



Second 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**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MIIYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Joy	Fort Garry	P.C.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCIUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Monday, May 28, 2001**

**The House met at 1:30 p.m.**

**PRAYERS**

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Kenaston Underpass**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** I ask for leave today to present the petition on behalf of the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen).

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the honourable member have leave? *[Agreed]*

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Wayne Linton, Geoff Vandal, D. Chan and others, praying that the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

**Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Lisa Shaubroeck, Ted Seniuk, M. Dewey and others, praying that the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) consider reversing his decision to not support construction of the an underpass of Kenaston and Wilkes.

**Manitoba Hydro Lines Routes**

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Doreen Lozinski, Gerald Rattai, Elsie Harkness and others, praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro (Mr. Selinger) consider alternative routes for the additional 230kV and 500kV lines proposed for the R.M. of East St. Paul.

**Kenaston Underpass**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Arlene

Wilson, Pat Spiring, William Crew and others, praying that the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

**The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba**

**Ms. Linda Asper (Riel):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba praying that the Legislature of the province of Manitoba introduce an act amending The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Incorporation Act.

**READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS**

**Manitoba Hydro Lines Routes**

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), I have reviewed the petition, and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Clerk, please read.

**Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk):** The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT the R.M. of East St. Paul has the highest concentration of high voltage power lines in a residential area in Manitoba; and

THAT the R.M. of East St. Paul is the only jurisdiction in Manitoba that has both a 500kV and a 230kV line directly behind residences; and

THAT numerous studies have linked cancer, in particular childhood leukemia, to the proximity of power lines.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister

responsible for Manitoba Hydro consider alternative routes for the additional 230kV and 500kV lines proposed for the R.M. of East St. Paul.

#### **Kenaston Underpass**

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), I have reviewed the petition, and it complies with rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Clerk, please read.

**Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk):** The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT the intersection at Wilkes and Kenaston has grown to become the largest unseparated crossing in Canada; and

THAT the volume of traffic for this railroad crossing is twelve times the acceptable limit as set out by Transport Canada; and

THAT vehicles which have to wait for trains at this intersection burn up approximately \$1.4 million in fuel, pollute the environment with over 8 tons of emissions and cause approximately \$7.3 million in motorist delays every year.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Premier of Manitoba consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, I ask for leave again to call for the reading and receiving petitions on behalf of the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen).

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the honourable member have leave? [*Agreed*]

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

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Clerk, please read.

\* (13:35)

**Madam Clerk:** The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT the intersection at Wilkes and Kenaston has grown to become the largest unseparated crossing in Canada; and

THAT the volume of traffic for this railroad crossing is twelve times the acceptable limit as set out by Transport Canada; and

THAT vehicles which have to wait for trains at this intersection burn up approximately \$1.4 million in fuel, pollute the environment with over 8 tons of emissions and cause approximately \$7.3 million in motorist delays every year.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Premier of Manitoba consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

#### **TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to table the Annual Report of the Automobile Injury Compensation Appeal Commission for the fiscal year 2000-2001.

#### **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

##### **Bill 27—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (2)**

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Ashton), that leave be given to introduce Bill 27, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba, and that the same now be received and read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Selinger:** I am pleased today to rise to give first reading to this bill. This legislation will require Manitoba Hydro to charge its customers connected to the provincial power grid the same rate for electricity service regardless of where people live in Manitoba.

*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 public gallery, where we have with us Miss Kate Donetz from École Henri-Bergeron. She is the guest of the honourable Member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan).

Also in the public gallery we have with us Bev Walker from Carberry and Gladwyn Scott, who are the guests of the honourable Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg).

Also, in the public gallery, we have from Edward Schreyer School 80 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mr. Bob Praznik. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik).

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

### ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

#### Esso Terminal–Henderson Highway Gas Spill

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** Mr. Speaker, we have been provided information that there was a major gas spill at the Esso tank farm on Henderson Highway some time within the last month. Could the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) please tell the House when this spill occurred and provide details as to the extent of the spill?

**Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth):** I am unaware of the spill, but I will take it under advisement and get back to the member.

**Mr. Schuler:** Could the Minister of Conservation then confirm that the spill took place

April 11, that it involved something like 10 000 litres of premium gasoline, that it was the largest spill in memory? Could the Minister of Conservation explain why his Government did not tell Manitobans about this major gas spill, a spill dangerously close to residents' homes?

**Mr. Caldwell:** As I indicated in the first answer, I am unaware of this, and I will take it under advisement.

**Mr. Schuler:** Can the Minister of Conservation tell Manitobans when his Government learned about the spill and can he tell us what the Department of Conservation has done about it?

**Mr. Caldwell:** Mr. Speaker, I see that my response did not deter the member from his prepared text, but the same answer is in place.

#### Esso Terminal–Henderson Highway Gas Spill

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Springfield, with a new question.

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** On a new question on a very serious issue, Mr. Speaker. For the past years the Minister of Labour has assured the residents of East St. Paul that the Esso tank farm on Henderson Highway is safe. I quote from Hansard: There are state-of-the-art systems and safeguards in this tank farm; also, the Office of the Fire Commissioner would plan to bring in the equipment and personnel to deal with that situation.

Can the Minister of Labour explain why it took hours for the East St. Paul Fire Department to be contacted after a significant gas spill occurred?

**Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, I will endeavour as quickly as possible to get the details of that information and bring it back to the House.

**Mr. Schuler:** An issue of this significance and the members opposite do not seem to know what is going on. Can the Minister of Labour indicate why she has repeatedly stated that the fire safety measures protecting residents are sound, when it took hours for the fire department to be contacted on such a significant gas spill?

**Ms. Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, it would be wrong of me to presume and to speculate on the specifics of the incident. I will get information as quickly as possible from the Office of the Fire Commissioner and report back to the member and to the House as soon as I have that information. Thank you.

**Mr. Schuler:** I would like to ask the Minister of Labour: Will she launch an investigation to determine why the local fire department was not immediately advised? Can she also look into how it was that they came to know that there was a spill and exactly who is in charge of this situation?

**Ms. Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, as I said before, I will get all of the necessary and relevant information for the member and the House as quickly as I possibly can.

\* (13:40)

#### **Esso Terminal–Henderson Highway Gas Spill**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, a very significant gas spill recently took place here in East St. Paul. Several thousand litres of gasoline were spilled dangerously close to local residences. The Department of Conservation has known about this for well over a month, and yet the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) has done nothing. Can the Minister of Conservation inform this House when he was advised of that gas spill and what action he has taken to date?

**Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth):** Mr. Speaker, if members opposite are going to be speaking off prepared notes saying they have already got the Question Period agenda set with prepared notes, they are going to have some difficulties. As I indicated at the outset of our—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

#### **Point of Order**

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne* 417: Answers to questions should be as brief as

possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate. The minister has the opportunity to not answer the question or take it under advisement.

**Mr. Caldwell:** On the same point of order, the first three responses were to take questions under advisement. There are a series of notes that have been prepared and the members on this issue are going to be prepared as my answer was for the first three questions, that we are taking these under advisement.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne* is clear. Where a minister has taken a question under notice, there is not required a preamble or a postamble.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Maguire:** Given the seriousness of this kind of a spill, can the Minister of Conservation or a designate who does know what happened in the circumstance, if in fact the Government was aware of it, tell this House why there has been nothing done to get to the bottom of this environmental action?

**Mr. Caldwell:** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to say that I would be very happy to take this matter under advisement.

#### **Esso Terminal–Henderson Highway Gas Spill**

**Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose):** Mr. Speaker, my colleagues have been raising this question and have not been getting a response from the acting minister. I am wondering if the acting Premier might take some interest in this question and outline what the policy of this Government should be in openness and identification of a problem like this when it arises in a community. Will one of them stand up and be responsible to the public?

**Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth):** In terms of members on this side of the House, we pride ourselves on our open-door policies and on a continual dialogue with the people of Manitoba. Members opposite

may remember a week or so ago there was a delegation in the gallery that members opposite wanted me to meet with after the session was over, Mr. Speaker. Of course we readjusted my schedule so that I could meet, as Minister of Education, with that delegation. Members on this side of the House are very open and very eager in fact to engage the public of Manitoba on public policy issues.

**Mr. Cummings:** This is not a matter of whether or not he is eager. They have a responsibility. Mr. Speaker, will the acting Premier stand up and provide some answers about whether or not he will give direction to the minister of environment to provide information to the public?

**Mr. Caldwell:** Mr. Speaker, of course on this matter, which is an important matter as members opposite have articulated, on this matter as on every other matter, this Government is very pleased to engage the public, to enter into dialogue with the public on issues of policy, and we will continue to do so.

**Mr. Cummings:** On behalf of the public, I find the answers of this minister embarrassing. The fact is he still did not acknowledge whether or not they would provide direction to the minister of environment and natural resources, now the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin), I guess, under the amalgamated department. Will he undertake to provide information to the public?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I have been a member of this Chamber for 10 years and raised many questions on many occasions in the absence of particular ministers dealing with issues, and have been in situations where questions, very important questions, were taken as notice. The responsible thing is for us to ascertain the information. The members opposite want current and proper information; we will provide that as soon as possible.

\* (13:45)

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Ste. Rose, on a new question.

**Mr. Cummings:** On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** On a point of order? The honourable Member for Ste. Rose on a point of order.

### Point of Order

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

**Mr. Speaker:** For clarification for the honourable Member for Ste. Rose. The honourable member was answering the question. The honourable Member for Ste. Rose, are you up on a point of order?

**Mr. Cummings:** Mr. Speaker, my point of order is that the minister was not acknowledging that they have a responsibility. I wish they would acknowledge they will take the responsibility to inform the public.

**Mr. Speaker:** 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 Government has certainly expressed its willingness to look into the matter and advise members opposite, indeed the public, of the facts as they are known.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Opposition House Leader on the same point of order.

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader):** On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. The only reason I rise on this point of order is because the honourable member has already referred to the absence of a member. He has not specifically named that member, but if a member is going to be absent or a minister is going to be absent, would he not pass on his House books to the minister who is acting in his place, or is it they do not trust each other over there?

**Mr. Speaker:** On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Ste. Rose, he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

### Esso Terminal—Henderson Highway Gas Spill

**Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, we have heard the acting, acting Premier tell us that the Government is willing to look into the matter. We have had the Acting

Minister of Conservation tell us that his Government prides themselves in their open-door policy.

I would like to ask the acting, acting Premier: Why, if they are so willing to look into it, on December 11 of last year I asked the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) for an explanation why his department did not notify the communities in my constituency about a chemical spill in the Winnipeg River from which they draw their drinking water. His colleague said, and I quote: I will endeavour to look into it today and tomorrow and to get back to the member in a very short while. Five and a half months later, we have still not heard back from this Government. I ask the acting, acting Premier if he will take personal responsibility to ensure that the residents of East St. Paul are informed about this dangerous spill.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, as is common practice in this House, we will endeavour to provide a response to the member on the very serious issue as soon as possible.

#### **Pine Falls Paper Company Expansion**

**Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet):** Well, Mr. Speaker, as soon as possible. The residents from East St. Paul can wait, at least like my constituents, six months to hear from this Government.

My question again to the acting, acting Premier: While his Government dithers on all of these issues, 325 new jobs in the Pine Falls area go waiting because his Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) again fails to act. I want to ask this acting, acting Premier when this Government is going to put in writing and make a commitment to the forest resources, which will allow a new sawmill operation owned by First Nations people to come into operation.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I noticed in the course of the member's preamble there was reference to three separate issues, which is the right of the member, but with respect to the specific issue of the forestry management in that particular area, the Minister

of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) is actively working on that issue.

**Mr. Praznik:** Mr. Speaker, I would like the acting, acting Premier to explain why it has been reported locally, and I quote: That while the joint venture companies have received verbal assurance, we gather from the department that the wood supply was there and they would have confirmation in several weeks. It has been several weeks, and the minister has not yet responded.

Can he explain why his colleague will let 325 jobs for First Nations people go to waste because of his inaction?

\* (13:50)

**Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth):** Mr. Speaker, of course, this Government is very proud of the relationship it has with First Nations people in the province of Manitoba. Honourable Minister Lathlin and his colleague Minister Eric Robinson—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

#### **Point of Order**

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. They should be referred by their title, not by their given names.

**Mr. Speaker:** On the same point of order?

**Mr. Caldwell:** That is correct, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Conservation.

**Mr. Speaker:** That should take care of the matter.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Caldwell:** As I was saying, the Government of Manitoba is very proud of the relationship it has with First Nations people in the province of Manitoba. The honourable Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin), the honourable Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) are stalwarts in the First Nations and



Aboriginal communities in our province and bring that perspective to the Cabinet and caucus table each and every day. We are working with, as the member acknowledged in his questions, people in that region of the province to develop this project.

### **East St. Paul Cancer Rates**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Last week, in this Legislature, we were discussing the very high incidence of cancer in the neighbourhood of East St. Paul. As we have heard today, there has been evidence of chemical spills in this area.

I would ask the minister whether he has investigated further the high incidence of cancer in East St. Paul and whether there might be any relationship to the chemical spills we have seen talked about today and the possibility of previous chemical spills.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, obviously the matter referenced in Question Period earlier with respect to a spill has no relation to the actual study that was released recently. I understand there was a relationship between some potential matters that occurred in terms of chemical between '94 and '96 with relation to that area. That matter was reviewed.

I also understand from memory, Mr. Speaker, the incidence of cancer with respect to that particular region is a higher than normal incidence of colon-rectal cancer. I have forwarded information to both the WRHA and CancerCare Manitoba to review the findings and report back as soon as possible.

### **Water Testing Chemical Spills**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** My supplementary to the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) deals with his responsibility for testing water and the possible link between chemical contamination in wells. I asked the minister whether he has tested, and the results of wells tested in East St. Paul, to determine whether there has been any contamination of

these wells by organic chemicals which might come from chemical spills.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, obviously we identified, both last year in this House and more recently, that there was a significant need for additional testing of private wells, et cetera, which is one of the reasons we reversed former government policy in order to provide a subsidy for residents to undertake tests, so it would encourage residents to at least do yearly tests of their drinking water.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The importance of the role of the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) in being on top of chemical contamination of wells and the fact that we do not have better answers leads me to wonder whether the minister has been using what is in the Thomas report is called discretionary accountability. No, wait a minute. My question to the Minister of Health—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

\* (13:55)

### **Point of Order**

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** On a point of order, regrettably the member is out of character today because I know he is very diligent with this rule, but would you please remind him that a supplementary question requires no preamble, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, members opposite should at least listen to the questions even though they have no answers.

**Mr. Speaker:** On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all members that *Beauchesne* Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble. I would ask the honourable member to please put his question.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, I was just asking the minister whether, in fact, in his answer he was not guilty of what the Thomas report describes

as discretionary accountability, that is deliberately keeping accountability vague so that he can be only accountable for the good news, and less accountable for the questionable answers.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, if this Government wanted to do what the other government did, and hide, we would not have put in place the Thomas commission that looked at the recommendations of the Sinclair report and looked at a decade of failure on the part of members opposite to not follow up on changes in the system, to look at systematic problems that occurred in the health care system under the watch of the previous government.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne* 417: Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate. We care about the people of East St. Paul, not like the people over here.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Health, on the same point of order?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, the member referenced the Thomas commission which dealt with the Sinclair commission which was a systematic failure of the health care system to respond. We released the Sinclair commission and the Thomas commission and undertook to live up to those recommendations so the people of Manitoba could have a better and more accountable health care system.

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

\* \* \*

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, when the water issues arose in this Chamber we put in place a

task force that made a series of recommendations with respect to water quality that had not been done in over a decade, and we moved on two of the most significant and are working on the other recommendations of that report. When the Sinclair commission report came in we put in place the Thomas commission to look at recommendations to try to improve the health care system and to try to significantly move on it. This has been a government of action not sitting on reports.

#### Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program Drinking Water Pipeline

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** To the Acting Minister of Conservation, I would like to table two letters. The Winkler Aquifer Management committee applied for funding through the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program to build a main conveyance water pipeline from Letellier to Winkler and Morden. This pipeline would provide numerous communities in seven rural municipalities with safe drinking water and act as the base from which other rural waterlines could branch off and would add to the preservation of the aquifer.

Can the Acting Minister of Conservation explain why his Government turned down the funding for this important project when the main priority of the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program was water supply?

**Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth):** I appreciate the question from the honourable member. I know that it is a constituency concern in his region of the province, and I appreciate that as a constituency politician myself.

I will take the matter under advisement. I do know, however, that the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure agreement is a broad—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. According to the rules, if a question is taken as notice, this should not require a preamble or a postamble. Is the honourable minister taking it under advisement or answering the question?

**Mr. Caldwell:** Mr. Speaker, I will take the matter under advisement.

\* (14:00)

**Manitoba Lakes  
Water Levels—Damage Assessment**

**Mr. Dyck:** I am going to ask another question. He being a part of Cabinet, and I assume that they do discuss things at the Cabinet table, could the minister explain to the other communities that were applying for infrastructure funds based on this pipeline proceeding what will now happen to their projects? This is a fairly broad statement here.

**Mr. Caldwell:** Respecting your comments to my first response, I will take this under advisement as well.

**Mr. Dyck:** Can the acting minister respond to the Pembina Water Cooperative question of why the City of Winnipeg can access millions for a downtown project in a timely way, and our request addressing the quality and the quantity of water supply for seven municipal governments is turned down? Why can they do one and not the other?

**Mr. Caldwell:** I know that the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program does have criteria involved for community development and so forth.

**An Honourable Member:** Tripartite.

**Mr. Caldwell:** I know that the priority area is tripartite, as one of my colleagues adds, with municipal governments as well. I know that a lot of the prioritization of the current infrastructure program is related to green infrastructure and community development around those issues. I think that is very important.

I also know that funding support under infrastructure programs as well as pretty much every budget area of responsibility for governments at every level, whether they be municipal, provincial or federal, are finite. Those pressures force us all as elected officials to make priority decisions and choices based upon availability of funds.

I know that we on this side of the House are quite proud of the choices we have made in health care and proud of the choices we have made in education, that is, to invest in this province.

**Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, this spring, particularly last week, Tuesday and Wednesday, we had unprecedented high winds affecting the lake levels on our major lakes, Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba, Lake Dauphin. I direct the question to the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin). Have his people had an opportunity of assessing the damage that has been caused, both property and flooded farmlands?

**Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth):** Mr. Speaker, again being mindful of the advice you offered in an earlier question, I will take this under advisement.

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Speaker, you know that I try to be consummately fair with you and with members opposite. This again was last week. My phones are ringing about property damages to cottages, farmlands, haylands being destroyed. I am simply asking whether or not somebody in the department is assessing the damage.

**Mr. Caldwell:** I know the staff of the Department of Conservation and natural resources work very—Mr. Speaker, members opposite may not think the public servants in this province work hard, but we do on this side of the House.

I know the members of the Department of Conservation and the department of natural resources work very diligently—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Caldwell:** I know the members of the staff of the Department of Conservation and the department of natural resources work very—

**Point of Order**

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

Mr. Speaker, this question was clearly not about the staff, whom we have a lot of respect for. It was about the ministerial level.

**Mr. Caldwell:** The member asked if the department was working on this issue and I was assuring the member that the staff of the department of natural resources and Conservation work very hard on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Lakeside, on the same point of order.

**Mr. Enns:** No, Mr. Speaker, on a new question.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have to deal with the point of order raised.

On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I have to rule that it is not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

#### **Lake Winnipeg Water Levels**

**Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside):** On a new question, again to the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin). Both in the instances of Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg, there are man-made operations at work that are putting artificially high water on the levels. I specifically want to remind him about Lake Winnipeg. Manitoba Hydro warned the then-government not to use Lake Winnipeg as a hydro reservoir. I as minister introduced in this House a bill that prohibited Manitoba Hydro from using Lake Winnipeg as a reservoir. We are now reaping the rewards, so they had some responsibility on this.

What is this Government doing in accepting the responsibility with respect to shoreline damage caused by those high winds as a result of Lake Winnipeg being used as a hydro reservoir?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro):** I thank the member opposite for the question with respect to the impact of Manitoba Hydro on Lake Winnipeg. The previous government initiated a study on that matter, and the study came back and indicated that in fact the regulation of Lake Winnipeg by

Manitoba Hydro reduced erosion on the lake because the lake was not going up and down as much.

#### **Disaster Financial Assistance Spring Flooding**

**Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, approximately 62 municipalities have made requests for disaster assistance as a result of this past spring's flooding. Individuals and municipalities are trying to recover and are anxiously awaiting the announcement of a Disaster Financial Assistance program.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Government Services whether he can indicate to these flood victims and affected municipalities: When can we expect a disaster assistance program to be announced?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services):** It is a very good question. In fact, going back to last fall we had abnormally high precipitation. We are anticipating, based on last fall, about \$300,000 to \$400,000 worth of damage. We are currently assessing the potential claims from this, and as is the case we will be announcing a program, if that information does warrant that.

I certainly would encourage, through the member, members of the public to file any claims they feel might be applicable under DFAA, because certainly there has been some significant impact on our municipalities in a widespread area throughout the province.

#### **Eligibility Criteria**

**Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if the minister could indicate what the program criteria is for the DFA program for this year, such things as the maximums and deductibles on the policy.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services):** Mr. Speaker, I am a bit surprised by the question, because the member is a former Minister responsible for EMO.

We develop programs that follow DFAA guidelines, which are federal-provincial

guidelines. The member will know that there is a built-in sliding scale that involves payments by both individual claims and also by municipalities. I want to indicate that we are assessing that information now.

In fact, I have encouraged people, and I will do so once again, to apply if they think they have a claim that might be eligible under DFAA coverage, and I hope to have an announcement very shortly on this matter before the House.

**Mr. Pitura:** Mr. Speaker, the minister really did not understand my question, I guess. The question I was asking was, the DFA policy, what is the maximum coverage? Is it going to be \$100,000 as it was before, and whether the deductible is within the details of that policy?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member I think is referring to some of the changes that were brought about in 1997 in the Red River Flood, actually at the urgings of the Opposition at the time. I remember it quite well. Indeed, there certainly was some enhancement of disaster financial assistance coverage.

I can indicate again, we are using the same guidelines that were used in 1997 and 1999, although there was fairly restrictive coverage in 1999, and we will continue to do so for anybody affected by this.

I point to what we came in with last year in July with the heavy rainfall. Once again, the disaster program was put in place which helped hundreds if not thousands of Manitobans recoup some of their damages from that particular emergency.

\* (14:10)

#### **Canada-Manitoba Adjustment Program Payments**

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, on April 17 the Minister of Agriculture announced in this House and via news release that she and her federal counterpart had come to an agreement to put in place a support mechanism which would be called CMAP 2 which would support the farmers in this province for losses they had incurred due to trade wars that were going on

between the Americans and the Europeans. The Ontario government at the same time announced they would put up their share and pay to their farmers their 50 percent of the contribution that would be provided under this program.

It is now five weeks later, and I would like to ask the Minister of Agriculture: When can the primary producers in agriculture expect a payment from this Government in order to help them offset the losses they are incurring during the trade war?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased that we were able to get additional money from the federal government this year, as we did last year, for our producers. When we made the announcement we said we had hoped the money would be able to flow in May. I am still hopeful that we will be able to issue those cheques before the end of the month.

**Mr. Penner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) then whether he has had discussions with his Treasury Board to allow for the flow of the provincial portion of the dollars under the CMAP 2 program to the farmers immediately, because there are farmers waiting out there for some cash flow that they can in fact finance their operation and spring seeding.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Speaker, we had hoped we would be able to flow that money sooner. Unfortunately, there have been some delays with the federal government in putting their money through. We hope that they will have their issues resolved and we will be able to flow the money before the end of the month.

**Mr. Penner:** The Minister of Agriculture has constantly been telling farmers across this province that before the end of May the money will flow and allow them to pay their expenses that they are incurring. Can the Minister of Agriculture tell me whether her Treasury Board has assured her that she could actually write cheques today for the provincial portion and pay farmers what is due them that she promised she would pay?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I can assure the member that the Manitoba money is in place, has been approved

by our Treasury Board. We are waiting for the federal government to make some decision. We hope that their money will be flowing to Manitoba and we can issue those cheques before the end of the month.

#### **Esso Terminal–Henderson Highway Gas Spill**

**Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth):** I am just going to provide the House with an update on some of the questions that were taken under advisement earlier. I have a note, and it is very quick. Mr. Speaker, as one of my colleagues noted, we want to be out front about this particular matter.

On April 11 in East St. Paul there was a release of approximately 10 000 litres from an Esso terminal. That terminal is a self-contained facility which is constructed in order to contain spills of this nature. Over 6400 litres were immediately recovered on the 11th. An environmental officer attended there on that day and the site was toured again last week. This Government is doing its work on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

#### **Esso Terminal–Henderson Highway Gas Spill**

**Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Minister of Conservation. If all is so well, as we hear him say, why did the Department of Conservation not notify the neighbours of what was going on in their own backyard?

**Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** I, too, have received some information from the Office of the Fire Commissioner. The fact is that the product, the 10 000 litres, went onto the ground and some into the sewer system of the facility. As the acting minister of the environment has stated, this facility has its own self-contained storm sewer system that then goes into an oil-water separator. The oil-water separator would have then separated the oil from the water within the self-contained sewer system with the Esso facility. None of the gas that was spilled would have gone into the storm sewers that were part of the residents' storm sewers. So there was no need for an alert, because it was all self-contained.

#### **Environmental Hazards Community Notification**

**Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet):** Since the Government today is so quick at providing answers, I would like the minister, the Acting Minister of Conservation, then to tell my constituents, who draw their water from along the Winnipeg River, why, after five and a half months, he has yet to answer, and, secondly, why those communities were not done the courtesy of being notified when Winnipeg Hydro spilled toxins into the Winnipeg River, their water supply.

**Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth):** Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful in fact for department staff, the staff of the Fire Commissioner's office, the staff of Conservation and natural resources for providing responses so quickly to members opposite when they are asking the House. I think the staff does an excellent job in this regard. I am very much appreciative of it, as I know the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) is.

As for the issue raised by the Member for Lac du Bonnet, I believe that that question was addressed earlier when it was asked earlier in this session and it was taken under advisement by the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak).

#### **Esso Terminal–Henderson Highway Gas Spill**

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to either the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) or the Minister of Labour: Why did it take up to four hours before the East St. Paul Fire Department was called to the situation at the East St. Paul tank farm when it has been confirmed that 10 000 litres of premium gasoline was spilled? Why was the East St. Paul Fire Department not notified of this situation?

**Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, the Office of the Fire Commissioner gets involved directly when there is a fire. The City of Winnipeg Fire and Paramedic Services and the Office of the Fire Commissioner were on standby. There was no fire. There was no movement of the gasoline into

anything other than the self-contained Esso facility water and sewer system. The City of Winnipeg and the Office of the Fire Commissioner were on standby. They were not needed because the facility's own resources were able to handle it.

**Mr. Schuler:** Mr. Speaker, then I would like to ask the Minister of Labour—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The honourable Member for Springfield, on a new question.

**Mr. Schuler:** I would like to ask the Minister of Labour, first of all, there is no contract between the—

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**Mr. Schuler:** On a new question, there is no connection now between the Esso tank farm and the City of Winnipeg fire department. Perhaps she means the East St. Paul Fire Department.

After approximately four hours, the East St. Paul Fire Department was notified and did come out, and there seemed to be a need for them at that time. Perhaps there was a breakdown in this great communication strategy of this minister between the East St. Paul tank farm and the East St. Paul Fire Department. They should have been notified right away. Why was there such a delay?

**Ms. Barrett:** I will look into why the East St. Paul Fire Department was not notified until several hours later, if it was not, because we have already experienced today, from the Member for Springfield, putting inaccurate comments and statements on the record.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

\* (14:20)

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert):** *Beauchesne's* 417: "Answers to questions should

be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

Mr. Speaker, out of the 10 000 litres of fuel, I notice with my arithmetic that there are still over 3000 litres of fuel missing, so I think it is 3600 litres of fuel that are still missing that they do not care about.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I would just like to remind all honourable members that members in this Chamber are all honourable members, and the information that they bring forward is taken as facts.

On this point of order, I would say it is a dispute over facts. I would just like to remind all honourable members that every member in this House is an honourable member, and, to the best of their knowledge, the information they bring forward is a fact.

\* \* \*

**Ms. Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, in response to the issue that was raised by the Government House Leader in his point of order, there were 10 000 litres spilled; 6400 litres were recovered from the ground and the other 3600 litres went into the self-contained storm sewer facility system and was separated out, oil from water, at that point, on site, totally self-contained by the Esso facility.

Mr. Speaker, in response to the Member for Springfield's question, I will endeavour to find out why the East St. Paul—if the East St. Paul Fire Department was not notified for several hours, but the City of Winnipeg fire department, which the Member for Springfield knows has all of the equipment necessary and the Office of the Fire Commissioner were notified immediately.

#### Esso Terminal—Henderson Highway Gas Spill

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Given this rather inappropriate answer to the fact that two-thirds of the product was cleaned up and another third of it was still in the sewer system

on this kind of a significant spill, does this Government—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Maguire:** Regardless of the fact of whether or not this was a self-contained unit with four hours from the time lag of notifying the fire department, does this Government believe that 800 gallons left after even the cleanup fact would not have caused repercussions all the way to downtown Winnipeg if there would have had a match thrown into it?

**Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, if there was a delay, it was a delay of notification of the East St. Paul Fire Department. There was no delay in notification of the Office of the Fire Commissioner or the City of Winnipeg fire department. They were notified virtually immediately. They were on standby from that point on. The 10 000 litres—I do not know where the member gets 800 missing litres because—

**An Honourable Member:** No, it is 800 gallons.

**Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Gallons, sorry. Between the pickup of 6400 on the ground and the rest of it going into the fully self-contained by the Esso facility storm and water sewer system, all of the amount was accounted for. There was no fire, but the Office of the Fire Commissioner and the City of Winnipeg fire department were on standby and on alert and prepared to deal with any eventuality had it occurred.

It did not occur, and I want the residents of East St. Paul to know that it did not occur. There was not a disaster. It was prevented by the good services of the Esso facility, the City of Winnipeg fire department and the Office of the Fire Commissioner.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, often in Question Period words get thrown back and forth in this Chamber, and I want to indicate that last Thursday some words

were thrown at me by a member opposite which were not nice. What I want to indicate is the member very kindly came up to my office after to apologize for those words. I just wanted to say that in this House sometimes the public does not see the honour and the dignity that is expressed by most members most of the time.

I just want to say that last week's episode was an example on the part of that particular member to the best that we see in this House, the best kind of behaviour. I want to take my hat off to that member and to the way he showed the decorum and the dignity. I hope to be a better member as a result of watching his example.

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the honourable member for the clarification.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** The time for Oral Questions has expired.

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### Darwin School Cabaret Night

**Ms. Linda Asper (Riel):** Darwin School held its cabaret night this month at Norberry Community Centre auditorium, an annual event that parents and grandparents do not miss. This jazz band concert, an idea started by John Patrician, school principal, when the band needed funds for its programs several years ago, is the culmination of a year's work for Darwin School's various bands. The event showcased the Grades 7 and 8 and Senior 1 concert bands as well as the junior and senior jazz bands.

The evening offered music, snacks and beverages, and other activities, such as a silent auction, thus giving the audience an opportunity to mingle between band numbers. The music varied to please all tastes, including the classic rock hits "Louie, Louie" and "Rockin' Robin."

Lesley Morris Meunier, Darwin School band teacher, worked enthusiastically with her students to present this annual evening of entertainment. It is another example of the fine work being done by students and teachers in St. Vital School Division to showcase young people's talents.



Congratulations to Darwin students and staff for offering another successful event. Bravo to the St. Vital School Board for its support for the music program in its schools.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. John Friesen**

**Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, this past April 30, residents of the Steinbach community and indeed all residents of Manitoba were shocked to learn the details of a vicious beating suffered by Steinbach resident John Friesen. The wounds inflicted on this 77-year-old Manitoban were shown in detail, and I am sure left a disturbing impression on those who saw them.

Today I am pleased to inform the House of an incredible recovery and a story of determination. Recently, Mr. Friesen returned to his business, and while not fully recovered, is making tremendous progress as he battles the physical and mental scars that remain.

Mr. Friesen is an example of what a determined human spirit can achieve in difficult situations. Through this difficult time he has been strengthened by a deep faith and by his family and friends. In a statement prepared by Mr. Friesen, he also offered thanks to the many well-wishers, the flowers he received, the cards, gifts, phone calls and visits. Despite the difficulties he has suffered, he has not allowed his experience to lead to anger. Rather he has stated that he does not hold anger towards those responsible for the incident.

Yet the news is not all good. Understandably, Mr. Friesen noted in a recent interview that he still lives with some fear following his attack. He has suffered nightmares and looks over his shoulders more these days and is more conscious in locking doors.

So, Mr. Speaker, while Mr. Friesen is on the road to recovery, this Government has a long way to go to ensuring that Manitobans can feel secure in their homes, in their communities and in their place of employment. Initiatives and a plan designed to reduce the seemingly increasing occurrences of violent crime within our

communities must become a priority for this Government.

On behalf of all members of this House and all Manitobans, I would like to thank Mr. Friesen and wish him well in his continued recovery. Thank you.

\* (14:30)

**Heritage Park Playground Structure**

**Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia):** I am pleased to rise today to bring all members' attention to a wonderful community project that was opened last week. The official opening of the Heritage Park new playground structure on Friday was a true school and community event. The new structure is multicoloured, with slides, swings and many other activities for children. It meets the new standards for safety with appropriate ground cover and equipment.

I understand this project cost almost \$60,000, with assistance coming from the City of Winnipeg, school division, Province of Manitoba, and of course lots and lots of fundraising. The parent council undertook to raise a majority of the funds necessary to complete the project over the last two years.

I would like to thank all those people who donated time, effort and of course money to make this project possible. Of particular note are: Sherri Sweetland, who was in charge of fundraising for the activity; Doreen Devries, the parent council treasurer; Daren Jorgenson, the parent council president; and all members of the parent council itself. I would also like to thank Heritage Park Principal Gail Surman, who has assisted with this project from the outset.

This wonderful facility will be a true asset for the children attending Heritage Park School and those growing up in the neighbourhood. I would like to thank all of the people who made this project possible and for the legacy they are leaving to all citizens of Assiniboia. Thanks for a great effort.

**Farm Family of the Year**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Hodson family from Lenore,

Manitoba, on being named the Red River Exhibition Society's Farm Family of the Year for 2001.

The outstanding dedication this family has shown toward the growth and success of their family farm operation demonstrates their skill and ability in the area of agriculture and their willingness to be strong stewards of the land on which they live.

The Hodson family has developed that original quarter section of land into a 5000-acre, 475-head livestock and grain operation. Today the farm is run by Innes Hodson, his wife Joan and their three sons Jonothan, Jason and Jamie. Their two daughters, Jody and Janelle, have both moved west to pursue teaching careers.

In addition to their expertise in agriculture, the Hodson family is very actively involved in their community. Innes Hodson has served as director of Keystone Ag Producers and the Manitoba Beef Commission and chaired the local UGG for 25 years. Joan Hodson has been a strong supporter of her children's community activities, has long been a member of the Lenore Women's Institute and is a member of, shall we say, the Virden experienced ladies precision skating team, an example of what this lady does to relax.

In addition, the Hodson family has hosted nine exchange students through the International Agricultural Exchange Association. Both Innes and Jonothan are members of the Woodworth Fire Department. Jason and Jamie have also contributed their time to volunteer fire duty. Jonothan is currently the director of the Manitoba Angus Association and Jason has started a community church in Kenton.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on about his family's list of activities and achievements. It is truly rewarding to see that a family which continually gives so much of themselves has been rewarded for their hard work and generosity. It is therefore with great pleasure that I congratulate the Hodson family on receiving this well-deserved recognition. Thank you.

#### **Canadian Peacekeeping Service Medal**

**Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James):** Mr. Speaker, on April 12, 2001, I had the great

pleasure of attending a ceremony honouring the recipients of the Canadian Peacekeeping Service Medal. This presentation was a wonderful occasion for the members of the 17 Wing and its lodger units and 'D' Division RCMP receiving the medal to be formally recognized and appreciated by their country for their important contributions to peacekeeping efforts.

