitoba. The fund was established in July; the funds were taken from the 1998-99 medical remuneration surplus funds and were used specifically for that purpose. It was expected that the funding would be used for

that purpose. The fund, therefore, was operated under the authority of the WRHA for all regions in Manitoba in order to recruit specialists to the province of Manitoba. The fund developed its process and was authorized in July of 1999.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me: One of the pieces of information not tabled was the number of ICU beds closed in the city, would he have that information at this time?

Mr. Chomiak: I do not have it at this time. I will endeavour to bring it next occasion and/or provide it to the Member as soon as possible.

Mrs. Driedger: We might have covered this ground. I am not totally sure anymore. Is there a time frame established for the start-ups of prostate cancer screening and cervical cancer screening?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we did discuss the issue of cervical cancer screening, and I believe I indicated to the Member that if we could start it today, I would like to start it today. There are some issues concerning that that we are working on that the Member may be familiar with. I think they are similar to the same issues that had occurred several months ago, or over the past year.

With respect to prostate screening, prostate screening is available from physicians for individuals. The concept of an overall province-wide prostate screening program is still being reviewed.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me whether he is confident with the contingency plan that is in place regarding the possible upcoming strike by the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals? The information I have is what I read in the paper, and it was information provided to the newspaper by the Cabinet communications person. I wonder if the Minister can tell me whether he is confident with the contingency plan that has been put forward?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, it is very difficult for us to discuss contingencies publicly, and I am not really in a position to do that, considering that negotiations are still underway

and considering the delicate nature of the situation.

Mrs. Driedger: Would the Minister be prepared to indicate at least, or go as far as to say that there is a contingency plan in place? I am not talking about the bargaining issues. I am basically looking at whether or not the system is going to be able to handle a strike of any sort in terms of the provision of patient services.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, all possible contingencies are considered and reviewed under these kinds of circumstances.

Mrs. Driedger: Are there any plans to purchase a MRI for Brandon?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I believe that there was a commitment from us leading up to the last election that a MRI would be provided for Brandon.

Mrs. Driedger: I believe it was also something that our government had been looking at as well, recognizing that it would certainly enhance the health services in that part of the province.

I would like to go back to some questions from pages 82 and 83 of the Supplementary Information book. Maybe I will ask one question that arose for me on page 82. I wonder if the Minister could tell us how much it cost the Government to drop the \$50 fee for the Northern Patient Transportation Program? Is there a global amount that he could provide?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, there is an amount of money, in terms of revenue, that derived as a result of the northern transportation fee. We do not have firm figures because, in the past, the money was not always collected, if that is the best term. I will endeavour to get back to the Member with as good a guesstimate or estimate as possible.

Mrs. Driedger: I appreciate that undertaking by the Minister. If there are hard numbers, or even soft numbers, we would certainly appreciate knowing what the final cost of eliminating that fee will end up looking like.

On page 83 under Long-Term Care Services it indicates that the increase in this budget is primarily due to wage settlements, construction projects and increases to personal care homes. I am wondering if the Minister could indicate what the wage settlement figure is.

* (16:50)

Mr. Chomiak: It is in the range of \$22.6 million.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me what the dollar figure would be for the construction projects indicated in that line?

Mr. Chomiak: The ballpark numbers—and because it deals with different areas and categories, although it primarily refers to new homes and the costs related to that, although it is variety of factors—is approximately \$13 million.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister just clarify what he means by new homes?

Mr. Chomiak: The footnote indicates increase resulting primarily due to wage settlements, which was the first figure, construction projects and increases to personal care homes. The basic three categories are the cost of wage settlements across the board, including new homes; then the \$13.5 includes operating and interest-related costs and interest costs that are carried that year for the new homes.

Mrs. Driedger: If those are the costs under construction projects, is there something different under increases to personal care homes or is the \$13 million a combination of both of those?

Mr. Chomiak: Just in rough ballpark figures, the rest of the increases would be actual increases to supply services and staff for homes across the province.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could provide for me a grid of what residents pay in personal care homes.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, we can provide the Member with that information.

Mrs. Driedger: I thank the Minister for that undertaking. I have to go back to footnote one. I neglected to ask the question on the hallway medicine initiative. I am wondering if the Minister could put a dollar figure to that and tell me what is involved in that particular initiative.

Mr. Chomiak: As the specifics are being allocated, if memory serves me correctly, I believe it is \$6 million that deals specifically with the acute care sector and those activities related to the acute care sector that we have talked about before with respect to beds opening, equipment and supplies, the physician managers, the increased psychiatric coverage and the expanded oncology hours, as well as I believe the—now I am not sure if the psychogeriatric assessment teams came out of this particular figure or not or crossed over into other areas. But generally it includes all of the categories under the hallway medicine initiative that were announced November 22 last year.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister clarify for me then, if \$6 million is attached to this figure, at the time of the announcement to end hallway medicine 12 million or 13 million or 15 million were numbers that were provided, where would the rest of that money be found? Would it show up under other areas like Home Care Services, for instance, because I see there is a hallway medicine initiative there?

Mr. Chomiak: Precisely. The balance of those other initiatives, approximately \$6 million, is included under the Home Care provision line.

Mrs. Driedger: Under Home Care Services, it indicates in the footnote an increase due to wage costs from collective bargaining agreements. I wonder if the Minister could provide me with the particular figure for that item.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, yes, it is approximately \$7.5 million.

Mrs. Driedger: Under Community and Mental Health Services, we see sort of a small increase. I am wondering if the Minister could explain where that money is being spent.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the increase under that appropriation is 7.1 percent. The

increase in wage settlements are approximately \$4 million of that increase. The PACT funding at this point under this program is about \$600,000, and there are a variety of other initiatives that will be announced in due course.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to indicate that at the time we were in government a great deal of emphasis was placed on health promotion and prevention of disease, and that certainly was a priority direction that we had taken over a number of years. The health of individuals and populations certainly depend on much more than health care strictly defined. We know that health depends on factors such as income and implication, whether we grew up in a safe and nurturing environment, whether we are employed, the genes we inherit from our parents, personal habits such as wearing seat belts or smoking, and healthy eating certainly make a difference, so do the physical and social environments in which we live and work, as well as a broad range of government activities from garbage collection to welfare programs.

Interesting to note, too, that through the initiatives that we had brought forward in the decade and more that we were in government, Stats Canada and the Canadian Institute for Health Information demonstrated that we had achieved actually some very good results. We had reached a point of having Canada's lowest unemployment rate, Canada's lowest youth unemployment rate, very affordable housing, Canada's third best life expectancy rate at birth, Canada's fourth best life expectancy rate at age 65, Canada's best pap smear rate, and more Manitobans rated their health as very good, 39 percent, than the Canadian average which was 38 percent. Certainly high standards had been met during our time in government.

I would like to ask the Minister how the current government plans on maintaining these high standards? I would like to, I guess, try to find from the Minister where the NDP focus is in terms of addressing health care.

* (17:00)

Mr. Chomiak: Well, Mr. Chairperson, clearly, as I indicated previously during the Estimates process, the entire question of prevention and

needs-based assessment is a matter that is prevalent throughout the Department of Health in a variety of activities. I do not want to get into a political discourse with the Member opposite concerning the high standards, and I do not want to get into debate concerning that. I accept with good faith the fact that all of us that are involved in the health care field, all of us, are intent upon improving the outcomes and improving the needs and the requirements of individuals and groups to have healthier outcomes.

I recall the recent meeting that we had with Dr. Fraser Mustard here in Manitoba, and reviewing some of these issues and reviewing the Whitehall study and the various other studies. In fact, I have a pirated copy of one of his lectures that I told him I had pirated, and he said it was okay, that I had reviewed. I believe members opposite at one point had reviewed the particular issue of healthy lifestyles and the whole notion of what constitutes proper health and the various health determinates.

I think that overall there is a very active component of health that has been present. There are some interesting stories regarding it that I will share with the Member sometime in camera about that process of development over the past few years concerning those groups. We have, for example, in Manitoba some of the best epidemiologists in the world. We have some processes and some of the best minds in this area that are working on those overall issues.

The question of healthy children, I have indicated to the Member that she will forward to me questions regarding healthy children, directed in those particular areas, but clearly that is an area of significance and significant review and approach by this particular government. The overall issue of economic and social determinants and their effect upon the health of individuals has been well documented. Numerous government initiatives crossing various lines and various departments have been entered into with respect particularly to some of the inner city of Winnipeg issues that are facing all of us and are incumbent upon all of us to respond to and to deal with.

One of the areas that will be seeing increasing attention from the Department, and I

said this publicly and otherwise for sometime, is the whole area of mental health. It is interesting that if one looks at the prevalence of disease and indicators, at the very top of the charts in all of the graphs is the whole issue of mental health. It is interesting that commensurate activities have not been spent in terms of a preventative aspect of mental health as we do.

It is not dissimilar to the situation that we discussed earlier concerning end-stage diabetes disease versus the front-end costs of prevention and some of the activities that have been undertaken with respect to diabetes and other disease indicators. But there will be additional initiatives and additional responses in terms of mental health and mental wellness with respect to the province.

There has already been, as the Member is aware, an active women's health component at the Department of Health dealing with specific women's health. The larger issues with respect to health indicators and health wellness have also been recognized by the Government, in terms of numerous programs. The Member might be aware that, for example, Community Places Programs were announced this week that reflected upon emphasis on safety, child safety and children's programs in that regard.

So, overall, the Fraser Mustard influence is present across many of the components and many of the activities undertaken by the Government, not just on the healthy child area, but across the spectrum of government activities.

It is trite to say that this issue is one that has been recognized and identified. I can outline to the Member that there are numerous initiatives in the Department of Health that I am aware of that we will be announcing within the next year that relate specifically to this issue. I can also indicate to the Member that in terms of general health planning, our basic goal in terms of the budgetary process this year was to augment and supplement the Health budget as we came to office, to augment those resources that we felt were lacking, supplement those resources that required review.

We have also asked the RHAs, particularly the WRHA, to undertake reviews of community

and preventative services and come back to us next budgetary year with their priorities in this regard. In other words, we have asked them to prioritize those issues and bring it to our attention during the course of the next budgetary process.

I can also indicate that the measures that were previously announced with respect to health access centres and neighbourhood centres are also being followed by this particular government and are going to be actually moved upon over the course of the next several years.

So without taking too long, I suppose I could sum up my comments to indicate that it is—and it is interesting because in discussions with Health ministers across the country, they all indicate the same kind of initiatives in this area and the same intention to try to move, and in some areas they have moved faster than we have in Manitoba. In some areas in Manitoba, we have moved faster than other jurisdictions, but there clearly is a move towards an augmenting of resources in that area and actually a delivery of programming in that area, where applicable, and certainly a planning in that regard. I will stop here before I go on interminably.

* (17:10)

Mrs. Driedger: I think in looking at the information put forward by Stats Canada and the Canadian Institute for Health Information demonstrating some of the successes we have over the last 10 years certainly supports the Minister's comment that what we had done in government, 90 percent of it he supported and felt that we did right. Certainly when we see the statistics put forward by these particular groups, I think he is accurate in saying that we did do a lot of things right. I am glad to see that a lot of the initiatives that we had put in place are agreeable to him and that he is continuing with them.

Certainly in this budget, the single largest increase was to acute care, and it increased by 18 percent while programs like Healthy Communities decreased by 4 percent, which does beg the question with the Minister's last answer in terms of an emphasis on health promotion and population health. I am wondering if he could

indicate for me why he would not have had, say, a comparable percentage allocated to some of those prevention and promotion of health areas. I will let him answer that question, and then I will go on with the next one.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, that is a completely distorted comparison. I am saying that with all due respect to the Member. The increase in actual expenditures to acute care services, actuals last year over actuals this year was only in the range of 6.8 or 7 percent. In other words, spending is up 18 percent budget over budget, but the actuals were only in the range of 7 percent. So that is the first point.

The second point to make in terms of this kind of comparison is we are talking about a comparison of an expenditure of \$1.2 billion versus an expenditure of \$8 million to \$10 million. Yes, Mr. Chairperson, the Healthy Communities did go down \$2 million in terms of actual programming, but I can indicate to the Member that Healthy Communities had generally augmented regular funds that were put into Healthy Communities in any event and there was no flexibility in terms of movement in that kind of a program. So it is not a fair comparison. If you want to make a fairer comparison in that regard, then look at the fact that the hallway medicine initiative, which is an actual direct initiative of this government, just without going into the issue of hallway medicine, just recognize the fact and I make this point over and over again, that we recognize in the application of our hallway medicine initiative half of the money went to the community-based services and half went to the acute care services.

Now, it is recognized and all of the attention was paid to the acute care services, but, in fact, half of the resources went on the community side. That is recognition of the various services, so if one wants to really compare, that would be a more applicable comparison in terms of intention and approach than to take the comparison of \$1.2 billion and compare it to a \$10 million down to an \$8 million comparison and the fact there were various factors that do not make it a valid comparison in the first place. Not to mention the fact that in some cases the acute care services, although it is entitled an

acute care service, do include a wide range of services that may or may not be determined as preventative and long range. The point the Member is making is valid. The comparison the Member is making is not, I think, an appropriate comparison of resources.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister indicate for me or provide some detail around the 4% decrease to healthy communities? Are there some specifics in terms of why the funding for that went down?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I will provide the specifics. As I recall from the process, it was the amount of money that was actually allocated to specific programs that fell under Healthy Communities, but I will provide that information to the Member.

Mrs. Driedger: Would the Minister, through his staff, have any of that information here right now?

Mr. Chomiak: I will provide that, hopefully, next occasion when we meet.

Mrs. Driedger: When we look at where we were placing an emphasis when we were in government and major health care reforms occurred because of it through the '90s in an effort to improve health care and we understood that quality health care systems would directly affect health in the areas of restorative care for acutely ill patients, rehabilitative, ameliorative or palliative care for patients with chronic or terminal conditions, we also understood that one of the weaknesses associated with Canada's health services in the past has been its narrow hospital focus. This focus tends to view health in isolation from all other health determinants. We were certainly moving in the direction of incorporating population health and health determinants in how we wanted to move health care reform forward in Manitoba.