Making the presentations of the 437 Canadian Peacekeeping Service Medals were the Honourable Peter M. Liba, Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba; Brigadier General D. Tabbernor, Deputy Commander Land Forces Western Area; Assistant Commissioner T. W. Eggleston, Commanding Officer 'D' Division of the RCMP; and Colonel D. C. McLennan, Wing Commander, 17 Wing Winnipeg.

Inspired by the 1988 awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to United Nations Peacekeepers, the Canadian Peacekeeping Service Medal was created to acknowledge the efforts of Canadian peacekeepers. This includes all serving and former members of the Canadian Forces, members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other police services, and Canadian civilians who have upheld the 50-year tradition of Canadian peacekeepers.

From all members on this side of the House, I would like to congratulate our recipients for their courage and for their accomplishments and contributions to peace. We applaud your commitment to helping people in war-torn countries to have the opportunity to live in a safer place. Your new medal should be worn with pride, knowing that you have helped make the world a better place.

I would also like to thank the family members of our peacekeepers, many of whom were in attendance at the ceremony, for their efforts in overcoming the hardships of separation and for their ongoing support. Mr. Speaker, 17 Wing CWO Frank Emond is also to be commended on his superb efforts in the organization of this parade.

Again we thank you. We are all proud of your accomplishments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, before going to Supply, I wonder if you could canvass the House to determine if there is leave to begin the Estimates in the Chamber for Intergovernmental Affairs at approximately 3:30 p.m.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to commence the Estimates at approximately 3:30 p.m.? [*Agreed*]

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Mr. Speaker, would you please call second readings of the following three bills in this order: 20, 15, 23.

## SECOND READINGS

### Bill 20—The Farm Products Marketing and Consequential Amendments Act

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Ashton), that Bill 20, The Farm Products Marketing and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur la commercialisation des produits agricoles et modifications corrélatives), be now read a second time and be referred to the committee of this House.

#### *Motion presented.*

\* (14:40)

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased at this time to put a few comments on the record on the second reading of The Farm Products Marketing and Consequential Amendments Act. If we look at agriculture, it is an important multibillion-dollar industry in Manitoba, and the regulated farm commodities have contributed significantly to the province's economy.

These commodities are regulated to varying degrees, ranging from market quotas to pricing and promotion. There are eight farm commodities regulated under the current act. These commodities include the poultry sector, representing broiler chickens, turkeys, eggs and hatching eggs, as well as milk, hogs, honey,

table eggs and root crops. Supply management has demonstrated its benefit to these sectors by stabilizing producers' income and ensuring a reliable supply for our industry partners. It has enhanced the viability of the family farm, thereby strengthening the social and economic fibres of our rural community.

The current act, which was introduced in 1964 and is approximately 40 years old, has gone under several piecemeal amendments over that time. Across Canada, most other provinces have revised and updated their marketing legislation. The proposed act reflects similar legislation in Alberta, Saskatchewan and in Ontario as well as several provisions from our current provincial statute. In general, Bill 20 provides the following: It allows plans to be established that promote, regulate and manage the production and the marketing of farm products. It also allows plans to authorize the boards and commissions to make regulations subject to certain conditions.

The Manitoba Council will continue to supervise the boards and commissions. Persons who are affected by the decisions, orders or regulations of the board or commission can appeal to the Manitoba Council. Enforcement provisions have been updated to reflect more recent provincial legislation as well as legislation in other provinces. As well, federal authority respecting interprovincial and export markets will continue.

The purpose, as set out in Bill 20, is to provide for the promotion, regulation and management of the production and marketing of farm products in Manitoba. This is accomplished through the establishment of plans for each farm product which maintains the authority of the board or commission to make regulations and orders under certain conditions and limitations.

These regulations and orders range from the establishing of price, to pooling, quotas, levies, registering and exempting persons and quantities. To ensure that the boards and commissions operate in accordance with their plan, the Manitoba Council continues its supervisory functions, including hearing appeals on decisions and regulations and, as well, on orders made by the board and the commission.

Enforcement provisions have been updated and are consistent with the provisions of the livestock industry development act, The Animal Care Act and The Dairy Act. These provincial acts were introduced and passed within the last few years. The proposed legislation is our commitment to support farm families who produced their products and to ensure a stable viable growth in Manitoba's agriculture industry.

Mr. Speaker, with these few comments, I would like to recommend Bill 20, The Farm Products Marketing and Consequential Amendments for consideration. I certainly look forward to hearing comments from the other members of this House as the bill proceeds through the second reading and eventually look forward to hearing comments from the public, but certainly look forward to the passage of this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), that the debate be now adjourned.

*Motion agreed to.*

#### **Bill 15—The Mortgage Amendment Act**

**Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Ashton), that Bill 15, The Mortgage Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les hypothèques), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of the House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to make some comments about Bill 15, The Mortgage Amendment Act. The purpose of this bill is to protect consumers who borrow money through reverse mortgages.

Reverse mortgage loans, Mr. Speaker, based on equity in a consumer's home, are unique in that they are targeted primarily at seniors. Interest rates tend to be higher than those of conventional mortgage loans, and typically the loan is not repaid until the borrower dies or sells

the home. As there are usually no payments made during the loan, the amount of interest and total debt can accumulate very quickly.

Mr. Speaker, reverse mortgages are a relatively new concept in Manitoba and in Canada. Prospective borrowers may not always appreciate the unique features of this type of a loan. Consumers may unexpectedly find the reverse mortgage loans have depleted all or much of the equity that they have in their home, leaving no source of funds for any further needs. The rate of depletion of equity will depend on the amount and the length of the loan, the interest rate, and any appreciation or depreciation in the value of the consumer's home.

Mr. Speaker, the main purpose of the amendments to The Mortgage Act is to ensure that prospective borrowers of reverse mortgage loans receive detailed disclosure that enables them to make informed decisions about entering into a reverse mortgage loan before committing themselves.

The amendments will require lenders to provide details such as the interest rate, the amount of interest that will accumulate during the loan, prepayment penalties and the effect of various rates of property appreciation and depreciation on the borrower's equity.

The required disclosure will also point out the risk that the loan may deplete or consume the homeowner's equity and will recommend that the borrowers obtain legal or financial advice or both before signing a reverse mortgage.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments stipulate that the required disclosure be given seven days before the borrower signs the mortgage. This will provide borrowers with a seven-day cooling-off period. Reverse mortgage lenders failing to meet the disclosure requirements will face stiff consequences. Where the borrower signs before the end of the cooling-off period, or where the disclosure is not provided or contains important errors or omissions, the borrower will be allowed to prepay the loan at any time without penalty and without interest.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the amendments include several offences such as failing to

provide the disclosure, advancing funds where the borrower has signed the mortgage before the end of the cooling-off period, and failing to refund any interest that has been paid on the loan where no interest is payable due to the lender failing to comply with the disclosure requirements.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment will also protect borrowers by limiting the maximum debt under their reverse mortgage loan. Where the total debt exceeds the value of the property, the borrower will be liable for no more than the value of the property.

Consumers experiencing problems with reverse mortgages will be able to complain to the Consumers' Bureau which will be given the authority to investigate complaints and mediate disputes between the lender and the borrower.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, upon application by the borrower or lender, the court can review this matter the proposed amendments to The Mortgage Act will provide important protection for those who are thinking of this type of loan. I therefore recommend Bill 15, The Mortgage Amendment Act, to the honourable members of this Legislature and look forward to their support.

\* (14:50)

**Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan), that debate be adjourned.

*Motion agreed to.*

### **Bill 23-The Highway Traffic Amendment Act**

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services):**

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Smith), that Bill 23, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Loi modifiant le Code de la route), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very important bill. It is our second bill on The

Highway Traffic Amendment Act. It deals with a number of important initiatives, particularly closing a number of very significant loopholes in our licensing registration.

Mr. Speaker, we have all heard the expression of a loophole you could drive a truck through. This is a loophole that you could drive a grader through, a front-end loader through, a tractor through, because, in fact, in Manitoba, currently you do not require a licence to drive any of those kind of vehicles. This is creating difficulties on our roads in terms of people operating these items without a licence. It allows people who have suspended licences to operate this type of equipment. It also is leading to difficulties in applying our drinking and driving sanctions. This Government has decided through this bill to propose closing that loophole.

I want to give you a very clear picture of the situation we are faced with currently. If you drive a car, you need a licence. If you are on an off-road vehicle and you are on a road, on our highway system, you need a licence. If you drive a truck, if you drive a farm truck, you need a licence. But, if you are driving a 20-ton road grader, you do not need a licence. If you were driving a front-end loader, you do not need a licence. Driving a tractor—a combine—you do not need a licence to drive on our highway system.

Quite frankly, when I made this announcement, the No. 1 reaction that I received from people was: I did not realize that. A lot of people were not aware of that fact. In fact, there was a woman who was involved with a street sweeping vehicle here in Winnipeg who contacted our office some time ago. She was shocked to find out that the driver of the vehicle, actually, I should say, the operator, was not licensed. She was very shocked to find that.

I want to give you a clear indication of what the impact of this will be. First of all, the only requirement currently is that an operator be 16. This applies on our provincial trunk highway or provincial road system. We are basically going to be requiring that people have a licence; in this case, the intermediate stage in the Graduated Driver Licence portion. This will not impact on municipal roads. We are recognizing the parallel to what is currently in place as well. It also will

not apply to the operation of machinery, particularly farm machinery, on the farm itself.

To give people a fairly clear idea on the farm side, Mr. Speaker, farm-plated vehicles require a licence for operation. Under the Graduated Driver Licence system, people were required to have an intermediate stage licence, which you can receive as early as 16 years, 3 months. That will be the requirement under this legislation: that people be in the intermediate stage.

I want to stress, as well, a couple of other items that this will ensure. First of all, there is a real loophole in regard to the impaired driving measures and countermeasures that are in place, Mr. Speaker. The bottom line here is that operators of heavy construction equipment and farm implements currently escape the administrative sanctions under the impaired driving countermeasures program. This is because of the narrow definition of motor vehicles under the act. As a result, an impaired driver on one of those vehicles is not subjected to the same sanctions as the driver of a motor vehicle. There is no immediate 24-hour suspension and no administrative licence suspension or vehicle impoundment. That is something that creates some difficulties.

While we are not proceeding with the impoundment portion, this will ensure that the 24-hour roadside suspension and the administrative licence suspension portion of our legislation will apply. I think, if it is unacceptable to have drinking and driving for a motor vehicle, most people would say that it is equally unacceptable for anybody operating this kind of heavy equipment to be impaired.

There are some other issues in this bill. There is a rewrite of the vehicle equipment sections. We have been rewriting the act over the last number of years; this is part of that. We are bringing in more consistent provisions and ensuring that they are much clearer. We have amendments here, motor carrier amendments. This is also part of the legislation, as well. We are introducing a range of amendments in this area, which will clarify current national safety code requirements and create new offences and increase fines for violation of motor carrier safety regulations.

I want to stress that the vast majority of motor carriers in the province are indeed very responsible. There is a very small percentage that are violating these regulations. The bottom line is, though, we are making sure, through this bill, that the sanctions are not just seen as a cost of business, that they are going to be real sanctions for those that are not operating in a safe manner.

I want to get back to the original point of this bill. It is part of the ongoing rewriting of the legislation, and I want to stress again that we believe this is reasonable legislation. It is being brought in in advance of the graduated drivers' licensing system, so it certainly gives plenty of advance notice to anybody that is operating this type of equipment on our highways system without a licence. They will be able to obtain that licence if they are able to do so.

I want to stress again that the bottom line here is that this Government does not believe it is acceptable for anyone to be drinking and driving or, in this case, drinking and operating heavy equipment on our highway system. That will be part of it, as well. It also ensures the same kind of standards, whether it be medical standards and proficiency standards, be applied. I think it is only logical, if you are required to have a licence to operate a car, you should have the same kind of requirement to operate any kind of heavy equipment on our highways.

As a bottom line, I think, in addition to making sure that many of our existing legislation applies, it will ensure that Manitobans have greater comfort, when they are driving on the highway system, that they know that every other person on that highway system, no matter what kind of equipment they are operating, no matter what kind of vehicle, that they are required to have a licence. We believe this is the bottom line.

I want to stress again that the licensing system is the backbone of our system in terms of driving in this province. In fact, it is pretty much a system that is based on the very important principle that driving is not a right, it is a privilege. We are bringing it in, in advance of graduated drivers' licensing to give people plenty of time to adjust. I do not think it is an unreasonable requirement in this province that

someone operating heavy equipment on our highways have a licence, and that is why I am very pleased to recommend this bill to the House and would strongly urge members, not only on the Government side but the Opposition side, to support this bill. Bottom line, it just makes sense, common sense, and I look forward to the members' comments. Thank you.

**Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan), that debate be adjourned.

*Motion agreed to.*

### House Business

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Ashton), that the House resolve into a Committee of Supply.

*Motion agreed to.*

### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

#### HEALTH

(15:20)

**Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg):** Good afternoon. 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 Health. There is a previous agreement of this committee to have a global discussion of the entire department, and, after completion of all questioning, pass all resolutions. We will continue with the global discussion. We are open for questions.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Chairperson, I will just read into the record some of the replies to previous questions that have been asked by some of the members during the course of the Estimates debate.

First, on May 16, 2001, the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) requested information respecting IMG, specifically (a) a list or the number of IMGs currently seeking accreditation, (b) a list of world health

organizations, except countries from which IMGs come from, (c) what training and assessment will be available to IMGs, and (d) what percentage of the Budget and subappropriation 21.4.(c) relates to IMGs.

I would like to provide the following information: To date, five IMGs have submitted application to the Faculty of Medicine to be assessed through the medical licensure program for international medical graduates. There are 1642 approved institutions of basic medical education in 157 countries or areas, and I will table a list of the approved countries or areas. We announced on April 25, 2001, the first permanent program in Canada to assist international medical graduates to obtain medical licences. Finally, the total amount of funding for IMGs is \$269,000, of which 0.06 percent of the total medical program of \$484,160,800. I am tabling copies of the World Health Organization's World Directory of Medical Schools by country.

On May 16, the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain requested information with respect to how much the medical program budget was for the operation set up of the Rural and Northern Health office. We requested a copy of the RFP that was being sent to all RHAs regarding the Office of Rural and Northern Health. I would like to advise that the Office of Rural and Northern Health, included in sub-appropriation 21.4.(c) medical programming, is \$501,700,000.

I am also tabling a copy of the RFP that was provided across Manitoba with respect to the Office of Rural and Northern Health, dated February 12, 2001. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** A few brief questions, as we indicated last time, before we adjourned, that I would come back with a few more questions on capital projects, capital programs, and I would ask just a few more on those.

I understand the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) had been asking questions, Mr. Chairperson, about projects that were deferred last year and the minister had indicated to him that he thought we had been

supplied with that list at some point. In looking through all of my documents, I do not happen to have a list of all projects that might have been deferred by the NDP when they came into power. I wonder if it would be possible to have either that tabled or a list provided today.

**Mr. Chomiak:** We can provide a list of those projects that were deferred by the Government of Manitoba when we did our reassessment—a complete reassessment of the capital plan that was announced in the '99-2000 period just before the last provincial election. We will provide a list now. Because projects were in various stages of approval and various stages of status, the question as to what is deferred and what has not been deferred is not necessarily as concrete as there may not necessarily be as explicit a black-and-white answer for each individual project, depending upon the state of their capital approval.

But we will endeavour to provide a listing of those projects that were deferred with respect to the capital plan. From memory, the course projects that we discussed last year in Estimates extensively that dealt with deferral were, of course, the personal care home in Morden, Mr. Chairperson, as well as the Emerson hospital. They were two of the projects that were deferred and that we discussed extensively, both last year and during the course of Estimates and, to a certain extent, during the Estimate process this year.

\* (15:30)

**Mrs. Driedger:** I appreciate the willingness of the minister to provide that list. Would he also be able to either now verbally or be willing to table a list of all of the capital building projects that took place in the year 2000, or in that budget year, that fiscal budget year?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I am not clear, specifically, what year the member is referencing.

**Mrs. Driedger:** How about let us do the last budget year, 2000-2001?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Is the member looking for projects that have been improved in principle, or projects that we have begun construction, or projects for making payment because the construction is not completed?

**Mrs. Driedger:** Is it possible to get all of that?

**Mr. Chomiak:** To the extent, yes, we will try to provide the information for all, basically, three of those categories.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister give any indication, and I know he has not announced his capital projects for this fiscal year, are there any particular projects that he is able to indicate to us that might be in the works for this year?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I cannot give any specifics. Some information has already leaked out that is common knowledge, but I cannot give anything specific, lest I open floodgates. If I indicate some projects, then the question will be why do I not indicate other projects. So, just for the purposes of consistency, Mr. Chair, I think I will just announce the projects at the time of announcement.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I do not mind if the minister wanted to share any of that with me. I think I must have missed the leaks. Can the minister give any indication whether or not there are any super, major, big projects happening that require a five-year plan? Is there anything in the works that requires that kind of a looking-forward commitment?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Clearly, there is a whole series of projects that are on a multiyear plan. Two of the most notable ones that have already been announced, the two critical services projects in Winnipeg and in Brandon that are on a multiyear plan. There are a variety of projects with respect to multiyear plans that are part of the overall capital development process.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate whether he is going to be looking at making a commitment to five-year projects or five-year capital announcements? I know, in opposition, he had had an interest in looking at the value or been somewhat committed to the value of more longer-term announcements. I believe that there was a five-year figure attached to that and wondered if that was where the minister might be moving in any of his projects, or does he go on a year-to-year or a two-year or a multiyear planning horizon?