The Conservative government actually made fundamental shifts in its health delivery system, from treatment orientation to socioeconomic determination of health orientation; from an institutional focus to an institutional community and home-based focus; from boundaries to continuity of care and services; from indepen-

dent organizations to integrated interdependent system; from a single ministry to a multisectoral approach; from traditional funding to alternative deliverable-based funding; from professional oriented to population health evidence orientation, and the source for that information is a document called Next Steps: Pathways to a Healthy Manitoba, page 6.

So certainly, when you look at where a government is focusing its money, it does give you some indication in terms of the priorities a government places. Now, my math abilities perhaps may not be that strong, and I do not know if the Minister has this information in terms of percentages, but the way I had determined my math I see that, and I am looking budget to budget, the NDP government has increased acute care spending by 18 percent, long-term care by 13.6 percent, home care by 10 percent and Community and Mental Health Services by 7 percent, and the Healthy Communities Development saw a 4 percent decrease.

I guess some concerns were created for me when I saw a decrease in a particular area that was focussing on prevention and health promotion. Certainly in Community and Mental Health we were moving away from the traditional view linking health with illness and disease prevention. I appreciate the Minister probably has that same philosophy and belief, in terms of strengthening mental health services.

This view recognizes that many characteristics of society might have a positive or negative impact on the health of the population, and these characteristics need to be reflected in the development and delivery of Community and Mental Health Services.

I guess I am wondering if the Minister could tell me whether his intention down the road would be to see more funding come into this particular area in the long run?

* (17:20)

Mr. Chomiak: If the Member were to review announcements over the past few months, the Member would note that PACT was announced by this government, studied for a decade, not

implemented, announced. If there is any better example of a community and a preventative-based system, I know of none.

If the Member would note the other announcement of midwifery, which I always said, and that was provided, was an unanimous process of the Legislature. It was announced, implemented and funded by this government.

If the Member would note that the hallway initiatives were half community-based and half acute care-based, which was a specific announcement of this government, I think that suggests a particular pattern.

If the Member were to note the announcement of a palliative care system at St. Boniface Hospital, and there will be additional expansion of community-based palliative care which will be announced, I think that will connote a particular direction in this regard.

There were also specific initiatives relating to diabetes prevention that were announced and implemented by this government. So most of the major announcements, if the Member were to look at the pattern of announcements over the past few months, would indicate a direction that is—for the Member to focus specifically on the Healthy Communities fund per se and a 4% decrease per se and to indicate that somehow is a non-commitment to a particular process is completely and totally inaccurate. There will be numerous and further announcements, the majority of which will take place in the community sector and will be announced by this government, as a result of this budget, over the course of the next several months.

In addition, if one wants to account for the fact that the amount of funding to rural ambulance service, whether or not that is attributed to acute care or whether that is attributed as community-based, I suppose it would fall somewhere in between, but the fact that the budgetary allocation in that area doubled in this particular budget is an indication of a particular direction.

I think that the Member will see, during the course of announcements and during the course of a whole series of programs that will be

forthcoming from this government—in addition, community agencies that received a rollback several years ago and have not received an increase since I believe 1994 received a budgetary increase for the first time, in recognition of the service they provide. We would like to have provided them with more of an increase but under the circumstances were unable. In fact, those increases alone were the first increase, if memory serves me correctly, in six years, and were in addition to rollbacks that occurred in the mid to late '90s to these agencies.

So, right across the board, the initiatives are significant, and not yet all announced.

Mrs. Driedger: I understand that Manitoba's acute care costs are much higher than Saskatchewan's acute care costs. I am wondering if the Minister is looking at Saskatchewan's information to determine how we might bring Manitoba's acute care costs down.

Mr. Chomiak: Manitoba has the highest acute care costs in the country. That is a significant factor when one looks at the expenditures and the application of health care provisions. I believe Manitoba has achieved that distinction from expenditures during the last provincial budget and continues during this provincial budget. It clearly is an area that requires proper management.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could give me any indication of how he is going to manage and address that particular area.

Mr. Chomiak: With that being the single largest component and portion of funding for the Department of Health, it is an area of ongoing initiatives. Continuing discussion is part of a number of activities that we have already discussed previously in the Estimates and will continue to be addressed by the administration.

Mrs. Driedger: Because Saskatchewan is easy to compare to Manitoba because we have so many similarities, it makes it difficult for Manitoba to be compared against Ontario. But, because Saskatchewan and Manitoba are fairly comparable, has the Minister been in touch with anybody from Saskatchewan to see how they might have addressed their situation?

Mr. Chomiak: I am in constant communication with Saskatchewan. Of all areas, we are working with Saskatchewan on a number of projects, and we are well aware of a number of the initiatives undertaken by the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mrs. Driedger: I understand that Manitoba keeps patients in hospitals far longer compared to other provinces. Could the Minister tell me if this is being analyzed to see how we could address Manitoba's situation?

Mr. Chomiak: I wonder if the Member might specify for me the specific reference to that. That is a fairly general statement. I wonder if the Member could be more specific.

Mrs. Driedger: I do not have any specifics, Mr. Chairman. The information came from discussions with, at some point, Manitoba Health staff. So I have no particular point of reference. Therefore, the question in terms of wondering if there was any analysis of this being done within the Department itself to see how we stack up against other provinces.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, there is analysis being done in that regard.

Mrs. Driedger: I understand that Ontario health care legislation allows the Ontario government to send in people to take over hospitals which go over budget. I think that maybe has happened in Hamilton and at St. Mike's. Is this minister considering having this built into Manitoba's legislation?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, if memory serves me correctly, I think if we required that particular authority we already have the legislative authority under the regional health services act to put in place a regime or a trustee relationship of that kind if it were necessary.

Mrs. Driedger: I wonder if the Minister could tell me if there are any penalties right now for hospitals that go over budget.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I do not believe there are any penalties for hospitals that go over budget.

Mrs. Driedger: Is the Minister considering instituting any penalties?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we are working with institutions, and we are working with regional health authorities to manage the budgetary process and to try to deliver the best possible health care. The budgets, the Member should appreciate, as well, are not directly flowed from the Department of Health to hospitals. The budgets are flowed from the regional health authorities to the particular institutions in terms of the chain of command. In fact, it is the regional health authority's responsibility to manage those budgets within particular guidelines, and we are working with the regional health authorities in that regard, as I have earlier indicated.

Mrs. Driedger: I understand that we had introduced new tariff codes for teleconferencing, but I do not see that there has been any approval for requested teleconferencing equipment that is given. Could the Minister tell me whether he supports alternative delivery methods?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I believe that the teleconference tariff fee has been negotiated as part of the process. The Member would appreciate that we are in discussion on a variety of technological issues related to the area of information technology, teleconferencing specifically, and there are several processes in place now.

Mrs. Driedger: I have a number of documents I am wondering if the Minister could table for me within the near future. The first one would be the most recent budget for each RHA, and with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority an inclusion of program-by-program breakdowns?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I will attempt to provide the information based on past practice in this Chamber.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister also table for me a copy of the last audited financial statements for each RHA?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, that information is generally available through the RHAs.

* (17:30)

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister table for me the 2000-2001 business plans for each RHA?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I understand the Department is in the process of reviewing those business plans now.

Mrs. Driedger: Would the Minister be able to table those for me at some point?

Mr. Chomiak: As I understand it, the established practice here has been to not table the business plans because they are working plans that go back and forth between the RHA and information subsequently can be obtained from the RHA.

Mrs. Driedger: I guess I am wondering if we are always going to go by past practice or whether we are going to pave some new paths here.

Mr. Chomiak: We have. I have given you significantly more information than I ever got.

Mrs. Driedger: Is the Minister prepared to look at this being a new path for the provision of the business plans?

Mr. Chomiak: As I indicated to the Member, we have provided a good deal more information than I ever received when I was the Opposition critic, and different and new information.

With respect to the business plans, I am not sure if it would be prudent for the Government to provide the business plan that was forwarded from the RHAs directly to members of the Legislature because those business plans can be addressed and reviewed. They go through a series of discussions with respect to the Department. It is a practical consideration. I do not think there is a problem in terms of obtaining the business plan subsequently from the RHAs. If the Member is asking whether the Department of Health can expedite that and get final business plans, if they are available, from the RHAs to the Member, I guess we can try to do that.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister table for me the letters of approval for additional funding that has gone out for 2000-2001 for each RHA?

Mr. Chomiak: I think that those internal financial documents, because sometimes they are subject to continuing negotiation, I do not want to make a blanket release of all of that information because it is an ongoing process.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister table for me the last published community needs assessments for each RHA?

Mr. Chomiak: Where available, I will endeavour to try to acquire that information.

Mrs. Driedger: I thank the Minister for those undertakings. In Estimates last year, the Minister, as the Health critic, felt that regionalization was moving too quickly and he had some fundamental differences with the operation of the RHAs, according to some of his statements. I wonder if he could elaborate on that and indicate whether those are the same impressions he still has right now.

Mr. Chomiak: As I indicated on many occasions during the course of these Estimates, when we came to office and we reviewed the situation with respect to the RHAs and the circumstances of the RHAs, we determined that, given the upheaval in the health care system the past few years, it would not be prudent to undergo major transformations, major changes to a system that was at present functioning. If asked whether or not regionalization per se would have been done differently had we had the opportunity to reconfigure it, I think that quite clearly we indicated there would be differences. But we decided from a prudent standpoint, given the upheaval in the health care system, we would not upset the process that was in place, and we would attempt to live within the existing process when we came to office in order to not cause unnecessary disruption of service. And because there was a number of programming and related issues concerning health care that we wanted to implement, we would implement them within general, the existing structures.

Mrs. Driedger: The Minister had commented in last year's Estimates that he had some fundamental differences with the operation of the RHAs. I am wondering if he might wish to elaborate on that particular line.

Mr. Chomiak: I basically indicated what our position was when we came to office with respect to the operations of the RHAs.

Mrs. Driedger: In Estimates last year, he also warned us about problems with the RHA. I am wondering if the Minister could indicate what he felt the problems were.

Mr. Chomiak: Obviously there were numerous problems right across the health care sector. There was a provincial election fought largely on the issue of health care and the applications of health care. I only cite the fact that one of our first initiatives, and this was an exception to the rule with respect to the RHAs, is that we took the two largest health care authorities and merged them into one within months of assuming office in order to provide a continuum of service across one level. So we put our words into action in that particular process.

Mrs. Driedger: Certainly it had been our intent when we had set up the Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority and the Winnipeg Regional Authority to merge the two within a five-year period. The reason that they had been separated was to be sure that the community kept its strong focus. It is so easy in a health care system where acute care needs can easily overtake the funding demands of a government—it is sometimes almost like a black hole. You can continue to put more and more money into acute care, and sometimes it never seems to be enough.

I think a lot of people had recognized that there had to be strong emphasis placed on the whole issue of being sure that the community was not short-changed in terms of the emphasis and priority placed upon it. That was the intent of having two separate health authorities. I think that there were many successes that were achieved by the WCA. It had always been our intent that the two would be merged at some point in time.

Certainly when the merger happened when it did, I, myself, had some concerns that maybe it was happening a little bit too quickly because, as I stated, there is always a need for a lot of funding in the acute care system over many, many years, in fact probably the whole time I

have ever been involved in health care for 25 years or so. Certainly when the merger of the two happened, I had some concerns that what we might see is a lessening of priority in funding and focus being given to the whole community aspect of health care.

I wonder, if the Minister could tell me, he had indicated at the time that when the two were merged, there would be savings, a dramatic funding savings of about \$900,000. Could the Minister tell me whether this was achieved?

* (17:40)

Mr. Chomiak: Just in regard to the Member's particular preamble, we were very careful with respect to the merger. I recall naysayers at the time indicating that, in fact, the community side was being overlooked by virtue of the merger. I think if the Member were to examine the board appointments, for example, one would see that the board appointments were specifically geared towards a recognition of the community side.

Secondly, I think that the experience, obviously I am subjective on this, but the experience generally that I have heard and that we have received in this particular regard is that the process has worked even better than we had actually anticipated, in terms of a connection between the community and the acute-care side. In fact, the two sides are working very collaboratively and co-operatively. It has affected and enabled us to do a number of initiatives, not the least of which is the PACT initiative that brought the two together remarkably fast and remarkably well and enabled us to launch that particular program, as well as some of the other initiatives that I have referred to and that will be further announced.

I am advised at this point approximately \$800,000 has been saved as a result of the merger.

Mrs. Driedger: Under Long Term Care Services, the Minister is on record as indicating that he sees the need for more funding to go into personal care homes. Is the Minister satisfied in this particular budget that he has been able to achieve what he had hoped he could achieve in terms of added funding?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, one is never satisfied with the levels, particularly when one looks under budgetary constraints. I am satisfied that the first time in seven or eight years there is an actual increase to personal care homes for equipment and supplies as well as staffing that had not been done for seven or eight years, literally.

Am I satisfied with the overall funding levels? No. I am not satisfied with the overall funding levels in all areas. Am I satisfied that we were able to put in significant increases in this budgetary year? Yes. We were able to put in significant increases. I remember very well discussions that took place during the course of budgetary review by the Department when it came down to the long-term care sector and personal care homes and discussions about how very often in the past that area did not receive specific increases, and we deliberately provided increases in that particular area to account for that.

Mrs. Driedger: Does the increased funding for Long Term Care Services provide for the hiring of additional staff within personal care homes, or will most of the money end up in wage settlements for current staff?

Mr. Chomiak: There is an increase for wages and staff that I outlined to the Member. There are increases for equipment and supplies that had not been done for about seven or eight years, that had been requested and asked for. There is also an increase to funding for existing and/or possibly anticipated staff.

Mrs. Driedger: Until the actual staffing guidelines and needs have been fully addressed within the system, would it not be premature to start funding in the area of increased staffing when we are not exactly sure of how much we need?

Mr. Chomiak: No. It is almost a universal acknowledgement that we require increased staff at long-term care facilities. The acuity levels are up dramatically. The staffing levels have not changed dramatically in a long time. It is clear that we need increased funding for staff, and that has been recognized in this year's budget. I am hopeful that, over the course of the next few years, that will be increasingly recognized.