**Mr. Chomiak:** The capital plan cannot be produced on a year-by-year basis. I mean, it



would not be an effective capital plan if it was not rolled out over a multiyear strategic basis over a number of years. With respect to announcements, what we have tried to do is change the process with respect to approval process, to break down the approval process into three separate stages. That was the decision we made last year when we reviewed the capital plan, and we determined that we would break down the approval process into a three-stage approval process that would try to accurately reflect at what stage a particular capital project is at. Quite clearly, the capital plan cannot be done on a single-year basis with respect to planning, or with respect to strategic direction of both the department and health in general, so it is rolled out a multiyear plan, but in terms of public announcements, we are trying to make public announcements with respect to the three-stage approval process that we put in place last year.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I know last week we had discussed a little bit without any real answers in terms of long-term care beds. I wonder if the minister could tell me how many long-term care beds were added to the system in 2000-2001.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, Mr. Chairperson, I guess we could provide the member with that information.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Does the minister wish to provide that now or table it at a later date?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Probably we will table it at a later date, as soon as possible.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate how many long-term care beds he is planning on opening for 2001-2002?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, Mr. Chairperson, there are some projects that are in the works. They are part of the capital planning process.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate what criteria he bases the number of new long-term care beds on? Would there be certain things that are looked at and addressed to determine the need for more long-term care beds or whether the numbers we have out there are stable now? Is there a process he follows in determining what that is and how that is prioritized?

**Mr. Chomiak:** There has always been a planning process that has been put in place with

respect to long-term beds at the Department of Health. They worked on certain thresholds of establishing long-term beds and the need for long-term beds. That was challenged in the last few years of the previous government with respect to planning parameters and with respect to planning structures. In the latter part of the last government there was a move to put in place a greater number of long-term care beds than had been put in place previously.

There are certain ratios that have been adopted by the Department of Health with respect to the number of long-term beds that are being constructed or are being approved for construction. Upon coming to office we did do a review of the number of beds in the system and long-term beds. We are still looking at the result of that particular review with respect to the number and the needs for long-term beds.

I alluded to the fact in the last occasion when we discussed this particular issue I indicated to the member that we were questioning some of the basics in the system with respect to the need for chronic, for psycho-geriatric, for what I term special needs beds, and taking a look at those kinds of requirements and mix in the system. There have been several studies, most notably by the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, that have assessed the bed ratios in the province and made suggestions with respect to needs for beds and the requirements of beds.

There are varying opinions across the system with respect to beds and the type of beds that are required. Clearly there have been suggestions—there were suggestions throughout the '90s and suggestions right up to the present that in terms of personal care homes per thousand, Manitoba has more than most jurisdictions in the country, certainly more than western Canada. That has been general, and in fact if one looks at comparisons across the country, certainly across western Canada, that in fact is the case. The question then becomes, if Manitoba has more beds per thousand in long-term care beds, what are Manitoba's needs in the future and how can those needs be met?

So that has been some of the conventional wisdom. However, I have always been of the

view that we have to challenge the conventional wisdom and challenge some of the numbers and to continue to challenge them. If you look at the recent studies, it is very clear that in some of those special needs categories there is a need for beds, and it appears that the system is evolving towards a system where the more intensive. What used to be long-term care beds have become more intensive in acuity requiring more services, which then translate into a different type of bed than may be required in the future because of (a) the age of individuals that are placed in those beds and (b) the level of acuity of those particular patients in the beds.

\* (15:40)

So we have basically asked and I have asked for an assessment of needs and requirements and basically challenged some of the conventional thinking in this regard to try to figure out what is in fact a better bed mix, and what is the best bed mix that will meet our needs in the next 10 or 20 years. Demographically there are changes. Demographically there seems to be some kind of a movement and need towards more supportive kind of assistance rather than institutionalization. We know intuitively that there is a move away from institutionalization in general. Whether or not that will be reflected in long-term care beds or not is still open to question. However, we have asked for an assessment and a continuing assessment, and that is in progress with respect to bed needs in order to make determinations. I have alluded, however, to the fact both publicly and otherwise that we are certainly looking at in particular the special needs bed component of our system as something that probably has to be addressed sooner rather than later.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I certainly appreciate the need to address some of these special needs beds. I believe my colleague from Portage la Prairie has spoken to the minister either through Estimates or separately about some of these issues and looking at some of the need for either Alzheimer's beds or brain injury beds for people injured through brain injury. Certainly one would assume that by paying special attention to these specific areas we could eventually end up providing patients in need of these beds with a much better-quality program and be able to better meet their needs.

Knowing that the baby boomers are on the horizon for reaching the age where a number of medical services are going to be needed and knowing some of the long-term planning that will be a part of this picture in order to properly provide the health care needs of baby boomers, is that part of what the minister is looking at in terms of some long-term plans and looking at numbers of beds in the system or other programs in the system to properly determine what we need? Has that kind of planning already started?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I believe that there was supposed to be a bed map produced in the fall of 2000. Could the minister tell me whether or not that bed map has been finalized and whether he would be prepared to table a copy?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I do not believe it is finalized. It is still in progress.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister indicate if there is a time frame on when that might be completed?

**Mr. Chomiak:** We are using some of the data acquired from that process in some of our planning around some of the projects that we are undertaking. We are also looking at the application of the bed map across the province, if memory serves me correctly, in terms of a larger general planning and long-term planning.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Does the minister have an expected date in mind at which time he would like to see that done and completed in order to be able to make sure that the planning is happening in an organized way?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I can indicate the planning is happening in an organized way. Obviously, the results of the particular bed map exercise has been and will continue to be utilized in the planning process. So it is continuing, it is being utilized in the planning process as we look towards the requirements for the needs in the short term, the medium term and the long term.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate if he is moving towards buying out the proprietary personal care homes?

**Mr. Chomiak:** There is a unique relationship that has been established in Manitoba with respect to proprietary care homes, insofar as they report directly to the Department of Health outside of the window of the regional health authorities. It is kind of an interesting anomaly, and there are a variety of reasons that have been given to me as to why that particular anomaly takes place in the health care system.

As the member probably is aware, most of the capital construction that took place in the long-term care or personal care home sector over the past few years has been largely in that particular sector of the health care system for a variety of reasons. It certainly is not my intention or I believe the intention of the Department of Health to buy out the for-profit, private personal care homes.

**Mrs. Driedger:** So the rumour that might be out there that the minister has a distaste for them and is planning on taking them over, does that have no validity to it?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I noticed the member used the words "rumour that might be out there." I am not privy to rumours that might be out there with respect to the acquisition of the for-profit, private personal care homes.

Having said that, Mr. Chairperson, it has never been a secret that it has been generally our wish that activity in the personal care home sector is preferable in the public sector for a variety of reasons. I made no secret of that, both in opposition and as a minister. That is not to say that our Government, both in the past, when we have been government from the period of 1969 through '77, and '81 through '88, and now from '99 and continuing, that there are existing and pre-existing for-profit personal care homes in the system. Just as members opposite made no secret of the fact that they preferred for-profit private personal care homes for a variety of reasons, our preference is towards the non-profit personal care homes for a whole variety of reasons, which I am pleased to get into if the member wants to question me on that.

With respect to the acquisition or the purchase or rumours that the member might have heard in this regard, I am not aware of any

intention to purchase a for-profit personal care home in Manitoba.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister then confirm that there are no discussions going on formally or informally in the department that would lend itself to that rumour?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, I do not want to speculate. If the member has a specific issue that she wants to question me on, I will answer definitively. But, with respect to possible rumours, the member might have heard about and my speculating on those possible rumours, I will not do that.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister then confirm that there are no discussions going on in the Department of Health informally or formally to purchase proprietary personal care homes?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I have not given any direction whatsoever with respect to the department for them to look at the purchase of for-profit private nursing homes in the province of Manitoba.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate what is happening with the proposal a few years back to build a tower at the Misericordia Health Centre?

**Mr. Chomiak:** There were a variety of options that were proposed with respect to the tower at the Misericordia hospital. The one that I am most familiar with in that regard was, I believe, an announcement in the 1999-2000 capital plan to build a tower at Misericordia, Mr. Chairperson, to expand the capacity of Misericordia to offer personal care home services at that site. That has been a proposal that was brought forward, and that is a proposal that, like all proposals, the 160 or 170, if memory serves me correctly, that were reviewed last year, that like all proposals was reviewed and was placed within our planning process.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate where it might be in terms of a priority, or has there been some determination that this number of personal care home beds are no longer needed in the system?

**Mr. Chomiak:** There are a number of personal care home beds that are needed in the system. There are a variety of other kinds of beds that are needed in the system and, I think, to a certain extent, that will be fairly clear in our capital announcements.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate whether or not—and I do not know if this might have been brought up earlier, and I apologize if it has—there has been any commitment to building a new hospital in Portage la Prairie?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I think that it was brought up by the member's colleague. It was a proposal that was brought forward with respect to a hospital that was built in the 1950s, and there was a fair amount of support in the community for municipalities with respect to the establishment of a new facility. That is part of the many capital proposals that have come before the Department of Health.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I guess, just to probably provide support to what my colleague from Portage la Prairie has likely said, having toured that hospital recently as well as the Emerson Hospital, certainly one can see the fairly dramatic needs in both of those places for a lot of reasons, whether it is for patients themselves or for the staff that have to work in either of those facilities, to have more modern functioning facilities would certainly enhance the quality of patient care, I would think, as well as the environment for his staff to work in. So certainly I would encourage a real good look at both of those particular facilities.

In Emerson I was particularly touched by the fact that the personal care home side of that is really almost, I have to say, depressing after being in a number of personal care homes in the province. I have to say there are some wonderful personal care homes for our seniors in this province. To have to walk through the one at Emerson was depressing. I cannot imagine what it is like for those seniors that have to live there day in and day out and would certainly encourage I guess that they be given a good look when priorities are being set.

I wonder if the minister could tell me where the situation is with the Swan River hospital.

\* (15:50)

**Mr. Chomiak:** I can assure the member that we have given the situation with respect to Emerson and Portage a good look with respect to all of the priorities. Of course, I have also had occasion to tour both of those facilities.

I also had occasion recently to tour the temporary hospital in Swan River, and I will just provide the member with some information with respect to Swan River momentarily.

I am advised that there is good progress being made between the Capital Planning Branch, the regional health authority and the Swan River board, which of course is a non-devolved board in that particular region, and plans are going per the norm with respect to the construction of the new facility.

As I indicated previously, I had occasion recently to tour the temporary facility and to view some of the situation up there, as well as to have an opportunity discussing with some of the board members and others some of the issues concerning that particular facility. I can assure the member that plans are moving very well from a planning viewpoint with respect to that facility.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister tell me whether construction has started on that or if it is still in just another stage?

**Mr. Chomiak:** The actual construction has not commenced.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister tell me what the start date on that would be?

**Mr. Chomiak:** As I indicated, there is a three-pronged planning approval process that has been put in place with respect to capital projects, and it is moving along that process.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister indicate where along that process it is? It seems to me that this issue was brought up for the last several years, and I am just curious at what stage it is. I would have thought that it might have been a little bit further along.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes, it is moving quite expeditiously. I think that all the parties to this particular process, that is the department, the regional health authority and the Swan River Hospital Board, are pleased with the progress.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I guess I have not really heard an answer in all of that in terms of the specific point along the process where it would be. Certainly there had been some indication, I can recall, when mould was discovered in the hospital, and there was some real concern by the NDP in opposition and by the community. I understand that they are in a temporary facility now.

I am wondering where along I guess the planning process this would be. I mean, have tenders been sought? Has the sod been turned? Certainly there must be some specific answer that can be given as to where this is along that process.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, I am advised that the process is proceeding along the normal time lines for a project of this type.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I guess it could certainly be moving along as it is expected or as quickly as the minister would hope, or it is following along in one of the three phases of his planning process. I do not understand why it is difficult for him to indicate where in that process this is. I mean, it is probably a fairly significant hospital.

I would wonder where in the process it is in terms of the approval processes, in terms of the sod-turning, in terms of the tendering. When can the community expect, I guess, some definitive action on this, or when will it be finished? I do not understand why the minister cannot tell me specifically where it is at.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Of course, the member knows that the previous facility was found to be contaminated, and a new temporary structure was put in place. Quite evidently, a community cannot function for long periods of time in a temporary facility. We have committed and I think the previous government committed—although I am not sure; I do not think there was money in the capital budget—to reconstruct and build a new facility there.

We have moved quite expeditiously with the community into the design stages. We are on target and we will proceed. Announcements will be duly made.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate whether there has been any funding allocated for the Swan River hospital?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Yes.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I have a particular interest, I guess, in the Swan River hospital because, like the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), I am from around that neck of the woods as well, Benito, Manitoba, that is right, about 22 miles from Swan River. I certainly have a partiality to that particular part of the province. Knowing I have lots of relatives who probably need to access the area, I certainly have a really keen interest and want to see good health care available to the people in the Swan River Valley, a place, by the way, that I am very proud to have come from.

I am a little bit surprised that the minister cannot be more definitive in his answer. It makes me wonder why he is hesitant to provide any concrete information about this. With his last answer, he certainly did indicate that funding has been allocated, but I guess I am wondering if the funding is allocated just for the plan, or is there funding allocated for the actual construction?

Certainly I would think that for the hospital that will be fairly significant to the Swan River Valley and that will be, I am assuming, a regional centre, that there could be some more concrete time frames attached to this. I do not understand why the minister is a bit reluctant. He seems reluctant to give me the information about exactly where in the planning process this particular facility is at.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, as I have indicated, we have made an allocation for Swan River hospital to be built, and Swan River hospital will be built. We are in a planning process and planning stage of staged approvals that we are working through. We have discussed it with the community; we have discussed it with the board, and we are proceeding as appropriate.

I have tried to be pretty consistent with respect to our capital announcements and how we announce our capital and what we announce with respect to our capital. I am trying to preserve that particular aspect of it, so that we do not get into situations of a myriad of announcements at one point that cannot be lived up to, as it had happened in '99-2000, so that we can have announcements that are announced along the appropriate approval process.

Let me outline for the member why I think this is appropriate. When we looked at the assessment of capital and we looked at the various stages of approval that had taken place, in many cases the amount of capital, for example, that was appropriate or that was allocated for a particular capital process had increased by 10, 20 and 30 percent from the time of the original announcement until the time of the actual capital. That then locked in the government or the agencies to particular cost that we did not think was effective. We wanted to manage the capital dollars better and we wanted to manage the capital dollars more appropriately, so we put in place an approval process that had various stages of approval where the items would come back and would be reviewed with all of the parties in question.

\* (16:00)

In this particular instance there is no doubt there will be and there must be a new hospital built in Swan River. We are proceeding to do that. We are following normal patterns, and in fact are going as fast as is permissible under the circumstances, as fast as could be permitted under the circumstances. We are doing that. We are proceeding and announcements will be duly made as we proceed through this particular process.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The other day in the House, one of the minister's colleagues yelled across—and this is a little bit surprising to me, because I do not think they have that many beds—and indicated that there were, and this is where the number is probably wrong, I am not sure, 400 underutilized beds at Concordia Hospital. Could the minister indicate whether that is something that would be an accurate statement? I did not hear the other minister say that in the House. Other colleagues of mine had heard those words

being said, that there were 400 underutilized beds at Concordia Hospital. Can the minister indicate if that is anywhere near an accurate statement? I do not even know if they have 400 beds.

**Mr. Chomiak:** No, they do not have 400 beds.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate what might have been meant by that particular statement then? Is there a lesser number? Is there some discussion going on in his Government about beds at Concordia Hospital, other than the ones of course we have heard about recently when Dr. Pat Harris had come forward with concerns about the takeover of community hospital beds at the Grace and at Concordia? Would that have been part of what this other minister was meaning when he was indicating there were underutilized beds at Concordia?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, I do not like to speculate based on rumours. Earlier on I indicated to the member her suggestion that there was maybe a rumour on something was something I did not want to comment on. Now the member is asking me to comment about a statement that she purports to have heard from a second party that was purportedly made by someone on our side of the House that I do not think it is appropriate for me to comment on.

If I were to comment on all of the comments I heard in the House, I could be here for several hours on recent comments that have been heard from members opposite, but I know that during the course of debate in the House many things are said, many things are said inaccurately or accurately, or in the heat of debate. So I am not going to speculate on a comment the member heard second-hand which was hearsay from an individual on her side of the House.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister then indicate in his mind whether or not there are underutilized beds at Concordia Hospital? Is that his view?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I do not know what the member is referring to by underutilized.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister tell me whether there are a number of empty beds, vacant beds at Concordia Hospital?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, we are utilizing as many beds at Concordia Hospital as staff permit us to utilize.

**Mrs. Driedger:** One would assume, I would think, with the shortages in human resources that we see out there, that there might be a number of vacant beds, perhaps even closed wards in some of the hospitals. One of the community hospitals indicated the only way they were able to come in under budget this year was because they had a closed ward because they were not able to staff it. So they actually had closed a whole ward. Can the minister tell me how many closed beds there are in Winnipeg hospitals right now?

**Mr. Chomiak:** What I can tell the member is there were a lot of beds closed over the past decade, permanent acute care beds that were closed in the health care system. There were also a lot of staff that were laid off in the health care system. It would certainly be helpful, and I can assure the member that there would be a lot more beds that we would be in a position to be staffing if we had the human resources to do that. That is known by everyone across the system. That is the fact that because of the acute human resource shortages it is very difficult to manage the entire system.

That is one of the reasons why we have launched a significant initiative to train and educate nurses, doctors and other health care professionals that we are moving on to try to staff up and try to deal with what we recognized when we came into office was the most significant issue facing us: that is a lack of human resources to deal with the various issues that have to be dealt with. We also know that there are situations where, from time to time, there are staffing difficulties, and we acknowledge that publicly. Mr. Chair, we have also acknowledged publicly that, over the course of summer, every year there are shutdowns with respect to beds that have been a tradition in the history in this province for decades, and that continues to happen.

There is also no doubt, Mr. Chairperson, and I have said publicly, if we had more nurses, for example, and some of the other health care personnel, that we would be operating more beds in the system. There is no question in my mind that that is in fact the case. I had a fairly lengthy

discussion with one of the member's colleagues the other day with respect to the staffing of beds and the relationship between the lack of personnel and the staffing of beds and some of the difficulties that we are experiencing in the system as a result of the cutbacks that occurred in the '90s and the inability to turn around on a dime, that is, to staff and to provide human resources to those beds and those locations in the short term.

Fortunately, we have planned for the long term, our nurses' plan that we put in place in March of 2000 that outlines significant issues with respect to nurses, our doctors' plan, the most significant expansion of doctor resources that I can recall perhaps in 20 years in this province, which is very significant to deal with doctors, and some of the other human resource measures that we have undertaken and will be undertaking with respect to human resources are going to have a significant impact across the system.