It is almost universally acknowledged that patient acuity is up dramatically in personal care homes, and that is the result of the change in utilization of personal care homes over the past decade. We are well aware of that. We have tried to put into this budget some recognition of that. There certainly is an acknowledgement and a recognition that there is a long catch-up probably in this area.

Mrs. Driedger: It is unclear to me, Mr. Chairman, from the footnote No. 2 where the increase to long-term care services is primarily for wage settlements and construction projects and increases to personal care homes. Could the Minister tell me within these figures what the actual dollar amount will be for adding extra staff to personal care homes?

Mr. Chomiak: The Member will note the increase from 298 to 338 is approximately \$40 million, which is a 13.4 increase. I indicated in actual terms staff and salary increases in terms of wage settlement which covers all collective agreements and all bargaining units is about 22.6 million. The new personal care homes including operating costs is about 13.5. That leaves approximately \$5 million or \$6 million. It includes increased staffing levels, equipment supplies, et cetera.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the Minister tell me how many of the new personal care home beds have opened since last fall?

Mr. Chomiak: If memory serves me correctly, I believe it is 300 beds since January 1 of this year, but I will confirm that and provide it to the Member.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me how many acute care beds this freed up?

Mr. Chomiak: I do not know if we have that specific number because it is not necessarily a measure of acute care beds freed up. It is not a one to one. It is not even close to being a one-to-one correlation.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me how beds are ready, but they are unable to be opened because of lack of staff?

Mr. Chomiak: I do not know if I have those specific numbers.

Mrs. Driedger: Now that the Minister has conferred with his staff, does he have that information?

Mr. Chomiak: No.

Mrs. Driedger: Would the Minister consider undertaking for me to find out how many beds are ready to go, but they cannot be opened because of lack of staff?

Mr. Chomiak: I do not have those figures in front of me. I will determine if those are obtainable.

Mrs. Driedger: In looking at the figures, Calvary Place was opened in December of '99 with supposedly 100 beds, Lions Manor in January of 2000 with 54 beds, Concordia with 80 beds opened in March, and the Misericordia 100 beds opened in June. So that adds up to 334 beds. I guess in looking at this very, very specifically, have all 334 beds been opened and staffed?

* (17:50)

Mr. Chomiak: I will attempt to determine what the ratio is.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister indicate when he will be able to have that information for me?

Mr. Chomiak: Hopefully, next time, next occasion when we meet.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me what effect the opening of these beds has had on the overall health care system? Is there any obvious benefit so far?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, well, as I indicated to the Member previously, in 1992 a study was undertaken that indicated Manitoba required, the city of Winnipeg required 1600 personal care home beds by 1995, if memory serves me correctly. The previous government, in 1995, then announced a series of personal care home initiatives to address that need in the 1995

capital plan, and then upon re-election in 1995 cancelled those personal care home beds.

Then subsequently, a number of the projects were, again, put back on the drawing board and were announced and have become open during the course of the last six to eight months which has, in effect, in terms of providing the appropriate facilities, the appropriate needs of patients that require personal care home beds, because there was a general sense in Winnipeg and in Manitoba that there was not enough personal care home beds that were available to patients.

Mrs. Driedger: Could the Minister tell me whether or not a review has been done by the Department to look at how many more personal care home beds we are going to need, say, over the next five to ten years and then build a capital plan around that?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, that has been an ongoing process at the Department of Health for some time. I think I indicated previously to the Member that we were undertaking a specific bed mapping of the city of Winnipeg with respect to our needs and our requirements, which I am hoping will be ready in the fall.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to ask the Minister a specific question from a constituent of mine. I am assuming the Minister will not remember this particular case. I mean, it is back from February 14. A letter had been sent to him by a Terrie Hnituk, and in late January she indicates that her 26-year-old daughter discovered a lump in her right breast. During an appointment with her family doctor a decision had to be made re ultrasound. Following numerous inquiries, she was left with the fact that the wait period was approximately two to three months for this procedure.

This particular mother inquired of the WRHA Breast Health Centre and was advised that a self-referral application could be completed and would be given consideration at their next intake meeting of February 9. A referral form was completed and faxed to them on February 2. On February 8, her family doctor contacted the Unity medical centre in Grafton, North Dakota, and on February 9 she was

advised that she had an appointment the next day, February 10. Subsequently, they drove to Grafton. She had the ultrasound procedure, and they returned to Winnipeg some four hours later.

The cost of the procedure was \$105 U.S. plus gas, plus a full-day wages for herself. She says, however, the cost involved was incidental. We would have paid any price for peace of mind. When you are a young lady of 26, such news is extremely devastating. I ask: Why was it necessary for us to seek out medical attention outside our province?

They wrote this letter to you. It was copied to me. We got your letter, and it will be referred to the Minister on February 29—sorry, no, February 17 from the Minister's office. On April 10, they wrote back. Terrie wrote back to the Minister of Health thanking the Minister for his letter of February 17, in follow-up to my letter. You mention a further response will be forthcoming at the earliest opportunity. However, I have yet to receive a reply. The initial letter had come in February 14. April 10, they still had not heard back. I am wondering if the Minister, and I know he probably would not have this information at his fingertips at this point in time, would be willing to backtrack a little bit with his staff to find out if indeed this constituent of mine had received feedback from his Department?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, yes, of course we will.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you very much. I appreciate the Minister looking into this one. I believe, in the follow up I had, that the results of the test, if I recall correctly, were okay. I think what this constituent of mine might have been wondering about, perhaps, as they enclosed their bill, \$105 U.S., to the Unity medical centre in Grafton, North Dakota, if that was something the Department of Health would be willing to reimburse them for, is what I am assuming might have been their intent in the end. Certainly, they felt they needed to go out of country for addressing this situation.

On that note, I wonder, it is two minutes to six. Prior to me getting into a lot of other longer

questions, if the Committee might be willing to call it six o'clock?

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Nevakshonoff): The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

* (15:30)

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski): Would the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of Executive Council. Would the First Minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

We are on page 21 of the Estimates book, Resolution 2.1. General Administration (b) Management and Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,072,600. Shall the item pass?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): We could pass it, but I do not think the Member opposite would allow it. I want to table a document for the members, two copies, if I could. The question was asked yesterday, two questions were asked, three issues were raised. One that I took as notice was the actual transition costs in terms of the transition period. Mr. Kostyra's number, as I indicated before, was an individual that was on quite a bit after the actual transition time. I remember at the time being ready for questions in December on it. I recall going back to 1988, Mr. Ransom, prior to being appointed the head of the Hydro board, was in a similar situation.

I was wrong about Carmen Neufeld yesterday. She did the communication on a voluntary basis. She did not receive any remuneration, but she did withdraw on the swearing-in ceremony. Her company—and maybe Elaine Mathieson's name was there. She has another partner, so there are two women who own the company. They own it and I think they are the total employees of the company. They received a contract, which I indicated yesterday. The other costs are legal costs and transition staffing of \$51,000. So I was wrong about Ms. Neufeld. She did not have two contracts, just the one. She did not, her partner did.

Secondly, the other question that was raised was the issue of Communications staff. We have inquired with Ms. Stevens from the Culture Department, and her records indicated reduction of two over the civil service communication positions.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (Interim Leader of the Official Opposition): I wonder if the Premier could at some point provide for us a list of what is included in the 51,482; 51,000 number for other transition staffing and legal costs, whether we could have a breakdown of what is in that amount?

Mr. Doer: Yes.

Mrs. Mitchelson: If we could go back for just a couple of minutes to staff and Executive Council. I am wondering if the Premier could provide for me—I know we touched on certain individuals yesterday—but a list for everyone that is employed in Executive Council, their classifications and their salaries.

Mr. Doer: Yes, I sometimes received a list from the previous incumbent in the job. I will get a full list for the Member opposite.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Could the Premier also provide the list of the appointed political staff since they have taken office, a complete list of the names of political staff that have been appointed, their classifications and their starting salaries?

Mr. Doer: Yes. The macro staffing, as I indicated yesterday, is comparable. The secondments are lower than when we came into office. The two positions have not been filled yet. One is the tour individual, and we are looking at that. The other one is the speech writer for the Premier, who was the person who was seconded, will work for the individual Premier from the Cultural Affairs and Heritage department. The pay, as the Member opposite can see, the overall pay is about 1.5 percent salaries, and other administrative costs are about 1.5 percent over last year. The biggest increase on a percentage basis was for the hosting of the first ministers' meeting and the western premiers' meeting.

I think it is safe to say that the salaries are lower in terms of the two deputy ministers that were formerly there. I do not want to say too much with Ms. Gray here. The policy individual, all three salaries together are comparable to the previous situation, but there is a variation, so I will provide that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I wonder if the Premier might tell me whether his department has a sort of responsibility for co-ordinating all hirings throughout government.

Mr. Doer: No. All hirings throughout government. There were just a couple of recommendations to the Cabinet last week at a certain level through the Civil Service Commission, and their civil service competitions continue.

Certainly the political appointments are handled in the traditional way under The Civil Service Act.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Then are the political appointments that have been made during this government's tenure, are they co-ordinated through his office, through the Premier's Office?

Mr. Doer: Well, ultimately, cabinet has the responsibility of appointing and dis-appointing political appointees, and that practice has not changed.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think we had a history, certainly, when we were in government of respect for the integrity of the civil service. I think I heard the Premier make the same comments yesterday in statements that he will continue to respect the integrity of civil service.

Could the Premier provide for me a list of all the people that have been terminated, not only political appointments but other civil servants, all those that have been terminated since he came into office and all of those that have taken early retirements? Could that list be compiled and provided to me?

Mr. Doer: I will take the question as notice because there are a number of individuals that have retired. There are other individuals that have retired in terms of their own view of what

their career situation in the public service and other individuals who were terminated. The largest number of terminations that took place are the political staff. I recall terminating all this former staff in '88. I did not mean to fire you, Becky, but it was just the way it had to happen.

I remember doing it in '88. I remember, again, this government properly did it in '99. It is the outgoing government that technically terminates their own staff but with an agreed-upon severance. The former premier and I discussed that issue, and there were a couple of changes we made from '88. Quite frankly, from '88 there were some better changes made than from 1981.

I think that it was my view that the former Pawley government did not handle some of the severance arrangements fairly. So we changed it in '88. We improved it in '99. It was not a matter of a big dispute. We did reduce the number of deputy ministers by five; four of them were by departments: Mr. Kinnear, Mr. Carlyle, Mr. Tomasson, and the combination of the Clerk of Cabinet and the inner governmental affairs. So we had some combinations of departments to reduce the size of the senior public service. We tried to do it on the basis of our best judgment.

As I mentioned recently, when you look at departments such as Finance, the Treasury Board, the Secretary of the Treasury Board is Mr. Potter, who would be well known to members opposite. The Deputy Minister is Mr. Gannon. The advisor to the Minister of Finance is Mr. Curtis. There are some things that continue to provide—I am just using Finance as an example—the basic technical and financial information to governments on a non-partisan basis.

* (15:40)

We looked at the Benson model of a secretariat of the Treasury Board, and we felt we were critical of the former government during his appointment, which we considered to be outside of The Civil Service Act. We have not practised that ourselves. The latest example is what would be considered a fairly lucrative opportunity; it would be the Lotteries Corporation based on the Auditor's report. The

Member opposite knows the salary is well above deputy ministers' salaries—very major responsibility.

We are going to have a national competition. That is on-going now, but the person that we have put over there was an on-going civil servant who is, in fact, a person I certainly respect, Mr. Hodgins. We promoted Ms. Elliott on an acting basis. Not only do we keep the majority of the deputy ministers from the previous government, we have less of them. The other decision that has been made is we have not renewed the contract of Mr. Rubric who was appointed by the former government.

We have one acting deputy, interim deputy, Mr. Hikel in the Department of Health. That situation, I know, has been discussed at length in Health Estimates. It is an unresolved situation.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So the Premier, then, has committed to undertake to get a list pulled together. I know that certainly we all recognize and realize that political appointments by any government when a government changes would automatically be terminated. We certainly understand and respect that. But I would like a list of all civil servants that were terminated.

Mr. Doer: I am going to have to check on the issue of confidentiality. Certainly in my office, I will definitely provide those.

I know the Civil Service Commission Estimates have not been completed or started yet. There are some combinations of departments that have resulted in a reduction to the civil service. We have tried to re-employ as many as we could. For example, through our estimate process, we had major reductions in the Department of Education. In the Department itself, I think 60 SYs were cancelled. We had major reductions in Conservation. We had major increases in staff to deal with the jails. We came into office, and there were virtual jails. There was not any staffing in the budgets when we came into office, so we had to make those changes. The allocation of SYs— it used to be SYs—I am dating myself, but FTEs now, for purposes of the transfer of the City of Winnipeg social assistance over the to province, which was a decision made by the previous government.

We have actually reduced the size, if you look at the core civil service. By reducing the Department, we have reduced the number of employees working for government in the administrative area. But some of the decisions made by the previous government, some of which we supported, for example, the renovations at Headingley; 120 correctional officers have been hired since we came into office. So you kind of have an attrition program, and you make some decisions in some departments, and then there are hirings in others.

I will have to take, as notice, the issue of the whole civil service. but certainly in the administrative section under these Estimates I will provide that information. I will provide the information at the Deputy and Assistant Deputy Minister level, which, of course, the Premier is definitely involved in the Deputy Minister and Deputy Minister equivalent level on hiring and decisions not to continue. I will provide that to the Member.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson. I cannot recall, I am sorry, but I might just ask the Premier whether it is public information on what employees over a certain salary level within the civil service, it is public information and those salaries and names are disclosed publicly. Am I correct in that assumption?