I have said publicly on many occasions that we are in for some difficult times in the next little while because of the serious cutbacks that occurred in the '90s and the inability to turn around on a dime with respect to staffing and dealing with those issues. The effect of those cutbacks are not felt and were not felt as much immediately as are continuing to be felt throughout the system as we move forward. Hopefully, with some of the measures we put in place several years down the road, as we see new graduates and new people filling the ranks of those that were not there in the past, we ought to be able to make progress with respect to the staffing of facilities across the system.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I know the minister certainly does get a little bit defensive when the question is asked about the number of closed beds in Winnipeg hospitals, but, when we do look at having probably one of the best percentages in terms of the numbers of acute care beds in the country on per capita basis and probably, as he just indicated a little bit earlier, on a per capita basis, some of the best percentages for long-term care beds in Canada, maybe part of what needs to be looked at in the big picture is maybe there are enough beds in the system.

I know he might lose some of the political opportunity to take shots at us for closing beds, but maybe there are enough beds in the system. Maybe there is, as he even indicated earlier, a better way or different ways, innovative ways, in order to look after patients which could be in the community or in other facilities like day hospitals, supportive living, a number of other opportunities. I do not know, without having all of the information at hand. Maybe having a number of closed beds in the system is maybe not that detrimental. On the other hand, maybe it is, depending on how everything else stacks up.

Certainly last week I had indicated to the minister, and it was an article that had been in the *Canadian Operating Room Nursing Journal* from October of 1999, written by a Dr. Tim Porter O'Grady, who talked about debedding health care and talked about the fact that in North America, by the year 2010, we will have reduced bed-based health care by 637 000 beds. He went on to say in the article that that does not mean people will not get sick. It just means that we are going to be caring for them differently. It does not mean that people do not need us in health care. It just means that they will need us in different things.

It appears to be a trend that is certainly happening throughout North America in terms of reducing the number of acute care beds. Probably having an adequate number of long-term care beds in the community is certainly something, though, that has to be watched very carefully with the baby boomers hitting the system, because that is maybe where we do need to be very in tune with what the future demands on the system are going to be and where we may need, in fact, more beds rather than less. Certainly, in acute care, with the day surgery percentage that has gone up dramatically over time, one has to continue to always evaluate how needed acute care beds are and what is the best percentage in our population for acute care beds in the system.

\* (16:10)

I certainly would be interested in knowing how many beds are closed right now in Winnipeg hospitals, but certainly if the minister does not want to provide that information at this point in time, that is fine. I can go on to a different line of questioning. Certainly, I think it

is important that when we are looking at beds and we are looking at what the trends are and we are looking at probably what the future holds, the fact that almost three quarters of a million hospital beds will close in North America by the year 2010 is pretty significant. I think that speaks a lot to the research and technology that has been introduced in the number of years that could actually create the situation where we do not have to look after people in very expensive hospital beds when there are other ways, in many cases, of looking after them in a much better way and in a much more cost-effective way while they still get really good care.

So I would certainly hope that when we look at the discussion and have the discussion about numbers of beds in the system and whether or not the former government closed beds, the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, a group that I know the minister likes to quote their research, indicated that there was no negative effect on Manitoba patients by the closure of beds in the '90s, and they have reiterated that statement in some of their most recent research articles that they have produced. They have indicated that actually a number of times, and even in their last three research studies that they have put forward indicated that the closure of beds in the '90s did not have a negative effect upon patient care in the province. So it does make for some interesting conversation.

I know the minister likes to always say that the Tories closed all these beds, but in fact, according to the research group, they indicate that that was not a detrimental thing. It is not that people were just left out there with no means of getting care, because there are certainly alternatives that have been introduced and innovations that have been introduced.

It appears to be a North American trend, and it is not just something that is happening in Manitoba. In fact, probably we are sitting with some of the largest percentages of acute care and long-term care beds in Canada. I know there have even been questions by other researchers as to whether or not the numbers we have in the system are the right numbers, so it is going to be interesting to watch how this evolves over time.



I do not know if the minister wants to comment on that. I mean, I am not going to stay on the issue of how many beds are closed in Winnipeg hospitals right now if he would prefer to go on.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chair, before I respond, I wonder if the member can advise me if we are finished the capital portion or not.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I have some equipment questions, but I do not know if you need your capital people here for that. There is one other one, and that is: Where in the Budget does the \$7.3 million for the Pan Am Clinic show up? What line would it be in, or is it under the WRHA?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, obviously the expenditure with respect to Pan Am Clinic would be a capital item.

**Mrs. Driedger:** One other question on that then. If it is a capital item, but we also are finding out that there are operating costs attached to that, where then does all of that fit? The 7.3, I would assume then from his answer, fits under capital. Would there be some place else in the Budget where the operating expenses show up?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, operating expenses appear to go to 21.4.(a), I believe.

**Mrs. Driedger:** That is fine. Other than getting into some questions on medical equipment, I do not have any further questions on specific building capital.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, I am just chomping at the bit to reply to the member's comment about the number of beds, but since the capital people are here I am going to defer that and just maybe we will deal with the equipment questions in terms of better utilization of time.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I am prepared to move on to other questions.

**Mr. Chairperson:** We will move on to other questions.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I guess in looking at medical equipment funding, I know that with the money

they received from the federal government that they have committed last year's amount, \$18.6 million, and right now they still have the \$18.5 million which was supposed to have been used for this year, but they are not going to use it this year; they are going to use it in next year's Budget, 2002-2003.

I would like to ask the minister why he would not consider using that money now, because, certainly, when he was in opposition, he had a lot to say about the state of equipment in the province and the need for better and more equipment. I would wonder why now he would not move to spend all of that money right now, so that we can end up having quality diagnostic equipment in this province.

**Mr. Chomiak:** As is often the case in statements made by the member, that statement is factually wrong, Mr. Chairperson. The member often makes blanket statements about what we are doing and what we are not doing, makes them publicly, and is wrong. That makes it very difficult to sometimes respond because the member makes statements and then asks us to reply to them. I mean, I can recall several statements during the course of Estimates last year that the member was wrong on with respect to the information, and I do not think that is conducive to a good discussion or isolating the actual facts of a situation during the course of the Estimates debate.

The member was initially claiming that we were not going to be spending that money at all and accused us of not spending that money, Mr. Chairperson. Then, when we made the announcements of that money, the member then said, oh, but you are not spending all of it right now. Now the member is saying, oh, you are not spending it this year; you are going to spend it next year. The member goes on and on and makes speculative statements that are not accurate and that we see over and over again. That is not conducive to a good discussion and dealing with the actual facts in hand.

I make that point because members opposite could not negotiate anything with the federal government with respect to financing. All they did in opposition was slam the federal government, slam and slam and slam, and did

not move the agenda forward. We realized that we had to try to move the agenda forward, and while we did not achieve what we wanted to achieve or nowhere near, Mr. Chairperson, at least we got some relief to all of the provinces as a result of the agreement that we concluded last fall.

One of the components of that agreement was the equipment fund, which I reiterate to the member was part of the Manitoba proposals that went to the federal government, was part of our negotiations. Fortunately, the federal government accepted the negotiations. So to pluck out of the air the fact that we are not appropriately using these funds or we do not know what this fund is about is not accurate insofar as we had recommended this fund in the first place.

With respect to the fund, the member likes to suggest that only spending on capital diagnostic equipment would be a panacea for difficulties. If that had been the case, then I say what happened over the last decade, Mr. Chairperson, with respect to the replacement of equipment across this province? We only saw significant replacement of equipment in the dying days of the last regime. So I do not think it is appropriate for the member to suggest somehow that we have not adequately used the funds. We have put more funds, I suggest, into equipment replacement this year than may have occurred cumulatively over the past perhaps five or six years. I am only going off the top, but I think it is probably accurate to state that.

The member is well aware of our announcement, when we made an announcement of \$22 million with respect to capital equipment that we were dealing with, and there have been other announcements and other matters dealt with. It is interesting that we have been able to replace and we have been able to put in place equipment across the system.

I pointed out in the House, I think, to members opposite that rather than was the case in the past when, for example, CAT scans were forced to be purchased by the fundraising component of the various hospitals and various health care institutions, we are funding that, Mr. Chairperson, because it is basic equipment that we think is necessary.

We think that the public has very well received the announcement of the expanded equipment, and we look forward to having more announcements in this regard.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister confirm that in the year 2000-2001, just under \$10 million was spent on new diagnostic imaging equipment and upgrades to diagnostic imaging equipment, that provincially, with their own provincial money, it was less than \$10 million that was put towards that equipment?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Just going by memory, I do not think the member is accurate, but I will confirm and let the member know with respect to that particular aspect.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I would certainly appreciate that. I know that in a Freedom of Information that I had sought asking for what that equipment would be, the total new diagnostic imaging equipment was \$4.3 million, and total upgrades to diagnostic imaging equipment was \$5.4 million. This was for the period of time April 1, 2000, to February 28, 2001. So I appreciate that in March more might have been spent on equipment, but what this came to was \$9.7 million of provincial money spent on diagnostic imaging equipment.

Then I believe the commitment was also made for the Government to spend their first year-one allocation from the federal government. I am wondering when the minister plans to spend the next allocation from the federal government, and that was the \$18.5 million. If the minister could tell me when he plans to spend that money and if he has an idea of what he wants to spend it on, I would appreciate that information.

**Mr. Chomiak:** That funding is part of an overall planning process with respect to equipment needs, an allocation that is part of our overall budgetary and planning process and will be duly announced.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate why the person I would have spoken to in the federal

government was surprised to hear that it was part of the provincial budgeting process here in Manitoba? She had indicated that because it was specifically allocated money earmarked for diagnostic equipment, she was surprised that it was going through what we would call a budgetary process here. She thought that that money would just be specifically looked at in isolation of the rest of the Budget.

I wonder if the minister could indicate why she might have been surprised to hear that Manitoba was doing it the way they were.

**Mr. Chomiak:** You know, Mr. Chairperson, I do not know any reason why a separate party to whom the member talked would be surprised in a conversation that the member had with that particular party concerning a particular item or a particular process.

We have already heard of the member talking to her colleagues with respect to something that might have been heard, a second party, from a member on our side of the House. We have already heard from a telephone conversation the member says she had with a nurse last week that purported to say something.

To take the member's statement to its logical conclusion, we would just take all the money and just spend it today on whatever was required that particular day. That is what I think happened just before the last provincial election, Mr. Chairperson, when determinations were made in terms of capital equipment and capital on an agenda that I think was not pragmatic and was not practical, was not based actually on a planning process and a needs-based process.

Mr. Chairperson, when we negotiated the agreement with the federal government concerning the equipment, we recognized that it would be used for a variety of purposes to satisfy the unmet needs that had occurred over a long period of time. Those unmet needs are still unmet and will be unmet for the foreseeable future because of several deficits: (a) a deficit in funding and a deficit in actual improvement of infrastructure over the past decade; (b) a deficit actually in personnel that operates some of the systems that are required to be put in place; and

(c) a deficit with respect to some of the needs that have to be acquired across the system.

We negotiated with the federal government. We suggested an equipment fund should be put in place, and an equipment fund was put in place. Now we are evolving it into our planning process and into our budgetary process in order to ascertain how to best utilize this equipment and how to best utilize these funds.

I think it is prudent to actually do it that way rather than just go on a wish list off the top of one's head. I think it makes sense to look at what the needs are, to assess them based on a number of priorities. I already know it is true that we could never with the funds we have meet the needs that are out there. Simultaneous with this, the radiologists and the radiologist groups across the country have made quite a dramatic public claim for the utilization of this fund for radiation and diagnostic purposes, which, in part, was one of the reasons for this fund, but there were larger applications to which this fund was being addressed as well. So there have been conflicting needs and demands, and that is what I meant in my point C that I referred to. There have been conflicting needs and demands with respect to how we should utilize this equipment and how we should best allocate it across the province.

\* (16:20)

One thing we did do is we allocated it, we think, relatively fairly between urban and rural centres. We tried to actually allocate it as well between, shall I say, acute care, or shall I say some of the equipment related to diagnostic and some of it related to other forms of acute care so that we tried to satisfy some of the needs across the system.

What a third-party individual told the member with respect to the funds may be one thing. The fact is that we think people are generally pleased with how we have allocated this fund. We are pleased that we acquired the equipment fund in the first place from the federal government. It was one of the needs that we identified. We are pleased that we were able to negotiate it. We are pleased that we had some funds to deal with, and we are pleased, at this point, that we have future funds in order to look

at needs across the province and how those needs can best be met.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I do commend the minister for pushing the federal government to provide this funding. Certainly this is something that we are all aware has been needed over many, many years and certainly recognize the work. As the minister has indicated, he has put into being one of the movers and shakers to make this happen. I think that is a good thing.

When the minister alludes to me asking questions that might be related to rumours, let me just tell the minister that I am giving him the first shot, whether it is in Question Period or here, to verify whether something is a rumour or not. That is why I bring it to him rather than running to the media or anywhere else. I do check my facts, and I give him an opportunity to certainly correct whether or not that information is accurate or not. So for him to take some pot shots at me, just for the record, I want him to know that when I hear rumours, he is one of the first to hear that rumour for validation. I do not go running around spreading something that I have not verified.

I understand that Health Minister Allan Rock sent a letter to all the provincial Health ministers because he is concerned that not all provinces are using the medical equipment fund, Mr. Chair, provided for new medical equipment appropriately. I wonder if the minister could share with us what the content of that letter to Manitoba was.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I can assure the member that Manitoba adheres to both the letter and the spirit of what that funding has been allocated for.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Does the minister have any concerns with what was brought forward by I believe it was a radiologist association or Canadian Association of Radiologists that were indicating to their patients or they actually had a legal opinion that doctors should inform patients about unreliable equipment to avoid potential lawsuits? Does the minister not have some serious concern about this enough so that he would move to spend that next \$18.5 million so that in fact we are not jeopardizing any patient's

diagnosis because we have equipment that might be unreliable?

Obviously, the radiologists were concerned enough to seek a legal opinion on this. I would wonder if the minister is not concerned enough about this that he would want to spend the rest of the money and try to bring Manitoba up to what it needed, which I understand from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority they estimated it would cost about \$50 million to replace obsolete machines in this province. So, if we took the \$37 million from the federal government, we put the \$10 million that the Province had spent, we would almost have Manitoba's equipment brought up to probably a pretty good standard, probably not perfect, because everything ages every day, but certainly we would be up there a little bit quicker. Does the minister not feel compelled because of that concern by the radiologists to the point that they would seek a legal opinion on that?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I hope the member is not excluding regions outside of Winnipeg, because we certainly do not want to have Perimeter focus with respect to needs and requirements totally confined to the city of Winnipeg. There are significant needs and requirements outside of the city of Winnipeg.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Certainly, I have an equal concern for what happens outside the city as I do for what happens in the city. Certainly, in looking at what the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority had indicated, they had indicated about \$50 million. The minister, though, I would hope, would make a comment about whether or not he had concern about the Canadian Association of Radiologists seeking a legal opinion that doctors should inform patients about unreliable equipment to avoid potential lawsuits.

Is he not concerned that we could be going down that path in Manitoba if in fact this money is not spent as soon as possible? We have the money, we know the equipment is in huge need of either repair or replacement. I do not understand how one could then not spend that money and buy the needed equipment, especially since the minister was very vocal in opposition about the state of our equipment here and has an

opportunity right now to do something. I do not understand why he is choosing not to.

**Mr. Chomiak:** That is one of the reasons why we negotiated this equipment in the first place. We identified a need for equipment replacement and renewal long in the process, which is why we are very pleased we were able to negotiate an agreement. We are also very pleased to announce for the first time, in the \$22-million package that we recently announced, significant improvement in terms of that equipment across the system. We are very pleased to be in a position to do that, to renew equipment across the province of Manitoba in a variety of areas.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I note that the minister is very evasive about making any comment about the Canadian Association of Radiologists seeking a legal opinion. Certainly he is very aware of that, however. Certainly I hope in Manitoba that we are not going to see a misdiagnosis, a wrong diagnosis, an unclear diagnosis that is going to jeopardize a patient because we do not have the accuracy in the equipment that we have for diagnosis. I am certainly going to encourage the minister to take that funding and to make good use of it now before we do see something serious happen in terms of a misdiagnosis.

I note that when we were in government, from some of the briefing notes I was able to go through, we had made an ongoing annual commitment of \$22.5 million for the purchase of new equipment.

**Mr. Chomiak:** No.

**Mrs. Driedger:** No? The minister says no, but certainly in the documents that I have seen, in fact, the total 1999-2000 equipment allocation was \$27.5 million. With a total ongoing annual commitment, it was listed at \$22.5 million. The minister has just indicated that that is not so. I do not know how he does not know that when he always says he does not have access to our briefing notes.

Anyway, rather than belabouring the point about the medical equipment fund, I think the minister knows exactly where I stand in terms of my concern about that particular issue. There certainly is a potential for lawsuits over misdiagnosis that alarms me. But the lawsuits do not

alarm me nearly as much as the fact that we have this money, Mr. Chairperson. We could spend it on needed equipment that will make the quality of diagnosis and patient care better in Manitoba. I guess, as a former nurse, I do not understand why we would not take full advantage of that and make sure that we could provide good quality care in Manitoba.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I know the member's allusion to the fact there are \$22 million in equipment renewal on a regular basis is not accurate. I am going straight from memory with respect to my review of the system. I know from my memory that that is in fact not accurate. What I did see just before each provincial election was a significant increase in capital across the health care system, a significant increase in capital that quickly dissolved after an election campaign to be either not existent or very greatly reduced. That is what the facts were and that is what I recall.

In fact, the largest capital program in the history of the province was coincidentally just announced before the 1995 election, then was promptly cancelled. The second largest announcement in the history of Manitoba. It was announced before the 1999 election.

So, you know, the member I do not think is accurate with respect to that particular point. The member says that is what her briefing note says. *[interjection]* Mr. Chairperson, the member continues to snipe at me from her seat with respect to my response. I listened to her question and now I am trying to answer her particular question.