Mr. Doer: Yes, and we will provide that. The issue that may not be available to the public is the personal reasons for people leaving. I said I would take it as notice. My belief is if anybody wants to make a public issue of somebody leaving, starting with the individual, it usually becomes public. So I have no difficulty with the request. I just want to make sure I am complying with proper confidentiality for those individuals who decide to leave and do not want to end up being perceived as being "fired" for their own career purposes, so I want to be sensitive to that. Some people leave because they want a different challenge. Some people leave because they get a better offer. Some people leave because they want a change, and some people leave because they feel that it is better for them to do so. Not too many have done that, but there have been some. You have asked questions on some.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I could just ask a couple of questions on labour relations

and how this government is dealing with the co-ordination of all the labour issues. A lot of contracts, I guess, are up for renewal, and we are seeing a significant number of issues.

I know that when we were in government Gerry Irving was a person within the Civil Service Commission who was used, I think very highly regarded and highly respected, as an individual that could deal with labour relations issues. We certainly had a lot of respect for him and his capabilities, and I think he managed to do a very credible job. My understanding is that he has been moved from that position and that someone else has been brought in by this government. I wonder if the Premier could indicate to me what has happened to Gerry Irving and at the same time what his roles and responsibilities might be.

Mr. Doer: Again, the Civil Service Commission Estimates, I do not think they have started or finished, but Mr. Irving is still an ADM in the Civil Service Commission. We are changing the labour relations function of the Civil Service Commission to go, like many other provinces and the federal government, under the Treasury Board function. One of the largest discretionary costs governments have is the salaries, subject to the other side agreeing; secondly, the benefits; thirdly, the classifications, although that is subject to The Civil Service Act; and fourthly, the number of employees that are in each department.

So we have moved the function to the Treasury Board or closer to the Treasury Board. Mr. Irving is still an ADM at the Civil Service Commission.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So, Madam Chairperson, I am just trying to clarify, is Gerry Irving still in charge of negotiations and labour relations, or is there someone else performing that function?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Irving retains his role as an ADM. The role of Secretary to the Compensation Committee of Cabinet, as you know, has been assigned to Mr. Lloyd Schreyer. So the role of Secretary to the Compensation Committee has been assigned to that individual, although Mr. Irving, I know, now that the settlement has been achieved—it is safe to say

that he was involved to a tremendous degree in the contingency plans and labour relations issues that were pending in a pretty close situation in our correctional institutions. There were strike votes being taken and possibilities, threats of illegal or legal strikes.

The other individual who has been added to that body from the Civil Service is Mr. Potter, Secretary to Treasury Board, to make sure we have some connection back to Treasury.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So if I am understanding correctly, Lloyd Schreyer has undertaken the responsibilities that Gerry Irving had—

An Honourable Member: No.

* (15:50)

Mrs. Mitchelson: The Premier is saying no, so I am having a little difficulty understanding.

I am wondering if the Premier could provide for me sort of a flow chart or a structure for the labour relationship, union interaction activities that are undertaken. Obviously, there is a new structure in place through Treasury Board, so I am wondering if he could provide for me a flow chart that indicates clearly who is in what position and what their responsibilities are.

Is it the Secretary to Labour Relations whose function has been moved to Treasury Board? Is that a new structure and are there new staff years associated with that, or is it a reorg with the same number of employees supporting that function?

Mr. Doer: We have an unusually high number of negotiations on this year, as the Member may have noted, some of which are ongoing. The Secretary to the Compensation Committee of Cabinet is a cabinet committee. We thought that that cabinet committee should be in Treasury Board or report to Treasury Board. So there is a reorganization going on.

I do know that Mr. Benson was involved in the past on negotiation issues as Secretary to Treasury Board, although it was not formal. It was informal, although one could argue that he had more power than anybody, save the Cabinet,

in the previous government. Mr. Benson was involved in the decision making, but it was not, in my view, clear that Treasury Board was responsible for negotiations on a line chart.

So you will see with our new line chart, the Compensation Committee of Cabinet reports to the Treasury Board. The reason for that, quite frankly, is the Compensation Committee is different than the Civil Service Commission. The Civil Service Commission deals with the direct government employees. It deals with the merit principle. It deals with a lot of other issues related to The Civil Service Act.

The Compensation Committee of Cabinet deals with all the Crown corporations, all the collective bargaining in the health care sector. For example, it was involved in trying to implement the mediator's report of the health care professionals, is involved in all the other negotiations that are going on, some of which have been resolved, some of which have not. I think just the recent example, there are about 19 or 20 out of 26 units have been settled in the health care professionals. One was tied. One northern local approved it, and one northern local voted down the offer 36:34. The three locals at the cancer institute all defeated it, and it is something we are aware we have to deal with, although we are pleased that we have made the step to deal with the lab techs, who are in a very difficult situation, not only for salaries, but also because of the sword of the Damocles that has been over their heads about the reorganization of that function for a long time.

So that function outside of the Civil Service and inside the Civil Service is a cabinet committee with an individual that is doing the job. The ADM remains in the Civil Service Commission. It is a temporary assignment. Whether we will make it permanent or not, I am not sure, and what we are going to be doing after this set of negotiations. We just felt coming in that we needed more horsepower with all the negotiations that were going on across all these tables to make sure that we had a balance of fairness and firmness in our settlements.

Mr. Schreyer is a management negotiator at the university, as you know, and he wrote what we thought to be a fairly good view. I thought he

chaired an excellent human resource committee when they recommended a number of changes. In fact, I think he was working with the previous government on the nurse resource proposal. We thought some of the recommendations he made earlier in the '90s could have been useful for all of us to have implemented throughout the last decade, but we felt that we have got a lot of negotiations going on.

Now, the person at the table, for example, in the direct Civil Service, was still Mr. Pruden who was there last year and years before, and a very, very capable individual. I have a lot of respect for him. In fact, when I was Minister of Telephones and we had problems with senior management, I asked him to come in and help out because we had a problem. I did not think, at the telephone system, after the MTX situation, that we had the horsepower over there to do the management job. So he is the person at the table and a person whom I have a lot of respect for.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So we have now the Compensation Committee of Cabinet. Is that a new structure? *[interjection]*

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): Sorry, you are not on record.

Mr. Doer: Oh, I will be more patient. I feel like I am in class: Ask me, ask me.

The goal is the same as it was under the former members. You want to know, cabinet wants to know, or Treasury Board wants to have some say against somebody out there making a management decision that prejudices the whole payroll. We have all gone through that before. It is not unusual to expect the Treasury and the public to try to control what we would call whipsawing. We are trying to do that; you tried to do that, and I think previous governments tried to do that. I think, if you make a decision, you could at least want to know you have made it before it has been on your behalf, and that is the role of the Compensation Committee of Cabinet.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I do not disagree with those comments, but we do have a new structure for the Compensation Committee of Cabinet with a new secretary. Maybe, when I see the flowchart,

I will have an understanding of what the changes were. I guess my final question on this area would be the Premier indicated that Gerry Irving is an ADM. He has not been moved into the new Treasury Board structure, the Compensation Committee to Cabinet, but he remains an ADM in the Civil Service Commission. What is his role and function in that position?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Irving has been ADM responsible for labour relations in the public service. He remains as ADM of that function, and all the labour relations officers report to him. I believe classification is also in that branch. Those functions are being moved by our budget to the Department of Finance in the Treasury Board. So, yes, Mr. Irving is moving with that function.

This has happened in other provinces before. That is why you had a situation informally where Mr. Benson was involved in the past. We understand Mr. Scarth was also involved, from the Premier's Office, in the former Compensation Committee of Cabinet. That is not inappropriate in my view, because it is better to try to make a decision on monetary proposals before they are made than if somebody makes an offer to table that you do not have the authority or the means or the support for, that that happens. It is no different than in the private sector where you will have negotiations go on at the table and then you will have decisions being made by the CEO ultimately and the comptroller and others who may not be at the table but may be reporting ultimately to the shareholders.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I would like to, if I can, move back to some questions around the transition team. We have the breakdown, I guess. The total costs for transition then were—

Mr. Doer: Of the transition team, the total—
[interjection]

Mrs. Mitchelson: Maybe I will just clarify that question. The total cost, not the transition, but I just want to clarify that the question I am asking is the total staffing and the total costs involved with members of the transition team in that function, not necessarily the transition costs, because I know that there were severances and all kinds of activities that were undertaken. That

is the total, just over \$90,000, that is on this paper?

* (16:00)

Mr. Doer: My understanding of the numbers are that is the total of the actual transition function in the two weeks that took place. The cost of severance, the cost of other decisions that took place in the transition was well over \$2 million, again, probably higher in relative terms than '88 because of the number of deputy ministers that were let go as part of going from 18 departments down to 15.

On the executive severance, we used the package that was developed by the former government for decisions that were made for executive managers. For political staff, it was a matter that was discussed between myself and former Premier Filmon. As we did in '88—I did it on behalf of former Premier Pawley in '88—so it was consensus on the amounts. So I believe that is the full cost, and I would give you the breakdown of it, of the actual transition office. It operated for about 8 or 10 or 11 days in between the time of September 21 and October 4, midnight.

I do not know. For example, there are lots of grey areas. The day I was elected, the next morning I was told the Bombers were not going to meet the payroll, so I was dealing with former ministers, and there were Treasury Board documents prepared of what we should do. There were all kinds of decisions back and forth between us, between the transition teams, mostly worked out between Mr. Eldridge and Mr. Leitch, sometimes requiring approval from Mr. Schroeder and Mr. Kostyra and sometimes requiring some consultation with us.

The second big issue we had to deal with immediately was Faneuil. There were a couple of things obviously that a government does not want to come out in the news during an election campaign, and I can understand that. We had the whole issue of Faneuil at that time, and do we refinance it or let it fall? We had to deal with that. I will check and see where that is. There were some legal issues we needed advice on. So we did use some legal advice, partly I think on the frozen food, because that became available

right away. Normally those would be the costs of government, but some of them were costs of the transition.

I think we got, for example, an opinion of Mr. Hak from Levine Levene Tadman. I think I have already stated this in the House in answers to questions you have asked before on some of the frozen food legal issues.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So then if the Premier's statements are correct, the \$90,000 just plus, I think he indicated that was for the transition period from the date of the election until the date the Government was sworn in? I thought that is what I heard.

Mr. Doer: There were some costs that were longer than the swearing-in date, but there were people that did some work and then faded away. Some of them were after I think Mr. Kostyra certainly was hired into office. I will get the names, because I think there may be people that we hired, and I want to make sure I got their exact—got paid after the fifth, and were hired by us after the transition was over. So I will make sure I get those names.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I guess, what I am asking for is how long members of the transition team might have been extended. We have Eugene Kostyra's extension here, and expenses. I would like to know who else might have been extended, and what those contracts might have been, and what their expense accounts might have been.

Mr. Doer: I can give you the exact breakdown. I think the one that comes to mind is Mr. Woodbury who worked till December 31. Before he was employed in another location, but Mr. Kostyra would be one that the Member opposite, I know, was interested in. I do not understand why, and that is why I have disclosed fully to her.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I thank the Premier for that full disclosure, and I guess what I am asking for is full disclosure on others that were part of the transition process, and how long they stayed on. Can the Premier tell me whether Eugene Kostyra has taken a leave from his previous activities, or is he still employed in any other capacity?

Mr. Doer: I believe he is retired. In fact, I am almost sure he has retired from his previous function.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I would not exactly say that he is free and independent and practising in the private sector, but anyway, we think he may have changed focus a bit. We have not quite assured ourselves that that has happened.

Mr. Doer: Just on that, and I know that you will continue to say that he did this and that and everything else, and that is fair ball. I understand that. He has, during the transition time, the project he worked on, and it is really not transition—my contact with Mr. Kostyra was his work on the Flyer bus company and getting the new owners to buy the bus company after we privatized the company. So one would argue that he was the first person to privatize a Crown corporation in a long time. With Flyer Industries, he was involved in selecting, in co-operation with the employees, den-Oudsten who came over and bought the company.

There were concerns about all the—and this is ironic, because the Flyer bus company was originally, the debentures were originally signed by Gurney Evans, I think, back in the '60s. So it was actually nationalized by a former Conservative government, if history is to be reported correctly.

But the liabilities were huge, as the Member opposite knows, for all of the requirements of repair if any bus went down and the Government assumed those liabilities. Thankfully, the buses were of high enough quality that they did not require any pressure on the public purse and members opposite would know that directly, coming into government in '88. Flyer has since, one time with the support of us, and one time with the support of members opposite, done very well.

He has been involved in the Buhler takeover of Versatile. He has been working with Mr. Buhler on some of the issues that are related there. He has been working on the Schneider's plant, working with the City of Winnipeg on Schneider's to make sure that if the company made a decision, it would be at least made on the

basis of economic decisions. So he has been involved in some of these issues that are completely opposite to the allegations that may be made, and I do not suggest for a moment they will stop by my explanation here today.

I understand the joy of political comment. I have sometimes used the odd one myself, but I just want you to know, the House to know, for the record, that he has a very good relationship with Mr. Gilroy who is working with the City of Winnipeg, and that is useful. He was on the Glen Murray transition team at the City of Winnipeg, chosen by Mr. Murray, and Ms. Lederman, Mr. Gilroy, and Mr. Kostyra were there. So he has some certain skills that are very helpful to the Government. I am not converting you. I know that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Just before I go on, I will just make a short comment, and indicate that I do remember well my days in opposition from 1986 to 1988, and the budget that was defeated that brought the Pawley government down. So I remember back to the tax-and-spend era of yesterday's NDP. I am not sure that I am seeing a lot different from Today's NDP. So I just wanted to put those comments on the record. I am sure that the Premier and I will have some interesting discussions and banter back and forth across—
[interjection]

Yes, well, they have always said that people from the north end are street fighters, and I had certainly developed a little bit of that strength over the last 12 years.

Anyway, I would just like to move on to the Deloitte and Touche report and ask the Premier what the total cost of the Deloitte and Touche exercise was. I am getting conflicting messages. I am hearing, on one hand, that there was a request for proposals and then hearing that there was untendered contract with Deloitte and Touche. I wonder if the Premier could clarify which one it was, and what the total cost was.

* (16:10)

Mr. Doer: It is again not in these Estimates, and the former premier used to admonish me at length if I asked any questions outside of his Estimates, and said go to the appropriate

minister. Having said that, I will try to answer without prejudice to the next question you might ask me, but the Deloitte and Touche report was on budget, as I recall it. So the number that was announced originally was the correct one. It was a proposal call.

So there was a bidding process or a proposal process, and the Provincial Auditor—we were critical of the former members in 1988 when the KPMG was hired, and I believe, that the auditor was critical at the point. The former auditor, Fred Jackson, going by memory, was critical. So we did have the Provincial Auditor involved at every step of the decision, because we thought the last thing we wanted was the Auditor to be critical of the process, and the new opposition.

Mrs. Mitchelson: So the Premier, then, is telling me that the \$400,000 that has been reported as the cost for the Deloitte and Touche report was all the money. There was no extension or no addition to that contract, and that money went directly to—that was Deloitte and Touche's cost. Were there other costs, I guess my next question would be, over and above the \$400,000 that went to Deloitte and Touche?

Mr. Doer: I believe, the first press release said that there would be approximately \$500,000 for the cost of the whole audit, and the number is within—there is about \$375,000 for Deloitte and Touche and \$94,000 for Mr. Hikel from Hampshire Consulting. We will have to check and see whether that was all for just that function because I think he had nine contracts in the former government prior to us coming to office.

I will check and see whether any of nine contracts were part of that. Of course, we thought it was useful to have the same individual go back after '88 because he was the audit person in '88, and he made some comments about what things have been improved in and what things had not in '99 and 2000.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I would like to ask the Premier whether there are any other contracts that were signed with any other individuals that might have related to the Deloitte and Touche exercise.

Mr. Doer: I believe, and again, I am not the Minister of Finance, but I believe Deloitte and Touche and in consultation with Mr. Potter and Mr. Gannon felt there was a difficulty with them being involved in some of the computer programs that the government had contracted to, and I believe there was one report completed by somebody that they had hired to ensure there was integrity in the review.

We were particularly concerned about the SmartHealth, the desktop, the Faneuil operation, a number of "high-tech" operations that we wanted to evaluate independently to see (a) whether they were worth what they were stated to be worth, (b) what the write-down would have to be, (c) what was salvageable, and (d) what was good and we should keep and keep investing in. The last point was what we had to develop an exit ramp to in terms of the public good and the public finances.

So I will take the question as notice, but I do know there was one example where Deloitte and Touche was involved in one contract that was given by the former government to a high-tech operation which they felt they would be in a conflict of interest to evaluate and they engaged someone else or another individual. That is my recollection of it. If I am wrong, like Carmen Neufeld, I will come back and correct the record.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I guess my question would be then if there was another firm contracted with to do some of the financial assessment of some of the programs, was that over and above the money that was paid to Deloitte and Touche, or was it included? Did Deloitte and Touche pay for those costs out of the money that was allocated to them for the contract? I do not know whether he has the answer to that or not at this point or if he wants to bring that back.

Mr. Doer: Well, Madam Chair, my predecessor used to bring back a note of some things that were asked and, as quickly as I can, I will bring back a note on some of these questions outstanding. I believe it was within, but if that is wrong, I will correct it in writing to you.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess I seem to recall on a news release somewhere that Bev Suek was a

part of some financial review that was undertaken, and I think it might have been in association with the Deloitte and Touche report. Was she a person on the committee that oversaw that review, and if that is the case, or if it is not, I know she was noted. Could the Premier indicate what her role would have been and what fees would have been paid to her to participate in that process?

Mr. Doer: Yes, Ms. Suek was appointed by us. I think she was a former member of the Civil Service Commission. She was on the steering committee as I recall with the Provincial Auditor. The Provincial Auditor, the Secretary to the Treasury Board, the Deputy Finance Minister, the Clerk of Cabinet, Bev Suek, we thought we should have an individual from the outside technically and get some better gender representation—or some gender representation in the committee, not better. She was paid \$3,960 for being on the steering committee. What that did was receive the reports and ask questions back as the progress of the financial review continued.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I know that some questions may have been asked. I am sure they were asked in the Estimates of Finance. I just thought I would touch on a few questions.

I guess I would like to move on to the Freedom of Information Act. We do know that this government was chastised for breaking the law and not providing information on ministerial travel until after—I guess they asked for one extension for 30 days and then a second extension, and were late in providing that information. I guess the reason that was given was that the Government, well not really acting within the spirit of the law, determined that they would go back and try to gather information on what ministerial travel was prior to their becoming government. That was the reason for the delay. I guess I would like to ask the Premier: Under whose direction was that activity undertaken?

Mr. Doer: First of all, we were making a general decision to try to reduce travel costs in government and also determine where the travel costs rested. In these Estimates, you will find

that there was nothing in the travel budget of the Premier for the government plane in 1999-2000, even though we know the government plane was available to the previous incumbent.

We were also told that the Province of Manitoba did not have to pay for things like Davos, Switzerland, but we found the membership of \$25,000 U.S. in another department. We were trying to see whether we could save money in the budget, and we were dealing with both our travel and the budget.

The second issue happening was we did not have any credit cards. We were putting everything on our own credit cards. I know in my own case, I carried the cost of the credit cards, including interest rates, because we just did not have time. We were told by the ambassador there was one mistake made on my expense account, and it was dealing with a request I had from Raymond Chrétien to get down to Washington immediately, because contrary to what we were told in the province, the North Dakota State Water Act was full steam ahead. I was literally told, not only the day I was sworn in, I had to get down there, when I met with the federal Foreign Affairs Minister the next day when he called me, said it was urgent. He asked me to visit when President Clinton was there in Ottawa to discuss this matter further.

* (16:20)

So we just had to drop everything and start doing some things we did not expect to do. When I got back from a holiday with my spouse, there was a mistake made on my travel expense. Because we did not have the proper credit cards in place for ministers, including myself, I thought it was better to have accurate information going to the public and the *Free Press*. So I asked that the document be changed to be accurate, and all information was provided to the media.

Having said that, I think now the situation is properly in place where the accounting is done properly by the accounting staff and there are proper credit cards to make sure they are carrying this responsibility; could be easily divulged within the 30-day period. So, I think there was some work going on in the budget. It

was over Christmas and we were new government just in office. I think some of the problems we encountered in the initial stages would not be a problem. As I said before in the House, it will not be a problem in the future. I thought accurate information was more advantageous than information that is inaccurate. That is why I asked that the numbers be changed.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, I have some difficulty in believing that a government that had only been in office for a couple of months at the time would have that much difficulty, would require over two months, that would require breaking the law in order to get that kind of information pulled together. Surely there was not that much travel that it would take almost as much time to gather the information and make it public as this government had been in office. So I have some concern about the motives and the activity that was ongoing surrounding the Freedom of Information request.

I mean we have legislation that is in place. I know that government today is looking at reviewing that legislation, and I certainly will be watching very carefully to ensure that they are not looking to provide less information to the public as a result of that review. But I would just like to ask what the process is now or has been within the Premier's Office on Freedom of Information requests that might be sort of standard right across government.

Mr. Doer: Just coming back to the previous point, it does not take any time at all, if you have credit cards, to add up the totals of travel and fully divulge them. We have cancelled a lot of the spousal travel that was made by the previous government. We have cancelled the first-class travel that took place under the previous government, so we are more than willing to divulge the information. We are trying to travel, sometimes, on Saturdays, if we can save money for the taxpayers, if we can.

I would note that in the past there were a number of requests made to a government that was in for a long period of time that did not comply with the time lines. In '91, reported the

Ombudsman, delays were noted; the '92 report, delays were noted, over 66 days beyond the total; the '93 report, there were three cases noted, 94 days in Department of Northern Affairs, 120 in Natural Resources, delays in Health; delays in '96, delays in '98.

I recall reading an Ombudsman's report where it stated that no information was divulged in the Jets because the Premier and the Minister of Finance did not make the records available. I also recall that when Mr. Benson was interviewed, he said, well, I keep the files in my briefcase.

Having said that, I do not think many of us have sat down at our desk for an hour to add up taxi chits and everything else from our first six or nine months in office. Perhaps someday we will be able to get all our catch-up done, but the goal was to get out there on Agriculture and get out there on the water projects.

I think it is not going to be any difficulty in complying with The Freedom of Information Act now that we have the administrative structures in place. When a new government comes in the transitions take a while in certain areas. That, to me, was the biggest reason. I was the biggest reason, when I saw a mistake, because they were relying on my own credit card which is not something that I readily hand, you know, my own statements, I do not hand out until I file an expense account. I had not been able to complete everything.

So I took responsibility. It was my decision, no staff decision, and I took responsibility for being three days late. But I think the members opposite, you know, there has certainly been time. The full information was divulged, which is the law. It was late, and I accept responsibility for that.

On the general issues, I think that we do need an implementation strategy. There are matters that concern me. Coming into office, some of the matters that have been dealt with, sensitive information that has been requested, in my view, public information, should be released pursuant to the FIPPA requests.

The issue of advice to the government, I think it is not a legal change; it is an implementation strategy, because this is not the American system. In a British parliamentary system, the advice to government, and you will have the same individual senior staff giving written advice to a Tory minister one year and an NDP minister the next, that advice is not like the American system where people are hired and fired when the government goes. That advice has, under a parliamentary system, some protection. I do not want a paperless public service, so I think we have to do some work on, not the act and the rights of the public for information, but on the issue of a British parliamentary system and how that would work, separating out public information from advice.

People say, to interpret it, you have to sever all these things. Well, I think that is inappropriate, and I do not want to prejudice senior civil servants who may be working for somebody else down the road, in a democracy, and do not want to be put in a very awkward situation.

The other issue that concerns us is the rights of individuals for privacy. I have not had a chance yet to read the chiropractor's report from the Ombudsman, but it does concern me, the driver's licence information and the chiropractor's patients records. We were critical of the former government, not in terms of some of the FIPPA stuff, but some of the issues of the privacy commissioner. That is certainly what we want to look at.

* (16:30)

Mr. Cris Aglugub, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Our intent is not to roll back the public right of information. Our goal is to clarify what is advice to the government, what is public information that should be released and what is privacy information that must be protected. Those are the three goals we generally have in government to deal with the new act.

I think all the FIPPA requests we have received so far, I mean, nobody has had to take us to court yet or threaten to go to court yet, but

there might be a time that they do, and that is fine, too. That is the law. The Ombudsman is not the judge and jury. He or she is just one step. We have resolved all issues at the first step. He has been critical of the former government. He is critical in a couple of cases of us, and so be it. We have not had to have a court order us to release information yet, which obviously is a recourse under the act.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I asked the question on what would be the process within the Premier's Office, or what has been the process, if there has been sort of a government-wide request for information. Would the Premier himself or any of his staff be involved in analyzing a request and giving direction on how it should be handled to departments or Crown corporations?

Mr. Doer: I am alerted when the stuff is going out. I am informed that it is on the way. With my own expense account, I was asked to read it and saw a mistake, so I asked for it to be changed. That was nobody's fault but mine, I suppose. There was something that was double-billed and it was false information, so I thought accurate information was more sensible. I guess I could have cancelled my holiday with my spouse, but that would have been a problem at home. We had not stopped for about nine months in a row, as the Member opposite would understand.

I do not think there has been any change in procedures. I remember once raising an issue, and Barb Biggar's name was over the request. I think, when material goes to the media, we certainly know it is going to the media, because they are going to ask us right away. Usually before they even print something, they ask us for comment. When something is of a general nature, we try to make sure we do not have five departments saying yes and five departments saying no. That is through the professional staff.

There have been some questions that the deputies have tried to resolve. It has taken a little cultural change for us, in terms of some of the blanket requests. I would say that when there was a request to FIPPA our briefing book, we said, well, what is going on here? A person like me does not have one. But there were some that had them, and there is the whole issue of confidentiality and commercial information.

There is advice from staff, and there is information that should legitimately get released.

I remember when the briefing material was requested from the December session. The only thing I brought into the house was the 1988 audit and the 1999 Deloitte Touche first audit, and that was it. Those are both public documents. Certainly we want information. The public has a right to materials, and we certainly support that. If we do not practise it, we will be in contravention of the Act and contravention of our words. I think almost every report we have received, we have released immediately: the Deloitte and Touche reports, the frozen food reports, the casino report, even reports that we did not even commission, like rural health care reports. We have tried to release them as soon as possible to this Legislature and to the public. We did not hold the casino report, for example, even though it was given to us the Wednesday night or Thursday morning, I am not sure, and it was released Thursday afternoon.

So we are not sitting on things very long, but I do think that the issue of advice in a British parliamentary system, which is protected by the Act, has got to be developed in the way in which documents are prepared. For example, a briefing book that intermingles advice with information, there should be a way of having advice and information, in my view, more FIPPA compliant. It was not my view that that was the case when we came into office. You might get a commercial comment in between a personnel comment.

So the section that is dealing with the privacy of individuals was intermingled with the right of the public to have information they should get. That is part of an implementation problem that we have to deal with. It has not been our No. 1 priority. Agriculture, water projects, the budget, which we first thought we would be running a deficit when we got into office, those have been more the priorities. I think this FIPPA issue, we have got to spend some implementation time on. We have not really done it; we have not had the time to spend the right time on it, to be honest.

Mrs. Mitchelson: What would be the role of the Premier's Office in any freedom of information

requests that might come into Crown corporations?

Mr. Doer: I am trying to think. I do not recall. The only FIPPA request I recall being informed about was the Lotteries Corporation. I will have to go back in my records to see if there are any other examples. There is a major FIPPA request I have been informed on in one Crown corporation. I think there is one on Hydro going back to the '60s. I think that matter is being dealt with by lawyers.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Was there not a blanket freedom of information request that came of all government departments and Crown corporations for briefing notes or transition documents that was all-inclusive in nature?

Mr. Doer: I was just informed, I was not directly aware, that the Crown briefing notes were asked for as well. I know there was a specific FIPPA request that has been met totally in the Lotteries Corporation on travel, on other matters that were complied with. Some of the Crown corporations that are dealing with negotiating strategies, for example, on export sales of Hydro, quite frankly, I would hope that we are not releasing that information prior to, you know, if we are in a bit of a commercial relationship, the whole campaign, for example, on stopping the hydro-electric power developed by some of the organizations in Minnesota, Wisconsin and other places, I am not sure, but I am just informed that the transition documents were requested.