\* (16:30)

It is very clear, and I said this coming into office and I have said this now, that there was a difficulty in terms of the infrastructure and the infrastructural renewal across the province over the past few years that we have to address, that we had to address last year and that we are attempting to address this year. That was one of the reasons for the equipment renewal plan, and we are trying to do it in a pragmatic approach.

I just turn the question around a bit on the member and suggest that the real difficulty I see

in this area was permitting the equipment to be downgraded so poorly and to be downgraded so much over the past decade that occurred in the province of Manitoba and the significant decline in capital and utilization in capital renewal that occurred over the past decade that makes catching up a really difficult proposition for anyone coming to office, Mr. Chairperson.

**Mrs. Driedger:** It almost begs a response from me, but I think with the number of other questions that I have, I think this might be just one that is going to have to await for concurrence.

It is funny, the minister indicates in the House a number of times that he cannot say one thing because he has never had access to our briefing notes, yet now when it suits him, he has solid information in his mind that we never spent that much on an annual basis.

**Mr. Chomiak:** When I said from memory, it is because when I asked the questions over the past seven years in Estimates, Mr. Chair, I remember that particular line item, and that is why I do not think the \$22 million that the member says was on a regular basis is at all accurate. In fact, I have the supplementary Estimates book that I did not bring here, that I could confirm that, in fact, that is not the case. That is what I was referring to.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister confirm with me what his total amount of spending for this fiscal year is for medical diagnostic equipment and other equipment?

**Mr. Chomiak:** We are still in this fiscal year, so I do not know if I can give the member a figure.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister indicate where in the Budget his figures are for the amount of money he is going to be spending on medical equipment, diagnostic equipment?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Fundamentally, it is in line 21.6. under Capital Grants. It is broken down between acute care and long-term care.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister then—because this does not add up to a lot of money from what I can read in all of this, and I do not think he wants me to not know the accurate amount, could he tell me what the total amount allocated

for equipment purchases and replacements would be in this Budget, in these Estimates?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I think that with respect to acute care, footnote 5 on the bottom of page 113 outlines that.

**Mrs. Driedger:** So if in acute care we are spending almost \$11 million; long-term care looks about \$1.5 million, so that is only about \$12.5 million. Would that be accurate in terms of the amount of money allocated for equipment purchases and replacements in these Estimates, \$12.5 million compared to the \$22 million that we would put in on an annual basis?

**Mr. Chomiak:** You did not put in \$22 million on an annual basis.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister confirm that he is only putting in twelve and a half?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I think the footnote outlines the expenditures there.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister tell me very, very briefly what the three-year French diploma program at St. Boniface College is about?

**Mr. Chomiak:** This is an attempt to do several things. One is to expand the number of bilingual or Francophone nurses in our health care system, which is required and needed. The other is to continue the introduction of the diploma program across the system, and the diploma program will be offered through Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface as an addition to the other programs that are offered with respect to nursing.

So, in addition to the Red River site for the offering of the diploma program, in addition to the Red River site for portions of the baccalaureate program, in addition to the University of Manitoba site for the baccalaureate program, as well as some of the northern sites with respect to the baccalaureate program and the Assiniboine Community College with respect to the LPN program, we are also going to have a diploma program that is going to be offered through Collège Saint Boniface on a three-year basis.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister indicate, is this a stand-alone program, or does it have an

affiliation with either the university or Red River?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I believe that we will have an affiliation with the university. I stand to be corrected on that, and I realize that it will be offered, as well, from the University of Ottawa with respect to the particular programming in that regard because of their expertise in offering bilingual programs or French programs of this nature.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister indicate whether or not this has been accredited by MARN?

**Mr. Chomiak:** It will be presented to MARN.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Does the program have to be approved by MARN?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I am not sure I understand what the member is asking.

**Mrs. Driedger:** As with the Red River College two-year diploma program, it had to be approved by MARN. Is this the same type of a situation that MARN has to approve these programs? I understand that they are the accreditation body for all education programs.

**Mr. Chomiak:** As indicated, we are presenting it to MARN.

\* (16:40)

**Mrs. Driedger:** But the minister is not answering my question. He is not indicating for me whether or not MARN approves it. Does that mean that perhaps he has changed something in the regulations so that now he gets to approve an education program?

**Mr. Chomiak:** No.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister then tell me who is the approval body for a nursing education program for the three-year French diploma program offered at St. Boniface College?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Entry to practice is approved by MARN. Educational programs are approved by MARN. As well, as educational programs are approved by the Department of Education who fund those programs.

**Mrs. Driedger:** So, if I understand correctly, the Department of Education will be approving the program as well as MARN.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I stand to be corrected, but, when the Department of Education provides funds to programs, one would assume that they approved them.

**Mrs. Driedger:** The minister is getting a little bit cheeky and totally evading answering my question. Certainly, with the Red River program, part of the issue over this past year was that it was not an approved course, and it was my understanding, as far as nursing education programs, that MARN actually is the approval body. In fact, there was an advisory committee of MARN which happened to have a lot of the minister's staff on it that approved the diploma program at Red River. All I am asking, and it is just a simple question, but now I am beginning to think there is more to it, is it an accurate statement to say that MARN approves or has to approve this program as well?

**Mr. Chomiak:** As I have indicated in several responses, yes.

**Mrs. Driedger:** So, for clarification, MARN will approve this program in due course.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I hope the member is not making a pun while using the words "due course," but, having said that, this matter has been presented to MARN for their approval.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister indicate why this one is a three-year program versus Red River being a two-year program?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, the intention was to have it the same period and offered the same way as the Red River program. Unfortunately, because the program is designed by the University of Ottawa and was in component parts with the University of Ottawa, it can only be offered in three segments as opposed to the offering in the 24-month period directly that we were able to offer the Red River program. It was our intention to try to offer it simultaneously but because of the way the component parts were broken down, because it is a program that is not designed here but designed at the University of Ottawa for the University of Ottawa, we were

forced to compromise with respect to the way in which the program was offered.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I thank the minister for that information, although sometimes it is so painful to get information. I would like to now move into another area and that is pediatric dental surgery, and ask the minister if he can indicate how many children are actually on the waiting list for pediatric dental surgery.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I do not think we have exact numbers with respect to the number of children. There is a lot of information floating around out there with respect to pediatric dental surgery. When I last inquired, fortunately we are proposing to do more procedures this year than have been done in the past several years.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate how many procedures now are done, or how many have been budgeted for in this fiscal year for these surgeries?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I will provide that information to the member. I am a bit leery in terms of giving specific numbers with respect to this particular program and the various component parts because there are different surgeons with different lists and different views in terms of who is on the list and who is not on the list, and we are attempting to increase. We will increase throughput this year. We are also attempting to offer the services outside of Winnipeg so that it is not necessary for the patients, the vast majority of whom I believe come from outside of Winnipeg, to have to come to Winnipeg with respect to the surgery although that may not be specifically possible.

There are negotiations that are ongoing with some of the surgeons in this regard. There are some surgeons who are not particularly as pleased with some of those discussions and negotiations as other surgeons. Suffice to say that generally the waiting list is similar to what it has been, and I do not think I should give the member a definitive number at this point, but we are intending to do more procedures in this area.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Could the minister indicate whether or not there are about 1200 children on the waiting list? That is certainly the list that I

have been given, and I have heard anywhere from 1200 to 1500. I have also heard that waiting lists for surgery can be over a year. In fact, I just had a father who wrote me a letter because his child has been told that the wait for surgery for his child would be probably about a year. So there appears to be a large number of children out there, and I guess I know that this is not a new problem, that this has been one that has been in existence from some time.

I am wondering if the minister is looking, and I understand from one of the dental surgeons, he had indicated that the Government was considering the establishment of a pediatric dental program at the Selkirk Hospital only half a day a month and the establishment of a one-day-a-week program at the Beausejour Hospital, and certainly one wonders if this is the best use of hospitals, whether this makes logistical sense for people to have to go to those facilities. I believe the Western Surgery Centre provides pediatric dental care on contract, and I am wondering if there is not an opportunity here, or if there is already negotiation going on to look at providing that service in the city.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, there is a long history, as the member isolates, with respect to the pediatric surgery. Several years ago, just prior to the last election, the other government entered into a contractual relationship with Western Surgery to try to ease back the wait list with respect to children's dental surgery. Those efforts are continuing, as well as, as I indicated earlier, the WRHA Child Health Program is meeting with the other RHAs to consider other options with respect to dental surgery outside of Winnipeg, insofar as, as I understand it, the majority of patients come from outside of Winnipeg that require this surgery. One would suggest there would be some validity in having surgery in locations other than in Winnipeg in regard to this kind of surgery.

\* (16:50)

There is a larger issue though here with respect to children's surgery. We have all been lobbied for several years, Mr. Chair. I was lobbied in opposition, I have been lobbied as minister by particular pediatric surgeons with



respect to the need for surgery. There is a larger policy question here with respect to prevention. A lot of this particular type of surgery is very, very preventable with respect to the kind of damage that is done to the mouth and to the teeth. We were also undertaking some efforts in this regard to provide for broader education with respect to preventing this type of service.

In short, we are negotiating for sites other than Winnipeg. We are expanding the capacity this year. We are also looking at education with respect to this particular issue. I do not want to get in a position in the Estimates process of arguing with particular surgeons, some of whom I have talked with, some of whom I have not talked with, with respect to their particular view of this situation. Mr. Chair, I trust the Child Health Program, the experts at the WRHA, to be able to resolve these issues medically and in the most appropriate fashion as it relates to the needs of the children.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I certainly support what the minister says in terms of prevention. Certainly in many instances, Mr. Chair, a lot of this is probably preventable. Nonetheless, there are probably, if one looks at some of the numbers presented, anyway to me, there might be 1200 children who are already past the point of prevention. I am wondering what can be done with these children. If there was a contracting out of about, what might it have been, 400 cases a year, is there going to be an enlarging of that to try to get those numbers down fairly quickly? Certainly some of the pictures I have had an opportunity to see in regard to what some of these cases look like, hearing about a child's inability to eat, sleep, learn at school, certainly does make the issue much more of an urgent one.

Mr. Chairperson, it has also been indicated to me that other provinces have established a surgery centre approach to providing general anesthesia services to accomplish well-child dental care, and I wondered if this is an approach we are going to be looking at in Manitoba. Is there not an opportunity to address this issue in the city? I am not sure if Children's Hospital does some of the surgeries, or if they are just done at the Western Surgery Centre by contract.

Is there going to be a commitment to look at trying to address the issue for these 1200 children right now, knowing we do have the preventative piece that does have to be addressed too?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I do not want to get into debate of the numbers. I think the numbers were 1500 when the member was in office, with respect to that, which is one of the reasons I supported and continue to support the additional surgeries that we are providing to these particular children.

I think what has been found, and this is not meant as a blanket statement, but I think—I am going from memory—that in fact the increase of surgeries has not significantly reduced the volume of surgeries, did not significantly reduce the wait list. There was some concern with respect to how that occurred. I am simply going from memory on that.

I am indicating there are going to be more procedures done this year, that we are examining other options with respect to locale for surgeries, and we are undertaking to try to enhance the preventative aspect of it, considering I understand and recognize that those who are on a waiting list have to be dealt with with respect to the waiting list, but part of the issue would be in the long term to try to reduce the waiting list in terms of prevention in the long term.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Just a couple more questions on this, and then I will be passing on to Doctor Gerrard to ask questions. Is the minister prepared to indicate how much that increase is going to be in terms of how many more children or how many more dollars he is looking at putting into this, or knowing that the Budget is already out is it already included in the Budget?

**Mr. Chomiak:** It is part of the included budget already in the WRHA. I know the member has probably received copies of particular correspondence from particular surgeons with respect to this particular matter. We are trying to address this issue to the best of our ability.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Can the minister indicate whether or not, and part of this is me being unsure about exactly what is covered by insured dollars, but if the actual treatment service provided is a non-insured benefit, does the Government then have the right to limit where

this service is provided, or can these pediatric dentists go out and do this wherever they want to?

\* (17:00)

**Mr. Chomiak:** The question is: Can the surgeons who are providing this service do it in any site which they choose to do it and then bill us presumably for the insured service and/or for the non-insured service vis-a-vis its specific coverage? I am just going to double-check that. I will confirm that answer later on during the course of these Estimates today if possible.

**Mrs. Driedger:** I thank the minister for that undertaking.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Let me begin with a question which will extend some of the discussion in Question Period today. The minister referred to the fact that there was an increase in colon-rectal cancer in the area of East St. Paul. I just wonder if the minister has additional information about the extent of this and the geographic location.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I think what I was alluding to during the course of the Question Period was that I had asked for a preliminary analysis of the data that was provided in the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation information that had been provided as a result of the 1996 data from CancerCare Manitoba reflecting what would appear to be increased cancer rates in that particular region of the city. The two highest rates appeared to be in that region of the city as well as River Heights.

Having said that, in the preliminary data that was given to me, if memory serves me correctly, and I have asked for confirmation of this, which I will provide to the member when I do confirm it, perhaps later today or tomorrow, that the increased rates that were assigned to that particular region of the city appear to be an increase in colon and rectal cancers. That appeared to be the preliminary analysis that was given to me from a preliminary viewpoint. I have asked for that to be confirmed.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Has there been any additional information as to whether the individuals who

developed cancer were closer or farther from the power line?

**Mr. Chomiak:** No.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The colon-rectal cancer can have a number of causes or reasons from what we know from epidemiological studies. One would be that there is a hereditary tendency. So the question could be: Is this increase the result of a number of cancers in a small number of families, for example?

**Mr. Chomiak:** That is correct as an observation.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Are you saying that there are some data from East St. Paul?

**Mr. Chomiak:** No, I am saying that fundamentally the statement that I made in the House and the member subsequently made in the hallway with respect to the data that was presented in the Legislature last week insofar as that there are a variety of interpretations and additional analysis that is necessary before one draws any conclusions is something that I have asked the department, the WRHA specifically and CancerCare Manitoba to try to resolve as quickly as possible in order to put some additional information to allow us to make some additional determination with regard to that data so that we can better inform both members of the Legislature and the public with respect to what the conclusions of that study were.

**Mr. Gerrard:** If one looks at the epidemiology of colon cancer, the reasons for this, it seems to be associated with the oral ingestion of carcinogens in one factor or another, for example, well-barbecued meat. Where you have an increase in certain polyaromatic hydrocarbons you can get an association with colon cancer. One can also have increased colon cancer associated with smoking. The question of oral ingestion of carcinogens raises the issue of whether there may have been or could have been contamination of well water in the area by chemicals which would be carcinogenic from the result of local dumps or leaks into the area. What has the result been of testing of wells?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I think it probably would be best if I were to take a look at the preliminary data

information and get back to the member with respect to the conclusions reached with regard to this particular issue.

When I was advised by officials late last week, there was reference. Two points. One that it looked like in a preliminary sense that it was an increase in colon-rectal cancer, and also that there had been during the '90s some suggestion of some contamination during that period of time. When I asked for that to be confirmed, that was verbally confirmed to me today, and I asked for that to be confirmed in writing, just the specifics on that. As soon as that is done I will provide the member with that.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The question of contamination, are these chemical spills, or is this groundwater contamination or well contamination? What sort of contamination are we talking about?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I will defer that to when I get back to the member with specifics.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I think that clearly we would all like to have this resolved as soon as possible so that people can know as best as possible what is happening in the area.

There was reference to a chemical spill in April, which was confirmed by the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell). Is it likely that a recent chemical spill would be related in any way to the occurrence of cancer, certainly since it was some years ago? One would expect, given the time lag to develop cancers, if there had been a chemical spill or chemical contamination that in fact for the period '93 to '95 one might have to go back into the '80s or even the '70s. Have questions been asked of spills or contamination going back into the '70s or '80s?

**Mr. Chomiak:** We have asked CancerCare Manitoba specifically to review the statistics and the patterns, and we are awaiting their preliminary observations, including WRHA.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Because you have responsibility as the Minister of Health for water testing, if there was chemical contamination, one would have thought that would have shown up in the water testing done over the last 20 or 30 years in

the area. Have there been any abnormal results in water testing for the area?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I cannot confirm that.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Let me move on to the Thomas report which was released last week. The Thomas report looks, among other things, at the issue of report cards or evaluations of health care professionals or institutions. I just ask what is your view on the report cards and what are your intentions in terms of this area as it is dealt with in the Thomas report?

**Mr. Chomiak:** There are a variety of issues concerning the Thomas recommendations and the issue of report cards and follow-up as it relates to both professionals and particular institutions. With regard to professionals, the Sinclair made reference to some kind of performance evaluations of physicians in five categories that were isolated by the Thomas commission. There has also been representation made by various groups, physician profiles, with requisite information being provided.

\* (17:10)

The Thomas commission outlined some of the pros and cons with respect to the performance indicators and indicated that the College of Physicians and Surgeons had begun a process of compiling some of that information and recommended that some information be provided to the public. As I recall, Mr. Chair, the recommendations were that the College of Physicians and Surgeons and Manitoba Health were to get together in order to determine how best to put together the issue of type of profile. I have indicated what we intend to do is to implement as quickly as possible the recommendations of the Thomas commission.

Now the issue of performance indicators as it relates to physician profiles is really a complex one, and as pointed out in the Thomas commission is not as simple as actually indicating that one is going to move ahead and do that. There are cost implications, there are IT implications, there are professional implications, there are implications vis-à-vis other jurisdictions that bear scrutiny.

In practice and in theory, what we intend to do is to just as quickly as possible move to some form of performance indicator. As a practical fact, we will have to rule out in a meaningful way those aspects that are doable and at the same time do not cause more negative results than might occur from being the pioneer in this country in moving forward in that regard.

**Mr. Gerrard:** You have indicated on the one hand your intention to move as quickly as possible to implement some form of performance indicators. Clearly there is a wide spectrum, as you have referred to.

I just wonder whether you would comment further on what areas might be looked at early as opposed to later on in this respect.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Going from memory, I believe that issues like education, basic background information which is relatively, Mr. Chair, would be to move forward, together with the college and the profession, to implement these recommendations so that we can provide the public with appropriate information, while at the same time not going so far ahead as to make it more difficult for the Province to deal with some of the issues that we have to deal with vis-à-vis physicians.