Again, the advice and commercial information and private information is not FIPPA-able, if that is a word, but public policy about what is in the annual report, what is projected. Some of the stuff that was at the public Hydro hearing last Friday, in my view, can be released to the public before it comes to the Legislature. Some would have to be maintained for the Legislature.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I guess I would just like to pursue this a little further. When the request came in for transition documents or briefing documents, what was the process that was followed in order to make a

determination on whether information could be released?

* (16:40)

Mr. Doer: Well, I do not know what the total process was. I think there was some concern that some parts of a document were FIPPA-able. Parts of a document included advice to ministers, which are contrary to the Act; parts of the documents were including personal information. Some of the documents contained commercial information, so there was an attempt to find out what was required and what was not. I think, ultimately, some of the briefing books have been made available to external parties.

In my view, it speaks to an issue of the new law. I do not think, in my view, there should be a separation out between. When documents are prepared, the materials that could be released to the public should be prepared in such a way that they can be. You know you should not intersperse commercial information, personal information and advice information that should be released to the public. If you do it at the front end, I think it might be—this is just a personal view; it does not reflect the view of the Government. My personal view is if we prepare the documents at the front end in a FIPPA-able friendly way—is that the right term?—FIPPA friendly or FIPPA-compliant, it would make a lot more sense.

Now, we had no direction on how the documents were prepared when we came into office. They were prepared by senior employees. The Member knows that. They were not prepared under our direction. As the Member knows, during an election campaign, all deputy ministers prepare transition documents because that is their job. They do not tell us that when we are running in a campaign, but that is what they do, and they do not tell it. They did not prepare them under our direction. We received it under—and I think there were some problems with the way in which—it was an omelette. A lot of the documents were omelettes, and it is better to have the eggs separate from the milk before you prepare the documents in my view. That is a personal opinion. It may be something that does not make any sense under the law, but it just seems to be common sense for my purposes and

the public, because we have no difficulty releasing information to the public.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I guess I would like to ask the question of whether, in fact, the Premier's Office would have been involved in any way with the requests that were made to Crown corporations around release of those documents. Was he involved or any of his staff involved in a process of dealing with Crown corporations around release of information?

Mr. Doer: Well, I did not know about the specific issue of Crown corporations, but I am sure we were involved in the—it was the first time ever. Instead of saying what is Bonnie Mitchelson's travel to Ottawa on such and such a date to do such and such a function, there was blanket. There were 65 or 70 blanket requests for the first time ever in government. So, you know, I think there was a lot of professional advice given to us, including in the Premier's Office, and what did this mean. I think there was professional advice sought.

But I am not saying that when we first came into office and were confronted with 65 or 70 blanket requests under The Freedom of Information Act that we had—we were really, really working long, hard hours to try to get the start of a budget together. Our priority when we first came to office generally in government was try to get a budget together which we first were worried was going to be in a deficit. So almost 90 percent of our time was being spent on what the existing financial situation was, what are the projections going into January, are we going to get good news, are we going to get bad news, how can we deal with the income programs for agriculture, how can we deal with those other things?

We did not stop. I can tell you personally, I did not stop and spend a lot of time about 65 blanket requests in FIPPA when I was trying to bloody well stop water coming in from North Dakota that was approved by the U.S. Senate subcommittee. Now, that does not mean to say there is not the law and it should not be dealt with, but I did not say, oh, I cannot go to meet with the Prime Minister, with Premier Romanow when we have got an agriculture crisis on our

hands because I have got a FIPPA meeting to go to.

So in some ways as a new government we did not have it as the No. 1 priority in government, and I fully acknowledge that. Some other individuals that might be monitoring this might feel there are people in government that feel that this is, you know, they are all assigned in each department FIPPA people, but we were trying to move. Calling an election in October, and if there is a change in government, it really does cramp, it really does put a tremendous burden on the whole public service, particularly when you reduce it to departments, to get a budget ready. We still could not get it ready in time. We ran 150 different simulations of what all these things were going to be in terms of computer modelling and everything else. The answer to your question is: I did not spend a lot of time on it. I did not think it was the No. 1 priority. There were mistakes made that will not be made under more normal circumstances. I take responsibility for that. I did not think it was the No. 1 priority in government.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I would not expect that the Premier in a new mandate, in a new government would place Freedom of Information requests right at the top of his priority list. Quite often I can remember those kinds of requests coming in when I had responsibility as a minister. But the reality is there is a law there and there is the process and we still have to be cognizant of what laws are in place and meeting commitments to upholding those laws.

So I know that the Premier would not have been intimately involved in every step of the way through any process as I never was or I am sure nobody within our government was, but, still, we have to take requests seriously. There are some issues that sometimes frustrate you more than you really need. You do have to set priorities but you also have to live within the law of the Province or all of the laws of the Province of Manitoba.

I have to pursue this a little bit and ask, the Premier then obviously must have, if there was a blanket request, and I know that there was, I know that ultimately there was an extension asked for and ultimately there was a denial of

information being provided on this specific request for briefing notes or transition documents or whatever they were called. The Premier, I would imagine, would have been aware or informed in some way that the request was going to be denied and would have agreed with that decision. Maybe the Premier could indicate to me who he might have put sort of in charge of looking after the whole issue of that request and have the ultimate decision on information being denied.

Mr. Doer: This was not a black-and-white request. It was not a simple request that was coming to us, you know, this information, Jets losses information, please reveal it, coming back and saying, we do not have it. This was not like video lottery terminals please provide the video lottery terminal breakdown by community and us saying, we do not have it. I remember knowing that every computer program had every VLT machine by hour, let alone by community. This was not a similar case. This was a blanket request for information.

Some ministers would have information that was fully public already; for example, myself. I just had the audits in my book. Sometimes I would bring in a newspaper article that I think the Member opposite might ask a question on, with a couple of notes on top of it. I do not think the *Free Press* would like to pay money for an FIPPA article and this was their own article.

There was other information in there that was advice to ministers which are contrary to being released. I think the big problem was not what should be released or what should not be released but the way in which material was prepared for us coming in, because it was innominate. Some of it should legally be public, and some of it should legally be withheld to protect the senior public service.

I do not think next time around, and I am hoping that will be a long time from now, there will be other cases of ministerial briefing books and other similar examples. We have got to get an implementation process in place that separates out advice, personnel information, confidential information. I may be missing something from public information that should

be properly released, so there can be information released.

I remember the members opposite when they released a report on the Seven Oaks School Division. It was more whiteout there than—it looked like the Nixon tapes. I do not think that is the purpose of the FIPPA either. It looks like you are releasing stuff and hiding stuff.

* (16:50)

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Senior civil advice, as the Member opposite knows because it is their Act, must be maintained with some integrity. Information on confidential commercial relationships have got to be protected and legal under the Act. So I think that is the problem that we faced with 65 blanket requests. I think that, for example, we had been elected earlier or later, after the budget cycle, the Member knows the budget cycle, the Estimates cycle is very time consuming from September on. It is particularly time consuming for a new government. There is no question about that, specifically, a new government that wanted to change departments. I was told there was nothing in my briefing book that was not already public already. It was true.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We are not talking about the 55 blanket requests. I guess, we are talking about the one blanket request across government and Crown corporations for information and briefing books. I want to know what the process was within government. Was there legal advice sought in each individual case on what was FOI-able and what was not? Why or how was the decision made that the request would be denied without taking a look at the legal implications of releasing some information and whiting out information that was confidential in nature and might not comply with the legislation?

Mr. Doer: I do understand right now there are no appeals of any decisions we have made, albeit a couple were a couple days late, my responsibility, on the travel. I am not aware of any appeals that have gone yet to court. On the issue of briefing books I do believe there was a legal opinion obtained from the Department of

Justice. The transition books were deemed to be subject to the Cabinet confidentiality rule.

On the issue of House books, there was legal advice received that part of the House books were FIPPA-able and should be released, and other parts of the book, the advice from senior staff, confidential information on personnel, pending decisions of cabinet, decisions that were dealing with commercial operations, et cetera, should be withheld. Some of the information in the books could be, should be, released.

After those legal opinions were obtained, we followed through on the legal advice from the Department of Justice and proceeded to sever, do a Seven Oaks School Division on some of these briefing books, as I understand what happened.

So, yes, the answer to your question was legal advice was sought, received and ultimately implemented. I would say that I think we can do a better job at the front end because, as I say, if you prepare documents on the basis of compliance with FIPPA to begin with, then you do not have these problems after when something is requested. It looks like blanket requests are going to continue. There is even some question about whether blanket requests are FIPPA-able or not as opposed to a specific one. Having said that, we are trying to operate under those requests.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess I would ask the question of whether Crown corporations would fall under the same process. If an individual Crown corporation got a request for release of information, would it be the role of the Premier or his department or his staff to determine what legal advice should be given to that Crown corporation, or does that Crown corporation act independently because they have their own legal advice and would, I think, under the normal course of activity, seek their advice from their legal council on what should be released and what should not be released?

Mr. Doer: I do not give anybody legal advice. My personal advice is not legal. There may be legal advice obtained in the Crown and maybe by the Government. There may be issues that are of public interest to a Crown and to the public

and to our customers. For example, there is a lot of potential litigation at Hydro and lots of court cases dealing with Hydro and the Northern Flood Agreement. There is also a lot of advocacy in the United States on hydro-electric power. The Northern Flood Agreement has been a tremendous asset to Manitoba. The Limestone project is producing huge revenues, the members opposite were in committee last week, huge advantages for Manitobans.

We recognize that the provincial government has to do some work with Hydro, not separate from Hydro, in some of the debates that are taking place in Wisconsin and Minnesota, and also some of the issues that must be resolved in some of the communities that are not resolved. Quite frankly, the biggest problem I have dealing with Hydro right now is the promise made by the former premier that they are saying is our promise to double hydro-electric power exports in the year 2000. I say, well, I did not make that promise; it might be a good idea. So it is not as if they separate the Premier from the Government from Hydro. Hydro is perceived as a Crown corporation and communicated as such. When Minnesota state radio comes up here, they do not want to talk only to the CEO at Hydro; they want to talk to us as well about the advantages of hydro-electric power.

So that is one example where I would see us as—I do not see as an either/or. I mean, Crown corporations, hopefully, are working in a partnership with the Government on behalf of people. It is people that ultimately—the big issue here is when we did get the expense accounts out, they were fully accurate and they were released to the media. We are not hiding stuff. I agree that there were some mistakes made, but material has been released. Nobody has had to take us to court. That was not always the case here. That is the next step after the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is not the final word. The Ombudsman is an intermediate appeal.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess then my question would be if a Crown corporation received legal advice from normal legal channels that certain information should be released under Freedom of Information, would the Premier's Office override that legal advice received by the Crown

corporation, and direct a Crown corporation not to release that information?

Mr. Doer: I do not know whether we have or have not. I do not know whether we have done that. The Member opposite knows that Crown corporations do not usually act that way.

My experience has been with the former telephone system. The agreement that I had was that they would keep me informed on issues that I would be accountable for in the Legislature. They may give you heads up. They may ask your views; they may not. A lot of decisions are made by Crowns. There is a different status between Crowns and direct government departments. Having said that, there is still a minister responsible for Crown corporation in this legislature. There are still committees of the Legislature that report here through a minister. I believe that the ultimate responsibility for public Crown corporations is this legislature, not the Crown corporations subject to certain accountabilities, and so are we. Ultimately, the public hires and fires us.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think it is really important that we have an answer and that the Premier inform himself whether, in fact, there were Crown corporations that received requests under Freedom of Information, or under FIPPA, for documents regarding transition or briefing, and whether, in fact, they had advice and were told—that they had legal advice that indicated information should be released and what information could be released, and whether there was either ministerial intervention or direction that that information not be released.

So whether that came from any minister or any deputy minister within government, I certainly believe that it is important to have a direct answer to that question. Was there ministerial interference or political interference in any way with any of the Crown corporations in advice or direction to not release information where they had legal advice that that information should be released?

* (17:00)

Mr. Doer: Well, I will take the specifics as notice. I imagine that if members opposite had

that concern, we would have all the Crowns coming before the Committee with officials that are there. If there is any specific question about any specific Crown, I imagine the members opposite will be asking those questions.

We have a minister responsible in this legislature. If an individual makes a decision or is accountable for a decision and ultimately is responsible for a decision—I did not consider ministerial interference when the former premier promised a considerable dividend to come from export sales of hydro to the northern communities. We made a similar commitment, well, actually a more modest commitment, of \$10 million for housing energy position.

We made a decision to proceed with Limestone. It was based on both the economic situation of the Province and the demand load of Hydro. There were all kinds of different debates about what was best in terms of getting the price and what was best in terms of getting the export sales. We made the decision in the '80s and it was a good decision. It came in at \$1.9 billion, and that was the feeling that the economy in Canada had slowed down. We could get cheaper prices rather than \$3.1 billion that was projected and budgeted for. The export sales have now produced phenomenal revenues for Hydro, so that was both a Crown success and a government success.

The decision to cancel Conawapa was made by members opposite. Was that political interference of a 1000-megawatt decision? I disagree with the judgment. I would have delayed the Conawapa on-time delivery, but to me, ministers are accountable for the—when ministers are sworn in, they are sworn in to be responsible, not only for their direct ministerial responsibilities but for their Crown corporations. So, I do not consider somebody that takes an oath of allegiance to take on a responsibility of a Crown corporation to be a disinterested person in decisions. Everybody is subject to accountability under the FIPPA, which ultimately is in the courts. The courts have disagreed with members opposite. They disagreed with the way you set up the court system, in fact. That is part of our checks and balances in a democracy.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I guess I would like to ask the Premier what the role of

the Clerk of the Executive Council would be in meeting with ministers, with FIPPA officers, or any staff of Crown corporations around requests for information. What is the practice of government in that respect? Does the Clerk have a role to play in meeting with groups of staff from Crown corporations?