**Mr. Gerrard:** In other words, as I hear you, the intention is to look at the five areas that were discussed in the Thomas report as the first areas to be looked at and to look at moving on those in a way that is both expeditious and practical.

**Mr. Chomiak:** In fact that is the way I would put it, and I agree with the member's conclusion.

**Mr. Gerrard:** There has been considerable discussion over the last several weeks of your moving on what you refer to as a made-in-Manitoba model. This is, I think, your description of your efforts in the area, in particular, of the Pan Am clinic.

I just wonder if you would expand a little bit on what you see as the sort of forward-thinking characteristics of this model.

**Mr. Chomiak:** The present system of providing for health care provides for generally exclusive utilization of publicly funded and publicly financed hospitals generally that provide care and in Manitoba, because of difficulties that occurred several years ago, Manitoba also

provides publicly funded care in contracted private facilities exclusively in the form of day surgeries.

In other jurisdictions, and in Manitoba, there has been some pressure, but less pressure than in other jurisdictions. There has been a move, Mr. Chairperson, towards private for-profit clinics opening up in a variety of areas, high-throughput areas, high-profit areas, by particular surgeons that would provide care in addition to or outside of the health care system. Under the Canada Health Act, if an insured service is provided, they cannot provide a facility fee, and in the event that they do provide a facility fee we are penalized from the federal government with respect to that facility fee.

In Alberta the Legislature moved to effectively take those private facilities and designate them as hospitals and to provide insured services in them as designated hospitals.

In Ontario the Premier has talked about simply having the private system co-exist with the public system. In fact, there are instances, for example, of Cancer Ontario purchasing an MRI and providing that service.

The advantage that I foresee with respect to this particular model is that it would take an already private system that has been demonstrated since 1979 to be effective and useful, and meld it into the public system. The recent CIHI Report or CIHI Report from several years ago indicated that the future—in fact, we had discussions during the course of these Estimates—of surgery is in day surgery and the growth area of surgery is in day surgery, and we have statistics that confirm that.

Part of the thinking, not necessarily from myself but even from the WRHA and from others, is that hospitals which are more programmed for high-level acute care surgery ought to be doing that, and day surgery can be done in hospitals but providing for day surgeries in day surgery centres would increase volume and better utilize the system.

On many occasions I have had surgeons profess to me the fact that they are quite upset that their particular surgery was not being performed in a hospital for (a) budgetary reasons or (b) because they got bounced because of other

considerations or other needs for surgery. They found it very frustrating. The idea of taking a private clinic and melding it into the public system but operating it along the lines generally of how that clinic is operated and putting the investments back into that clinic, we think could increase the capacity to do day surgeries while maintaining the capacity in the public system to do the surgeries that it should be doing. It allows us to have what is the future, that is surgery centres within the public system as opposed to the other option which is to contract exclusively with surgery centres or to have private clinics simply operate within or outside of the integrity of the Canada health care system.

We know from studies in Manitoba by the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation that when private clinics operated beside public clinics the waiting list actually went up. We know from studies in Alberta that that was also the case. So it suggests that by integrating a private clinic with all of its expertise into the public system, we might be able to have the best of the high throughput through the surgery centres but still have control in the public system and not be in a position where we are contrary to the tenets of the Canada Health Act.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Just from some of your comments, both in Question Period and outside, we all recognize that there are, I think you put it, dozens of clinics in Manitoba which are owned privately, everything from the Winnipeg and the Manitoba clinics, which have been around for a long, long time, to more recent clinics.

My assessment or my read of what you are trying to do is to in essence not at this point look at taking over a lot of clinics but rather at this point to try and be innovative in putting forward this model and then compare it to clinics operating in other ways. Is that correct?

**Mr. Chomiak:** That would be an accurate statement.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Just in that context, what sorts of comparisons do you expect to make between the, as you call it, made-in-Manitoba model, the Pan Am Clinic, and other clinics?

**Mr. Chomiak:** I think we ought to be a little careful in terms how we define Pan Am. I think it would be more appropriate to say that there are surgery centres, Midland, Western, Pan Am and now Maples in Manitoba. I am not so sure that we would necessarily compare them to the Winnipeg Clinic or the Manitoba Clinic, insofar as I do not think either Winnipeg or Manitoba clinics classify themselves specifically as surgery centres. So, Mr. Chair, I want to make that qualification.

**Mr. Gerrard:** What you are suggesting is that in a first pass you would be comparing aspects which relate to the performance of surgeries as opposed to other aspects. Is that correct?

\* (17:20)

**Mr. Chomiak:** I am not sure if I understand the member's question, whether the member's question is in response to my comment previously or whether it is a different factor that he is making reference to. I am not sure that I am clear what the member is asking.

**Mr. Gerrard:** My sense of your earlier response was that your intention was to compare measures at the Pan Am Clinic with the other clinics which were not publicly owned.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, there are, in my view or from my understanding, several surgery centres in Manitoba. There are also clinics that do surgery of different kinds. That to me is comparing apples and oranges.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Well, my assumption was that, in fact, what you were going to compare is aspects related to the performance of surgeries at a Manitoba model, as it were, the publicly owned and operated facility versus other facilities and that in order to make sure that you were not sort of comparing apples and oranges, your comparisons presumably would be focussed on aspects of the functioning of the facilities' operations which related specifically to performance of day surgeries.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, although there are a variety of day surgeries that are performed in various clinics, some are contained and actually viewed as surgery by virtue of the regulations and some which are not necessarily viewed as surgery by virtue of the regulations.

**Mr. Gerrard:** So maybe I can go back. The initial question was you are going to look at comparisons between the made-in-Manitoba model and other models and your intent is that you were to make what comparisons specifically between these models or among them?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, quite clearly one of the aspects of evaluation of this process would be a comparison of cost-effectiveness, outcomes, efficiencies, et cetera, that would occur as a result of this particular move and operation, no pun intended.

**Mr. Gerrard:** We are coming very close to 5:30, so we are nearing the end in a moment, but as I understand it, the goal here is to have a look at quality of care and cost-effectiveness of care in making these comparisons.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, amongst a variety of goals and objectives, that would be some of the intentions.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Okay. You mentioned amongst other goals and objectives. Maybe just before we close today, you can give me a little bit more of your assessment of what may be the other goals and objectives.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Chairperson, amongst other would be a model of a community-based speciality care centre, a model with a different overhead structure, a service model that is perhaps tied to a speciality. We want to see the potential for different cost and delivery models. We want to explore the gains of smaller-oriented models and public acceptance of alternative policy delivery. There are various forms of delivery of service that will be allowed to compare.

The conventional wisdom that we have heard in a variety of instances is that high-tertiary care facilities should have high-level tertiary care, high-acuity types of operations, and as we go down the scale to community hospitals and to surgery centres, they should diminish in intensity while that makes for some theoretical correctness probably, there are disadvantages with doing only tertiary care high acute surgery at tertiary care facilities because it does not allow for a mix, et cetera. So we are not going to

be blind to comparing various models and various forms of delivery, but we are going to look at an alternate form of delivery, an alternate form of approach that is not presently utilized in the system.

**Mr. Gerrard:** I think the time is up this afternoon, so thank you.

**Mr. Chomiak:** I wonder if there might be leave for the committee to rise.

**Mr. Chairperson:** It has been suggested that the committee rise. Is that the will of the committee?  
[Agreed]

Committee rise.

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH

\* (15:00)

**Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski):** Good afternoon. 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 Education, Training and Youth. When the Committee of Supply met to consider this department on May 17, 2001, it was agreed to have a global discussion on resolution 16.1. The floor is now open for questions.

**Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth):** Just briefly, Madam Chairperson, I appreciate the remarks, and I just want to acknowledge we have a couple of new staffers with us today. In addition to Doctor Farthing and Mr. Fortier, we have Ms. Pat Rowantree, the ADM for Training, and my special assistant, Annalea Mitchell, who loves seeing her name in Hansard.

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry):** I have a request that we continue our global discussion throughout the rest of the Administration and Finance and the rest of the discipline, simply because I only have a few specific questions. In the event staffers are not here then we will just say we will put that on advisement and get the answer from the staffers another time. What I want to do is the same as before. There are a

certain number of hours that we can use very efficiently in Estimates, and I have a certain number of questions to ask, so I want to shortcut the process and just to get down to business as it were.

I still have a couple more questions in the area we are in now, Madam Chairperson, but if we can agree to do that I will be very pleased, if there is not the appropriate staffing here, just to say fine.

**Mr. Caldwell:** I am amenable to that right now. I think we have had a lot of discussion around amalgamations, letters, trips and off-road adventures on the way to Brandon and so forth. I guess she quite enjoyed the discussion we have had the last little while, so I am amenable to that.

**Mrs. Smith:** The minister does know that the offer is still open that he can go in my Lumina, and we can go together next time.

I am going to go into some questions regarding the Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba. I was wondering if the minister, I know last year a short-term solution was offered to ensure retired teachers received a COLA in the amount of 2 percent retroactive, I believe, to July 1, 2000. I was wondering if the minister could advise this Committee of Supply what further things—if the retired teachers will receive the COLA on a yearly basis.

I understand, as you know, that the Retired Teachers' Association represents approximately 4000 retired teachers in Manitoba and the RTAM has requested changes to the pension adjustment account. The pension adjustment account is a segregated fund which finances inflation adjustments like COLAs for teachers now retired and for teachers who will retire.

I also know that more teachers are retiring early and because of dragging salaries improvements in the basic plan have not always provided for their impact on PAA. Due to the fact that this Government did offer a short-term solution last year in the amount of 2 percent, I am wondering if there are future plans to provide, you know, the cost of living or the COLA increments to the Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba and the retired teachers.

**Mr. Caldwell:** We have since assuming office, since September 1999, entered into meaningful discussions with retired teachers, with the Manitoba Teachers' Society and indeed within government around the whole issue of pensions, not only for retired teachers but for civil servants as well and the previously unfunded pension liability that had risen to a little over two billion dollars globally.

So there was quite a degree of interest in September '99 when we formed government in the pension accounts in the province of Manitoba and their management. I was very pleased where one Mr. Selinger in his first Budget did reflect those liabilities on the books of the Province of Manitoba and provided for transparency on pension issues. I think that is in the public interest.

The retired teachers, as I said, have been meeting with departmental officials and indeed myself a number of times over the last 18 months or so with regard to a number of issues, COLA being one of them. As the member pointed out, cost-of-living provisions are very important for teachers. I believe the member was a teacher for 22 years herself, yes, so there may be some interest there as well.

**An Honourable Member:** I am not retiring yet.

**Mr. Caldwell:** The member is not retiring yet, but it certainly is an important issue, something that is alive before the department and indeed before me.

In the 2001-2002 Budget, COLA is budgeted for again, as it was the first year, for a 2% increase which represents a figure of \$915,000 for this current year. We are in ongoing discussions with retired teachers, and as I mentioned with the Teachers' Society and indeed the Manitoba Association of School Trustees around a number of pension issues, governance issues of the Teachers' Retirement Fund board, issues pertaining to COLA, issues pertaining to pregnancies and maternity leaves and so forth. Those discussions, I expect, will be ongoing throughout the course of the Government's mandate. It is too early in the day to say how this Government will proceed in the future.

interested in having transparency in regard to teacher pensions, and we are interested in having fairness in terms of retired teacher pensions and indeed with regards to all levels of the operations of the public schools, whether it is capital investment or operating investment or what have you.

So I guess in response to the member's question, discussions are ongoing about future direction. There is nothing on the agenda right now for next year other than to continue on with our discussions with the retired teachers.

\* (15:10)

**Mrs. Smith:** I thank the minister for that information. In 1963, Madam Chair, when the PAA was established, it was considered prudent that it should be allocated earnings on its funds on the basis of what is earned by only the fixed return portion of TRAFB investments. This would be more secure than basing them on the whole TRAFB portfolio.

Now I guess the minister is aware, Madam Chair, the situation has changed in that the overall fund is doing better than the fixed return portion and that this portion is now being valued as its market value. As interest rates change, these market values change, and I am sure the minister is aware of this. Recently, the market values have gone so that the calculated return on these assets is currently negative. TRAFB is still receiving the fixed return, but the value of the investments has fallen.

The Retired Teachers' Association argues that there is no longer any rationale for the original scheme and believes that the PAA should share in the overall gains, rather than suffer for the fixed return losses. Now legislation could be changed to reflect this economic change. Another possibility is to use some of the present and future actuarial surpluses to bolster the PAA. As you know, the PAA is the pension adjustment account. Under current legislation, TRAFB, the teachers' retirement association, cannot make such transfers. I guess the minister knows the easiest way to fix this is an amendment to The Teachers' Pensions Act, to change the way money is allocated to the pension adjustment account. This is a short-term

solution however. Currently any changes to the teachers' pension plan must be passed by an act of the Legislature.

In 1968, the TRAFB board asked the provincial government to restructure the governance of the teachers' pension plan to create an equal partnership between teachers and the Government of Manitoba. The Society unanimously endorsed the TRAFB board proposal.

The proposed governance structure will allow the partners to make changes when it is in the best interests of the plan. This is a long-term solution that will permit the partners to resolve issues that arise concerning the teachers' pension plan. The Government's liability for teachers' pensions is currently \$1.7 billion. All money in TRAFB is teachers' money, and teachers' money pays the full administration costs of TRAFB.

Madam Chair, could the minister please give the Committee of Supply this information as to whether or not the present government will restructure the governance of the teachers' pension plan to create this equal partnership?

**Mr. Caldwell:** That very question is one of the issues under active discussion at present. This is an issue that we again confronted when we came into government in September of '99, and I suppose my first meeting in this regard, after being appointed minister on October 4, was probably meetings in October, in the very first month. It may have been November, I am not certain, but I have had a number of meetings with retired teachers as well as representatives of the retired teachers' organization, Mr. Murray Smith, Ms. Peggy Prendergast, and others.

The issue of governance is an important issue. It is one that had lain without redress for quite a number of decades, I daresay, Madam Chairperson. It is one that this Government is actively working towards resolving, in concert with our educational partners. I am hopeful there will be a resolution to this particular matter in due course. I am hopeful, having been here in the Legislative Building for the last 18 months or so, I am conscious that oftentimes things take a while to materialize, but we have been moving as a government very aggressively and very quickly on a wide range of educational issues



that we felt have been in need of some redress for some time.

The teachers' pension task force is the forum that has been set up to review and discuss changes to the teachers pensions plan. The teachers pension task force includes representatives from the Manitoba Teachers' Society, retired teachers and government officials from Manitoba Education and Training, the Labour Relations Division, as well as Treasury Board Secretariat. So it is a fairly comprehensive body involving all parties interested.

The parties have reached agreement on a number of changes which have been recommended to the Government. Those have been incorporated in the amendment to The Teachers' Pension Act currently before the Legislature, which we will be voting on sometime during this session, so I expect that is a live issue, Madam Chairperson. I note that the Member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith) is concerned about this issue, as am I, as are all retired teachers. So I look forward to some resolution in due course.

I am very pleased, in terms of 18 months, at how quickly we have responded to issues around COLA issues, around maternity benefits, issues around a number of items on the provisions before us and also on provisions during the last session. So we are actively addressing this file. The governance issue is one that is on the front burner during these discussions right now.

**Mrs. Smith:** Madam Chair, I want to put it on record that the reason why I brought this forward is a lot of retired teachers have requested that I do that during Estimates. I am not personally in the teaching profession right now. I know there is a great segment of the teaching population across Manitoba who are in the classrooms right now, and who are scheduled to retire within the next five years. I believe there are about 4000 right now estimated to actually be retired at this point in time.

Now, just to put on record, on July 21, 1999, the Premier, Gary Doer, advised that—this is what Gary Doer said when he was in opposition—he put on the record, and I quote: Our caucus agrees with the proposal put forward

by the board of TRAFB to seek a new governance structure. We agree that a comprehensive review of The Teachers' Pension Act is needed. That was done, as you know, right before the previous election.

Now, it is my understanding, and please correct me if I am wrong, but the current NDP position first May 15, 2001, the president of the Retired Teachers' Association said the perceived preference of the present government seems to be to make the payment of adjustments similar to those in the superannuation pension for civil servants, for example, limited to two-thirds of the change in the consumer price index.

Madam Chair, I would like the minister to clarify if indeed it is the goal, if the present government prefers to make the payment of adjustment similar to civil servants in that it is two-thirds of the change in the CPI.

**Mr. Caldwell:** Madam Chairperson, I concur with the Premier's (Mr. Doer) remarks of July 1999, which he did make, as the member noted, when he was Leader of the Opposition, before he was Premier. Certainly the legislation that has been introduced in this particular session as well as previously refers to the positive activity and constructive activity that this Government is undertaking with regard to The Teachers' Pension Act and pension provisions for teachers.

\* (15:20)

The discussions around the broader provisions of COLA, the broader provisions of governance and various other issues that come to the table during our discussions with MTS and with the Retired Teachers' Association, as well as the Treasury Board Secretariat and departmental staff, revolve around fairness and equity issues for retired teachers. It really would be premature to have any conclusions on the future at this time because those discussions are still ongoing. Suffice to say that this Government is making real progress in terms of teacher pensions and in fairness of teacher pension provisions, and is committed to working with teachers and retired teachers as well as within government resources to be responsible in the provision of pensions to retired teachers.

In terms of the holistic question about the future, discussions are ongoing around these

issues so it is premature. I do not have, frankly, any view that I feel strongly about, other than the view that we want to respect and respond to the best advice given to us by the partners in the pension task force.

**Mrs. Smith:** I thank the minister for that response. On May 17, 2001, the present minister, Drew Caldwell, stated: In terms of meeting our commitments, we have teacher pension legislation pending around the idea of cost of living, COLA, around the provisions for providing meaningful pension amendments on a wide variety of issues. That legislation will be proceeding in due course.

Now on May 23, roughly 6 days later, the present minister introduced Bill 18, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act. Now the pertinent changes that seem to be in that amendment act is, No. 1, it gives the TRAF board the authority to invest funds on behalf of the Government and to administer other pension plans; and two, it provides for a one-time transfer of \$15,561,000 from Account A. That is the account to which teacher contributions are credited and from which pensions are paid to the pension adjustment account, the account used to fund the cost-of-living adjustment.