Mr. Doer: It has been my experience in opposition that our contact person across all government departments, and the person who was co-ordinating it, was Mr. Leitch. Anytime we had a request, or were looking at going to court, it was Mr. Leitch as Clerk of Cabinet. I think the practice continues with Mr. Eldridge. We dealt with Mr. Leitch. We did not usually deal with Miss Biggar, even though I know she was copied on everything, but anytime, if we FIPPA'd something that was sensitive, it was always in a press release long before we got it with the previous—but we are not trying to do that. It is the same practice in terms of the role of the Clerk of Cabinet.

I think the difference has been there have been specific requests from the past. For example, VLT revenue by community. The requests we have received generally have been more blanket other than the odd individual one: What is a transition cost? What is this? What is that? But most of the requests we have got are blanket requests. That requires, if you are interpreting a law, legal opinions to make sure that you have a consistent response. Consistency is, I would imagine, part of the job. As I say, I dealt with Mr. Leitch in the past. Mr. Eldridge is involved in a similar way.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, so the Premier is telling me then that the Clerk of the Executive Council would have the responsibility for co-ordinating, if it was a blanket response, whether it be government departments or Crown corporations and that he would probably be the one, then, who would be responsible for co-ordinating a legal response and receiving legal advice. I guess in this instance, I might ask the Premier whether the Clerk of the Executive Council did receive legal advice with regard to that FIPPA request?

Mr. Doer: I do not know the one we are talking about, and I will have to take it as notice. But the

last FIPPA request that we received was one on the transition costs. It was across departments, and the Clerk was involved in gathering those things.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I guess I would ask the Premier then to determine whether the Clerk of the Executive Council will have the authority to override any legal advice that might be given to Crown corporations and whether, in fact, would have the ability to direct Crown corporations to go against the legal advice they had received and not provide information that legal advice might have indicated should be released.

Mr. Doer: I am not getting into a theoretical might-might question. I will take the specifics as notice and come back more specifically to the Member opposite.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, I will ask sort of a direct question. Has the Clerk of the Executive Council directed any Crown corporation to do something contrary to what their legal advice has told them should happen with regard to Freedom of Information, and if so, where, in which Crown corporations has that happened? In fact, if the Premier does his research and finds out that that is the case, I would like to ask the question of whether any of his political staff or any of his ministers directed that activity to take place.

Mr. Doer: I will take the question as notice and inquire with the ministers responsible for the Crowns.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Chairperson, at the same time, I would like to ask the Premier to investigate what direct role a deputy minister for a government department might have in contacting a Crown corporation on behalf of their minister and directing that information not be released, contrary to legal advice that they had received?

* (17:10)

Mr. Doer: Well, as I said, I mentioned the transition documents and legal advice and transition documents dealing with briefing books.

The Member would certainly be aware, and I can recall the debate on section 23 in this Chamber—I was not elected then—and it was two different legal opinions both in competition with each other from former Premier Lyon and former Premier Pawley on the impact of section 23 amendments to The Manitoba Act.

So, again, I will take the specific question as notice, but there are ministers responsible for Crown corporations. There are deputy ministers that are involved in Crown corporations. For example, almost every Crown, the debt is guaranteed by the Province. The financing is through the Finance Department. So Crown corporations are not separate satellites or separate universes, they are Crowns that answer through a minister to this Legislature. We have ministers responsible for Crowns. They are accountable to this Legislature. If the Hydro CEO decided to go under the new deregulation act to Saudi Arabia tomorrow to start a separate enterprise, you would want the Minister responsible not only to stop it but be responsible for all the consequences. So you cannot have it, in my view, both ways.

I have always believed the Minister responsible should be a minister responsible. I have seen ministers that have had hands-off views of Crown corporations and suffered the political consequences. There is a separation between what a minister should be involved in and what a CEO of a Crown should be involved in. I know of examples where there has been an honest discussion about a strategy, and I am not going to go into much detail, about where you discuss your different options and you come to a conclusion. The Crown may come to its own recommendation on something and we may have our own views on it, and hopefully you can resolve it in a way that makes sense for everybody after you discuss it. The Minister responsible and the CEO of the Crown and the Board will all be on the same page.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I thank the Premier for the comments that he has put on the record. I do want to indicate that ultimately it is the Premier and the First Minister of the province that has responsibility for the activities of his government, his ministers and their responsibilities. I know that he would want to live to the letter of

the law and try to ensure that ministers did not provide direction that was contrary to legal advice that they had received. I want him to assure himself that those ministers that are responsible for Crown corporations indeed have upheld their responsibilities and taken their responsibilities seriously, and they have not intervened in any way to prohibit the flow of information based on legal advice that any Crown corporation had received.

So I am asking him to speak to those ministers, because ultimately the responsibility is his, to assure himself that there has not been that kind of political interference and release of information on a timely basis and that none of his ministers have breached the letter of the law in that respect. I would like him, after he has had those kinds of discussions with his ministers, to get back to me and let me know whether there has been any breach. I certainly, in this whole process, am not pointing any fingers in any way at the Clerk of the Executive Council. We do know that the Clerk is a civil servant and does work for the government of the day, does take direction, have discussions and implements decisions that political masters direct.

So I just wanted to indicate that there usually is not a senior bureaucrat that steps out on a limb and makes decisions without some political direction. So I just want the Premier to assure himself and report back on whether there has been intervention by any of his ministers that would certainly jeopardize the flow of information that would be required under law, and then report back to this committee. I think it is serious enough that the Premier should ask those direct questions of his ministers and have them indicate whether they gave direction to their deputies or to any political staff to intervene in any political way around the release of information.

Mr. Doer: Let me make it clear again. You get legal advice all the time, and ultimately you decide which advice you are going to follow. I had legal advice about whether we should look at a constitutional notwithstanding clause in the Speech from the Throne on child pornography. I had lots of legal advice that said that made sense. I had legal advice that said it did not make sense, or it was not as legal or pure as it should be.

Ultimately, you make the decision. We can get, I might point out to the Member opposite, various legal opinions from various sources. If we have a legal opinion from, say, the Justice Department on transition books and then we have them on ministerial books and somebody else comes out with a different opinion on it, it is only an opinion. Ultimately, the people decide, and we are going to be accountable to the courts.

I expect ministers to ask questions. If they get two opinions or three opinions coming at them, then ultimately they have to make the decision and be responsible for it. I do not consider that wrong because they are the minister responsible. They are the ones sworn in to protect the public interests.

When I was a minister of a Crown, I asked lots of questions. I asked them over and over again until I understood what was happening. I could not get the right answers on the finances, so I put a guy named Bill Fraser in there from the Department of Finance on an acting basis, because I was not getting the right answers from a Crown corporation. Mr. Fraser is very happy he is over there now, but was that interference? The existing staff could not tell me. I had 10 projects that I wanted to evaluate. Some of them were initiated by the former government; some were initiated by us. We did not have a business plan on cellular phones. We did not have a business plan on fast fire alarms.

I remember giving the former member for Pembina a rough time about that and some of the other things that were symptoms of the Coopers and Lybrand report. So, yes, I intervened. I put somebody else in there that could give us the right answers. Yes, that individual reported through to the acting CEO and then reported through to the board and then to the Legislature. But I knew who was going to be asked the questions in the Legislature. It was not going to be Mr. Fraser. It was going to be the individual who was sitting here.

I expect ministers to be accountable for their decisions. If they make a wrong decision on FIPPA it goes to the Ombudsman, and then it goes to court. If we do not agree with something and the court comes back a different way, that is fine. There are court decisions every day that

give the public their rights or confirm the decisions that are made on public rights in another place.

* (17:20)

Just to be clear, I expect ministers of Crowns to be responsible, and sometimes you have to—was it interference when I brought Mr. Fraser in to be the controller when there was a board of directors there and another authority, or was it acting in the public interests? You could argue that that was political interference or intervention. It was. I thought the public had a right to know. We were not getting the numbers. I wanted somebody in there that could give us the numbers, so I intervened.

Now, when Charlie Curtis recommended to me, as the acting CEO of MTX, that I go to Saudi Arabia, I did not go. I did not want to go. I thought that Mr. Curtis was handling it well.

The Member opposite has been involved with Crowns, the Lotteries Corporation and other corporations. Ultimately the public holds you accountable for decisions you make. Maybe there should have been more questions asked about the cost overrun at the Lotteries Corporation. I do not know. But I know that maybe there is a different sense of a degree of accountability here. I do not consider it intervening or interfering to make decisions and ultimately to be accountable. I do not consider it wrong to have a different opinion from a Crown corporation or a differing view that ultimately gets resolved. I consider that to be part of decision making. The CEO of a corporation reporting to the shareholders does not get everything rubber-stamped. The CEO of Great-West Life and the CEO of Investors Syndicate, when they go to the Power Corp board, do not get everything rubber-stamped either.

I do not treat it as a private company, but we are accountable for the public. I am just giving you my other perspective on that. It is not specific to your question.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I know the Premier sort of moved off into other situations and scenarios. The bottom line right here is, I am not sure what his answer is telling me. Is he saying to me that

ministers under his watch and under his leadership can override legal advice that is given to Crown corporations and make decisions on what can and cannot be released under FIPPA? Is that his government's policy?

Mr. Doer: Our policy is that ministers are accountable to this Legislature and FIPPA is accountable through to the courts, and we respect that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I would like to hear back from the Premier after he has had an opportunity to ask those direct questions of his ministers to satisfy himself that the letter of the law has been followed and that there has not been political or ministerial interference in legal decisions or opinions that Crowns have been presented and that ministers have not overridden legal advice they have received on what kind of information should be released under our FIPPA laws. So I look forward to hearing back within the next very short period of time around that and as to whether the Premier has been satisfied.

Mr. Doer: The only incident that I can recall where government intervened on a Crown corporation was the withholding of information from VLTs by community on what their proceeds were through the '95 election. The recourse to get that information was through the courts. When the request was made by us to the courts, of course that is when we got the information. We knew it was fully available.

So that is the only example I can recall where the government made a decision not to provide the VLT breakdown by community which we knew was computerized into the Morris operation. When we filed in court, that is when the Minister and after the election that is when the government released it. So I will take the question, but the bottom line is, we are all accountable in FIPPA through the Ombudsman through to the court. That is the process, not the Legislature.

The Legislature does not overrule, for example, the majority cannot overrule the court if there is an appeal. I am just giving you the only example I can recall.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I will not go on too much longer in this direction. I just do want to ask the

question on whether it would be the role of the Premier's Office or through the Clerk of the Executive Council to direct Crown corporations to send out a blanket letter refusing access to information, contrary to a legal opinion that crowns may have received, that the information should be released.

Mr. Doer: It is our job to ensure the law, and some consistency with the law. There are opportunities to get different opinions on the same law. The only way to reconcile that is not somebody else's opinion, but through the courts. There is a process, which we have used against the former government. We used it successfully because the information was released.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I have a number of questions which relate to the responsibility through the Federal-Provincial Relations Secretariat that you have, and some of the initiatives that you have or may not have made to date. One of the points that I made in my opening statement had to do with the fact that it is widely known that the unemployment statistics for Manitoba are relatively inaccurate because of the failure to count accurately the Aboriginal population in the First Nations communities. This clearly is something that should be the subject of federal-provincial discussion and pressure. My question to you would be: Have you made a request to the Prime Minister, specifically, to have this issue addressed for Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: Yes. To elaborate, I raised it, and the Clerk of Cabinet was there with me, with Mr. Goldenberg and Prime Minister Chrétien. He congratulated us on our low unemployment rate, and I pointed out, as you have, that it does not include everybody. He pointed out that it does include people in the urban centres. But I did say that this was one of the problems of the statistics. We are further trying to develop this.

The federal government is announcing an infrastructure program. The infrastructure program is based on the unemployment rate. One of the issues we are raising is that northern unemployment rate, particularly the Aboriginal unemployment rate, is much higher than the 4.4 percent. If the formula includes less money for Manitoba on a per capita basis than other

provinces based on unemployment, that is an unfair way of dealing with it.

So I raised a general issue, and then I also raised it in specific investments that I think must be made. We also offer an alternative that, rather than having a tripartite infrastructure program only, we should have a major infrastructure program in Aboriginal communities, both for employment purposes and infrastructure. I am sure I am on the same page as the Member opposite on this point.

Mr. Gerrard: I am certainly strongly supportive of efforts to be inclusive of all Manitobans and have statistics for our province which are accurate. I would ask, in that context, whether you have got the civil service staff work in doing the best possible estimates for what the unemployment rate for Manitoba would be, if all areas were considered. I think it is important to point out that this is not just a northern phenomenon. There are many First Nations communities in southern Manitoba. Indeed, although people of Aboriginal background who are living in urban areas are counted, if evidence is to be believed from the United States and elsewhere, those counts may actually be rather inaccurate as well.

* (17:30)

Mr. Doer: It is a very good point he raises. One of the concerns we have about the rate and also the concerns of the census, which is another inherent problem on the undercounting, if you will, and something that Clinton tried to address in the United States, and we certainly feel is important to address in terms of the census of the province as well. Len Evans, when we are in opposition, developed a methodology with Mr. Falk from the Statistics branch to try to develop a kind of possible model to look at this. It is something we definitely are going to be looking at. We think it is important enough to try to develop something more focussed in this area.

Mr. Gerrard: From the work done to date, what would be your considered estimate of the actual unemployment rate in Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: I do not have the actual. I have not calculated, but we did calculate a range of

unemployment in some aboriginal communities from about 38 percent to much, much higher, as the Member would know.

Mr. Gerrard: I would suggest that to make the cases best, it might be that, in fact, adequate calculations along those lines might be very helpful. I would urge the Premier to embark in an effort to make an estimate which is more accurate and use that in making the case with the Prime Minister and the federal cabinet.

Mr. Doer: Yes, we will. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: The Minister, in one of the federal-provincial meetings, mentioned the discussion around the cost drivers in relationship to health care and the emphasis, it would seem to me to date, of the Government has been in spending money to address shortcomings. I would ask the Premier in terms of approach in health care, given the cost of health care and the major item in the provincial budget, what approaches he has taken, whether it be the result of that conference or otherwise, in looking at ways in which the overall health care budget can be used more efficiently and dollars can be more wisely spent?

Mr. Doer: We believe the issue is not either/or. We think that there is some legitimate demands on the health care budgets, particularly in diagnostic services, diagnostic equipment, diagnostic staff, nursing staff that are very, very stretched at this point with a huge turnover predicted in the next five to ten years and that the issue of retaining specialists, as well, is a challenge for us. We consider it to be legitimate. So there are some real demands on us in the immediate sense.

The cost-driver report points out the cost side of this issue and points out that, for example, the Pharmacare costs in provincial budgets now, our Pharmacare costs in health care now are outstripping the costs of medical doctors' salaries in Canada. It also points to the deficiencies in diagnostic equipment, particularly MRIs, a disproportionate amount of equipment in Canada relative to United States.

We believe that the early childhood programs, the prenatal programs, the fetal

alcohol syndrome programs, some of the initiatives that we are just starting to deal with in government, are crucial for the way in which we organize health care in a more cost-effective way. We would like to work with the federal government, and we have a Health ministers meeting again. Dave Chomiak is working very carefully and closely with the federal Health Minister to try to deal with some of the six or seven objectives of Health that they, the federal government and ourselves have put on the table to try to discuss before the premiers' meeting next month and before the first ministers' meeting that is scheduled with the Prime Minister in September.

Just to give you an example, we would like to move more services into communities and have less Medevacs. We are now trying a pilot project at Garden Hill to have a dialysis machine in the community. There is a pilot project to show and demonstrate with the federal government, in co-operation with the federal government, that having a dialysis machine in a community like that makes a lot more sense than not only the elder leaving the community, often an elder, and the whole family leaving the community to be relocated close to a dialysis machine with all the social costs that go with it. We would really like to see a preventative strategy on fetal alcohol syndrome with the federal government in some of our communities. Some of the other stuff, we can do on the infrastructure that may help in terms of other diseases we would like to proceed with.

We have virtually been spending more time on the demand side and the financial side, but we want to move past this next session into the longer term. Our goal is to stabilize funding with our federal partner, to innovate particularly with children in First Nations communities with the federal government, to not see it as just this is your job because it is on "federal land and it is our job here." We want to innovate with First Nations people much more creatively, and we want to innovate as much as we can at the earliest possible age.

So our goal is to stabilize funding and to stabilize some of the demands that are more immediate, but we agree with the Member that the longer-term issues are crucial to society.

They may not even pay off in the next four to ten years, but in the next twenty years, hopefully, it will make a difference to our communities. It is certainly something we want to work on. I know the Minister of Health has probably discussed some of these issues with you and would appreciate your advice on it.

Mr. Gerrard: My follow-up question relates to how you perceive the interaction between a provincial government, the federal government and the First Nations communities in involvement of health care given that some costs are provincial, some are federal, some are, in essence, First Nations community. How do you perceive from a provincial perspective the circumstances evolving in Manitoba in this area?

Mr. Doer: Our first approach that might be different, we think, is to say that we cannot approach the challenge by saying this is federal responsibility because it just defies the movement of people and the necessity of people to get closer to health care services. We want health care services to get closer to the community, so we do not want to be part of a medivac system and a social assistance system because we do not have the right resources in the community. I use dialysis as an example.

So our first approach that is different is to say—and there have been some alarms raised by officials and others about whether this is a good idea or bad idea, but we think it cannot keep going on with three separate orbits: First Nations, the federal government, the provincial government. They are all residents of Manitoba, and we think all three of us should go to the table and develop more sensible community-based programs with the resources closer to the community.

I visited St. Theresa Point and there was no home care program. There was no personal care home, and what we were doing was just medevacing them to Winnipeg and then they were ending up staying here or going to a more acute care hospital. That did not make any sense, and the impact on their family was horrific. So I think that our approach has been to say, yes, we see this as part of our joint challenge and we are willing to sit down with the federal and the First Nations people to work on a more community-

based, preventative-based model that we are all part of, not just geographic jurisdictions. Federal-provincial separate jurisdictions will not work in our view. It just does not make any sense.

* (17:40)

Mr. Gerrard: I would like to move into another area, which is important federally-provincially, and which I again brought up in my opening remarks, and that is the potential for adjacent provinces, in particular, to work together in areas like tourism, hydro development, education, et cetera. I would like to have, first of all, your vision of what your goals are, where you think that Manitoba should be going, what the potential is, and so on.

Mr. Doer: At the Western Premiers', shortly, we are working on, for example, some programs that speak to different responsibilities in some of the areas in health care for children, that each of us do not have enough patients, if you will, or professionals, if you will. We are still awaiting the Murray Sinclair inquest but we are having obviously a lot of preliminary discussions of where we should go from here about what Manitoba can do for our children and how we can share and partner with other provinces in this area.

We have not really developed a sophisticated, co-operative agreement with Saskatchewan in tourism. I think, for example, that we were suggesting with the federal government and the Hanover world's fair, we were working with the Chamber of Commerce and some of the other tourism interests to look at a preliminary kind of co-ordinated approach with Canada and, hopefully, Canada with other provinces on ecotourism. We put some ideas forward in that area. I am not sure whether it will take off or not with the Hanover fair or whether it is appropriate or not, because it seems like Hanover may not be getting the same kind of people that might be further south of Hanover in terms of potential tour operators and others.

We have had some discussions with Saskatchewan on power. It is just very, very preliminary discussions. Again, Hydro is going to be discussing some of these issues with

Saskatchewan. The Kyoto agreement, the energy source in Saskatchewan means in our view that Saskatchewan might, and we could work in a more co-operative way. We always thought the idea of having the old idea of the telephone systems being owned by SaskTel and Hydro being owned by Manitoba Hydro with some guarantees for jobs in communities, et cetera, made a lot of sense. So we do plan on pursuing some of these ideas that the Member opposite raised. I definitely see the advantages of co-operation starting with Saskatchewan. I definitely see the advantages of working with other western provinces. Our vision is very co-operative. I am a strong federalist, as the Member opposite knows, a very co-operative working relationship hopefully with Ottawa and with other provinces.

There are unlimited numbers of ideas we came up with in the western premiers' meeting on co-operation, sharing best practices in health care, sharing training, sharing education and training strategy which we put on next year's agenda, which I thought was inadequate at our last western premiers' meeting, working on a common border and transportation with the United States governors to try to deal with some of the issues there. So there are a lot of issues we can look at.

The other issue that really concerns me is genetically modified agricultural products and our common export markets. I suggested to the other premiers, the western Canadian premiers particularly, and I think it affects B.C., that we might want a co-ordinated strategy rather than all of us go off and talk to the Japanese before they list the products on April 1, 2001, that we might want to have a joint marketing strategy, information strategy, et cetera, rather than have our producers suffer another decline in price based on consumer decisions in Japan based on the decision that the governments made to label all products, that we would work with the Canola producers and others.

So we are looking at an idea there to have a co-ordinated approach. It does not make any sense at all for Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta to go off and promote our products or the Canola producers to be off on their own rather than Canada, the Canola producers in the

three western provinces working together. So this is a suggestion we made at the western premiers meeting. I think there should be a lot more of that, whether it is attracting people here or going and speaking with one voice in our common markets.

Mr. Gerrard: I will make a comment here in reference to sharing best practices in health care. One of the ways that this has happened in many other circumstances is through common involvement in research and development. For example, when I was in the federal government, I was involved in laying the foundation for Canadian participation in European Union Framework Agreement, in which the European Union provides support for research and development.

What was notable is that the Saskatchewan government saw the wisdom in participating with members in the European Union in the research and development related to advanced health information systems and other areas of health care. So the Government of Saskatchewan, through their Department of Health, was involved in supporting and aiding this co-operative involvement. The Government of Manitoba, at that point, did not have the, I would say, wisdom to see that there was a potential for making a small investment which could reap tremendous benefits in development of expertise, standards and so on in a common way. Let me move on—

Mr. Doer: We do not have a monopoly on good ideas or co-operation. So if the Member opposite sees anything that we might be missing, I am certainly willing to pursue it. So I appreciate any advice you could give us.

Mr. Gerrard: I mentioned that for precisely that reason, and your staff maybe able to follow up.

The move to the area of sustainable development, development obviously critical for this province, if we are going to grow, be participants, have employment opportunities, sustainable implying that we need to work in a world which is finite, which all of us recognize that there are limits, which we need to put on ourselves in producing greenhouse gases and so on, I would perhaps start by asking the Premier

to comment on his vision in terms of sustainable development in many First Nations communities. I am familiar, of course, with his vision in terms of casinos, but I am talking beyond that in a more general way to the thought that the Premier has on facilitating sustainable development in First Nations communities throughout Manitoba.

Mr. Doer: Well, there is a difference between a promise and a vision, but I am not talking in any specific terms, not that I do not agree with the direction we are going in creating economic opportunities of First Nations communities through some limited number of casinos. Having said that, I think, in my view, First Nations people need to have access to resources to develop their own economies and their own opportunities.

Sometimes those resources abut because the resources have been so developed in other places, abut the kind of views of people who want to totally limit the utilization of resources because of desire, for example, for endangered spaces. I am hoping that sustainable development will include Aboriginal people. I think the Minister is wise to establish an environmental conservation advisory group because it is really important. Some of the areas represent such possible opportunity but also represent a real challenge for us to ensure that it is sustainable, are directly adjacent to or part of Aboriginal areas.

* (17:50)

When we came to office, there was an immediate proposal to develop the whole east side of Lake Winnipeg and some of the boreal forests there without knowing what the actual fibre was in the existing cut area and what was necessary beyond that. So we thought we should work with the stakeholders, being the private investors who want to put in a lot of money, the communities and the Aboriginal communities, and we should do it with a degree of honesty. The promise made that there would be a road built up the whole east side, which was not true, by a private developer we thought again was a false promise.

I think we also believe that we have to resurrect the Clean Environment Commission

that does have some sensitivity to Aboriginal people. The Clean Environment Commission has not had a public licensing process for years. We have just tried to establish the clean environment process with individuals that we have selected. Mr. Duguid is going to chair that with individuals who will see the need for inclusion of Aboriginal people, the balance between development and conservation of resources in a sustainable way.

We have some real challenges in our Department of Conservation in terms of Manitoba. We need to do some more work on being able to make the decisions on the basis of science. I mentioned east side and the amount of fibre in the existing cut area, the water, accumulative impact of hogs in certain areas and the science that we could use and must use in that development. I am hoping over time we can incorporate our vision of an inclusive province for people which includes inclusion of resources for Aboriginal people for economic sustainable development. But if we do so on the basis of scientific information, what is sustainable? What is there as opposed to developing? We were going to increase the cut area before we knew what was in the proper fibre in the existing cut area. So we are trying to increase our technical capacity so we can make better decisions for all Manitobans, including First Nations people.

Mr. Gerrard: I want to look in the context of sustainable development. The Premier will know I have been critical about things like procurement policies, which should have been, as mandated under The Sustainable Development Act, ready for July 1, Madam Chair. I would ask, because I think procurement policies are quite important in the area of sustainable development in facilitating the growth of firms in Manitoba, in facilitating the inclusion of First Nations enterprises in the growth of Manitoba. Procurement policy is a very important step. So I would ask the Premier: What is the status of the development of the procurement policy and to what extent and when does he expect that that might be ready?

Mr. Doer: Well, it is my opinion that the procurement policy that was dictated in an act that was passed a couple of years ago and its compliance or non-compliance or its fit with the

Agreement on Internal Trade in Canada—there had not been any work on that issue when we came into office.

Rather than stop everything and not comply with the July 1 date on a first statement on The Sustainable Development Act, we committed in the House and came forward with the first statement on Principles and Objectives under The Sustainable Development Act. There are some parts of that like procurement where we still have some work to do. It is not just as simple as—because we have internal trade agreements. We have Manitoba companies that do not want to practise prohibitive trade practices in terms of their ability to compete in other provinces.

It is more than just us sitting down in an office and saying this is what it is going to be. There is going to be more work necessary on it. So I cannot give you a date. But we do acknowledge that it is one of our objectives that we must meet.

Mr. Gerrard: I would ask the Premier to elaborate a little further on the role that he envisions because of the importance of the procurement policy, the Executive Council steering this. It may have links to other provinces. As I have said, it may be quite important in facilitating the development of Manitoba-based enterprises. Also, a reference to the fact that when we are talking procurement policies, I presume that we are talking public sector and not just provincial government.

Mr. Doer: There are sections dealing with the public sector under the Internal Trade Agreement that are not necessarily—there are sections under NAFTA as well. The few staff of the Executive Council, I think there are seven researchers. There are a couple of other people in the Policy Co-ordination branch, administrative staff. But I think there are seven researchers over fifteen departments.

So there is some work going on in the Conservation file. But a lot of it has been dealing with, well, some of it has been dealing with the international file that is imposing even as late as yesterday. We were on a conference call this morning with our lawyer, tremendous amounts

of time to try to deal with all these subappropriation committees in Congress and the Senate that are all rowing in the same direction against the North Dakota water act and the Devils Lake outlet, which is unilateral.

I will get back specifically to the Member about a time on the procurement policy. If my statement is inaccurate about some of the impediments of that, I will correct that as well. I know he has asked in the House, so I should have an answer on that. I know we are working on it.

Mr. Gerrard: The Premier, of course, has a bill at the moment which deals with electronic commerce. Electronic derived products in many circumstances waste less paper and they are more environmentally friendly. Procurement in this area is clearly significant. Maybe the Premier would comment.

Mr. Doer: Yes, I agree.

Mr. Gerrard: I would urge the Premier to take a careful look in the development of the procurement policies, not only the electronic situation but indeed how one facilitates the development of enterprises in Manitoba using

such electronic approaches, and as we have already talked, the sustainable development to First Nations communities.

Mr. Doer: That is a valid suggestion. It is a good point to ensure. I will have to see if there is proper co-ordination between the ministers that are working on that and the procurement strategy contained within the Sustainable Development Strategy. So I will follow up the point made by the Member.

Mr. Gerrard: I would ask in terms of the environment in which we are in if it would be possible to take just a straight regulatory approach or to take an approach which in fact has got a variety of facilitory mechanisms.

The Acting Chairperson (Ms. Korzeniowski): The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, July 18, 2000

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