Now perhaps the minister, Madam Chair, could clarify any other parts of Bill 18 that he feels should be emphasized or stressed because when we were talking about due course the present government has been in power 18 months, and it is my understanding that the present Premier, Gary Doer, advised that a new governance structure would be of paramount importance.

So, if the minister could comment on this, is there going to be another bill introduced that augments Bill 18? Are there going to be regulations put in? What is going to happen to meet the commitment that the present Premier had in terms of seeking a new governance structure for TRAF?

**Madam Chairperson:** Just a point of order, I just would caution the member to use the titles and not the names of ministers. I realize that it is accidental.

**Mr. Caldwell:** We do have a personal level of informality because we are going to be sharing car pools to Brandon in the future, but I appreciate the remarks because we do have protocol to respect in this regard.

I guess broadly, again, it comes back to a previous answer earlier in this particular session of Estimates that we are working with the pension task force to determine a variety of issues that are of importance to retired teachers and indeed pension funds in the province of Manitoba, specifically for teachers in this regard, although the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has a broader interest. In fact, the Government has a broader interest in civil servants' pensions, as well anything that requires legislative authority and/or public resources. So the provisions that are before the Legislature right now with the amendments to The Teachers' Pensions Act for the 2001 spring/summer session at the Manitoba Legislature are ones that have achieved consensus and agreement in the task force, that is, with retired teachers, with members of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Department of Education, Labour and Treasury Board Secretariat. When consensus is achieved in the work of the task force in the months, weeks, years ahead, throughout the course of the mandate of this Government, I expect that there will be, similar to that which is occurring right now, changes proposed to the act that would reflect the consensus reached by those party to the teacher pension discussions.

The member also asked to outline some of the key changes to The Teachers' Pensions Act which are incorporated into the bill before the Legislature right now. They are very balanced changes, and they are very responsible and respectful changes, both to retired teachers and to the public interest, which I think is what we always try to achieve in this Legislature, is a balance of fairness in all of our dealings within whichever portfolio the ministers may be responsible for. I can outline for the member some of the key changes, which will be discussed during committee, of the bills as it moves through the Legislature, but I do not mind providing them because this is a matter of public record since the bill has been introduced.

The main changes to the act incorporate provisions which would enable teachers to purchase, at full actuarial costs, periods of parental leave, periods of past service with the Manitoba Faculty of Education, for example, the Brandon University, the University of Winnipeg, the University of Manitoba, if there is to be a year of being a lecturer or professor and so forth, periods of past service under the minister responsible for education or advanced education, if a teacher was working within the department for a specific period of time, in periods of past service as a school clinician. As the member will know, having a family of her own, parental leave at full actuarial cost is something, particularly, for female teachers which is very important, as well, the issues of fairness for those teachers who choose to serve or are asked to serve under a minister or within a faculty of education for purposes of education in the province of Manitoba, and, again, for school clinicians. These provisions, as I said, will enable teachers to purchase, at full actuarial costs, the benefits that they would otherwise have lost through pregnancy or what have you.

The second key change is a provision which clarifies the periods of part- and full-time employment which can be combined to determine whether a teacher has sufficient service to qualify to receive a pension. Another key provision is a provision which states that teachers who retire before turning 65 will be treated as not having retired if within 30 days after retiring they become re-employed as teachers, a provision which, as the member stated, gives the Teachers' Retirement Allowance board authority to invest funds on behalf of a government, a further provision which limits the period during which a retired teacher under the age of 65 can teach while receiving a pension to 120 days in a particular school year, a provision which gives the teachers retirement allowance fund board authority to administer a pension or other benefit plan for employees of another employer and a provision which the member has also outlined in her question, a provision which authorizes a one-time transfer of \$15,621,000 from Account A to a pension adjustment account.

Those are the key changes to the pension act that reflect the public interest and reflect fairness

to teachers and their service to education in the province of Manitoba. As I said, we will be discussing those issues more during committee when the act goes before public hearings.

**Mrs. Smith:** Could the minister, Madam Chair, be a little bit more precise in terms of time lines, because I know, you know, depending on when the next election is called, is that going to be something that is done right before an election or is it something that the Teachers' Retirement Association can look forward to perhaps in 12 months, perhaps in a timely fashion? I know it is hard to get a grip on.

These things do take time and the discussion and the partners involved, you know, do have to be consulted, but I know there are many teachers. I know I was speaking with a teacher over the weekend from the school division where I previously taught, and their reply was, you know, retirement has been very hard because they did not have the resources that they thought they would have, and I was just wondering if the minister feels that this could be done within a 12-month period or even a shorter period to ensure the retired teachers now have a sustainable income at their disposal, because I know a lot of retired teachers are suffering.

\* (15:30)

**Mr. Caldwell:** Madam Chairman, I do appreciate the member's remarks, and I do have a lot of empathy with retired teachers who have given so much of their lives to this province and to the prosperity that this province currently is experiencing. The changes to this act, the amendments before the Legislature this session give me hope for optimism that future matters will also move this expeditiously. These are major changes to the pension act which have been undertaken since this Government has come to office. It is certainly not the end of the road. It is a very ambitious beginning, and there has been a lot of frustration over the years around pensions for teachers, in fact, around issues educational generally. But we are, in the Department of Education, Training and Youth, responding very, very quickly indeed to the concerns raised by teachers and retired teachers in this regard, and we have a very, very capable and thoughtful group in the teacher pension task

force, which is currently, as I said, advising me on matters to do with teacher pensions in Manitoba.

I should say that, and give some further details about how Manitoba compares with other jurisdictions, the Manitoba teachers' plan compares favourably with other plans across Canada in many, many respects. For example, in Manitoba, teachers can retire with full pension as early as age 55 or with 25 years of service or with a reduced pension as early as age 55 with 10 years of service. The average age of a retiring teacher in Manitoba is approximately 57 years old and the member may be interested to know that approximately 50 percent of retiring teachers are aged 55. The current contribution rate for Manitoba teachers is 5.7 percent of salary up to \$38,300 per year and 7.3 percent of salary over \$38,000 per year, and to give the member an understanding of how that compares with other jurisdictions, in the rest of Canada teacher pension contribution rates range from a low of 5.5 percent to a high of 12.06 percent. So we are at the low end of the contribution rates, I suppose.

The changes that we foresee in the future involve the continuation of meetings of the task force, with retired teachers and the Manitoba Teachers' Society to discuss changes in the pension plan, and as I mentioned earlier, a central part of this ongoing discussion—and it is an issue for the members interested in this line of questioning—is the issue of governance. The parties are currently examining alternative forms of governance for the teachers' pension plan, as I said, as well as a number of different issues.

Last spring, in the spring of 2000, this Government announced a plan to begin to pay down the unfunded liability of the teachers' pension plan, and any future changes to the plan will have to be considered in the context of that repayment of the unfunded liability. Again, Madam Chair, this is something that is very central to the public interest and very central in fact to the integrity of the pension plan, that it be funded as it has not been funded for the last number of decades.

**Mrs. Smith:** I thank the minister again for the answer. We talked about, you know, ensuring the certain patterns that I see in Estimates,

having global questions rather than going tediously through line by line when you actually know the answers. There is a pattern that I would like to ask about in the Estimates, in most disciplines within the Estimates manual here, a pattern that I am seeing for instance in administration and finance, amalgamated human resources, same pattern in management, information services, same pattern in research and planning.

So maybe there is one answer to what is happening there, and I will address that question shortly. I just want to put it on record that I had given the minister and his staff a paper requesting a list of all departmental, political staff and all the rest of it, and I understand we will have that in this Chamber by tomorrow. We had talked last day, just as a reminder, by Tuesday. Can I get an answer back on that because that will eliminate some of my questions?

**Mr. Caldwell:** I was in the constituency on the weekend, leaving here after the Estimates completed last week. It is my understanding now that the three of us who thought we could get this material to the member quickly, i.e., tomorrow, it is going to take some time to compile the departmental list with names, positions, FTEs, whether they are full-time or part-time, salaries and so forth that was in the member's question. I understand that some of my colleagues have also been asked for similar information.

We are striving to get the material as fast as we can within the parameters of what is appropriate under privacy legislation and so forth, although that is not an impediment, but it is being respectful to individuals and the information that may be released in a form such as this on those individuals. But it is going to take some time to come up with the material provided for.

I just have it in front of me here. There is a list of all departmental and political staff including name, position and the full-time equivalent, whether they are full time; a specific list of all staff for the minister's and deputy minister's offices; the number of staff currently employed in the department and the number of

staff employed by the department for each year from 1998 through 2001; the names of staff that have been hired since 1999, including whether they were hired through competition or appointment; a description of any position that has been reclassified; a listing of all vacant positions; the ascertainment to find out whether all staff years are filled; details of how many and what type of contracts are being awarded directly and why this is happening, and how many contracts are going to tender; how many positions have been relocated since taking office, i.e., the relocation from rural or northern Manitoba into Winnipeg or relocated around the province and why; salaries and so forth.

I have a note on the side that this is a request for all departments inclusive of Administration and Finance, all departments of Education, Training and Youth, K to Senior 4, and I guess we were a little bit overly ambitious, the three of us, Doctor Farthing, Mr. Fortier and myself, on Thursday when I said that we could provide this material by early this week. It is indeed going to take some time. When we submitted the request into the department, I think there was a gasping of, oh, my goodness, there is a lot here to get.

As the member knows, there are nearly a thousand employees in the department, literally dozens of classifications in a number of different areas and many, many, many contracts in a \$1.4-billion business, which is education and training and youth and, I suppose, advanced education as well, the group of them. So it is going to take somewhat longer than the two work days I initially anticipated. I am sorry about that.

\* (15:40)

**Mrs. Smith:** No, I can understand that, and this is all public information, so it should be available. I can understand the minister saying this, but could the minister give me a time line. Some time could mean three years, two years, one year. Could we have this within a designated time so I can look forward to the list?

**Mr. Caldwell:** I see some of the people at the back of the hall saying some time next century, but I do not think that is going to fly. I do not know how long it will take, quite frankly. I know that one of my colleagues suggested a couple of

months, in his estimates, to get the material that was asked for in terms of the number of contracts. The member will know that all this information, as she rightly acknowledges, is publicly available. Not all of it, of course, salary levels for individuals are protected by legislation, except for those who are over the \$50,000 range, which is public record.

So there are a number of issues around privacy of individuals and accessibility for specifics of it, but there are a lot of areas to do with contracts, to do with individual employees of the Province of Manitoba in terms of their positions, their salaries, their names, I suppose, the contracts, position vacancies, relocations. Around the province there are a great, great many details that have to be satisfied to fulfil the request made by the member, and we will, as a department, as I have indicated here last time we met and again today, endeavour to provide the information to the member in a timely fashion, but I do know that one of my colleagues, at least, has suggested a couple of months. I am hopeful that we can do better than that. It will take a while, as I said. On Thursday, I thought that we could have access to this. The three of us around the table here thought that we could access this in a fashion that was more expeditious, but, as I said, when we put it into the department, there was a veritable gasp of, oh, my gosh, this is going to take a while. There is an awful lot here.

I should add that untendered contracts over \$1000 are already reported and made public through the Department of Finance, and that information is available under The Financial Administration Act. So the member could perhaps, for that part of this question, go there if she wants, or, again, we could also provide it, but they are available. A great many of these other issues which I thought would be quite quick—and I suppose generating a computer list of names and positions and salary ranges could be done relatively quickly. There are a great many more points that were made or asked for during that question, and, as I said, the three of us were widely optimistic in terms of our estimated time lines.

**Mrs. Smith:** As the minister will probably know, I worked in Manitoba Education and Training, and I knew everybody that was in my

area and probably the areas beside me. It did not take too long to figure everything out. I am very concerned that this information cannot be had before a two-month period, but if that is the case under the minister's administration, then that is something I would have to accept. I would expect then by July 30 that all this information would be on my desk. Can I have the assurance that this will be there at that time?

**Mr. Caldwell:** I can give the assurance to the member that we will try our best to get the material that she has requested within the provisions of what is within our authority.

**Mrs. Smith:** All of this should be within your authority. We have checked and double checked before this question was presented. So I would suggest that by July 30, if indeed it takes that long, that this information be on my desk. These are very important questions that have come up to our opposition side on several occasions. Also, there has been a concern that the present minister has let Manitoba Education, Training and Youth people know that if Opposition called not to give them any information, and me in particular. Now, I do not know whether that is true or not, but, by the same token, we do have part of this information already. These are questions that we would like thorough knowledge of because they are public information. We are not asking for anything that should not be public information. Manitoba Education, Training and Youth and the present minister are responsible to the taxpayers here in Manitoba.

Now, I will be very lenient in terms of saying if this cannot be done under the minister's watch in less than two months then I will take that under advisement and not ask for it before that. But we are now at the end of May, so the minister and his staff have June and July to put it together. I am requesting that by two months, which in my view is ample time, the end of July it could be and should be on my desk. I would like the minister's commitment, anything that is public information now. If there has been a mistake made and there is private information I would not ask for that. I am not asking at this Committee of Supply for people's wages, exactly what they are getting today. I am asking for the salary range, yes. I want to be fair and equitable

on that matter, but I do want this complete information.

**Mr. Caldwell:** I do appreciate that, and, as I said, I think that the optimism displayed by us on Thursday was in fact where the conundrum is here, because we did expect that this material could be accessed a little bit more quickly. I have been advised in a pretty forceful way by a number of people that there is a lot here, and it will require some time. As I said, the two-month figure is one of my colleagues who had a similar request in his department. His staff gave him a two-month period and indeed that is what we will try our best to do.

**Mrs. Smith:** I thank the minister for that. Two months it is. So July 30 if we can have that package and I could read it, I would be very happy. I thank you for that. I also know what it is like. I appreciate the enthusiasm at trying to get me the information that is needed. I also realize that when Manitoba Education, Training and Youth people say that more time is needed I, with great respect, take that advice. So I am certainly not going to press it until July 30. So I thank the minister for that commitment.

Now, I was talking about a thread that has been going through Manitoba Education, Training and Youth which is puzzling to me, and it is a thread, so there might be one answer rather than going tediously through every single line. I will give an example now. If you look at the Estimates book there are several very like Estimates that just need some explaining. It is the same in a number of programs or in a number of disciplines. So probably it has the same answer.

Looking at Administration and Finance on page 38, Madam Chairperson, if you look under the Professional/Technical and Administrative Support, you have 342.7, and you have 298.2. Instead of going into the complete question, maybe the minister just could explain why there is such a jump in dollars when there does not seem to be an increase in people. There must be an explanation for this because it happens in several disciplines.

\* (15:50)

There is no increase in full-time equivalents. There is no change in full-time equivalents, so I just wondered why the jump in dollars. Have the people been reclassified? Are there contract people? Madam Chairperson, there must be some explanation, because it has happened in a number of disciplines.

**Mr. Caldwell:** I do have an answer for that. We just had a little bit of a consult over here with Mr. Fortier, Doctor Farthing. There are a number of factors in that. There are the general salary increases, per the collective agreement, which is responsible for approximately \$15,000 of that increase. There are other salary adjustments due to realignment of salaries to actual levels.

There have been some movements within the department, so someone, for example, would be leaving at a lower classification and a new individual moving into the area from another area of the department that has a higher salary level. That is responsible for the bulk of that. There is also merit increments and reclassifications, employee benefit adjustments, as well. So those are the four factors in that. It may be the case in the other ones, too. We have had quite a bit of movement within the department. So it mostly reflects salary adjustments due to realignment of salaries with people moving out of the lower salary and individuals moving in at a higher classification.

**Mrs. Smith:** Yes, that sounds reasonable. So basically because of the movement.

**An Honourable Member:** Within the department.

**Mrs. Smith:** Yes. If I had the answers to a lot of these questions, probably I would not have asked this particular question. I notice it is a thread. If the minister were to look under, on page 44, under Research and Planning, the same thing has happened there. My understanding is people like new staff, like Heather Hunter, have come into Research and Planning. So the salary level might be different. We have the same full-time equivalent staff, but you see it goes from 285.5 to 322.4, so 36,900, that is a big jump. I would assume the same kind of thing has happened there.

**Mr. Caldwell:** It is the same reason. There have been some movements. I will refer the member to the Managerial line just above, which is the opposite. In 2000-2001, the budget was 92.5. For the Managerial this year, it is 77.5, so it went downwards in that regard.

So it is movement within the department in that regard as well. We will get to the next one; it might be the same thing.

**Mrs. Smith:** Madam Chair, perhaps the minister begins to realize why I wanted to ask global questions, because basically it is the same reason and it does short-cut the process very clearly.

Now, I know you do not have staff here in the other disciplines. If I were to go to Assessment and Evaluation and places like that, would that be appropriate? The same thing happened there. If the minister would look on page 54, under Assessment and Evaluation, the full-time equivalents were 23. *[interjection]* Yes. So the same thing, I would assume, has occurred.

**Mr. Caldwell:** In that particular case, there are 23 people and the bulk of that \$35,000 in terms of those 23 people has to do with merit increases and normal collective bargaining increments and so forth. The staff complement in that shop is large enough that that would be a normal reflection.

The bulk of that does reflect merit increases and increments that are due through normal contractual relations and general salary incremental increases.

**Mrs. Smith:** So, basically, what we are seeing is the same thing happening in all School Programs, in Evaluation, so that the same question would apply to these other disciplines as well. Maybe the minister has further comment.

**Mr. Caldwell:** Just that a general trend that is reflected through all branches, I suppose, and all staff years, all individuals, is the general salary increases and merit increases that have to do with the normal year-to-year movement of one through his or her career.

**Mrs. Smith:** Madam Chair, basically in all the disciplines, in Assessment and Evaluation and School Programs and in program implementation, several people have advised the Committee of Supply that regional managers and people who in-service teachers have been reduced.

I want to know from the minister if that is the case, generally speaking, across the programs in Manitoba Education, Training and Youth.

**Mr. Caldwell:** Madam Chair, the effects of that were felt last year when we reduced the general budget by approximately 25 percent in Doctor Farthing's branch and staff complement by about 15 percent, so that the main impacts of that were felt last year. This year, that is not a case that would be reflective in this year's Estimates.

What we see this year as a result of last year is again—just a second. There has been a refocussing of some attention of individuals from where they previously resided within the department to other areas in the branch. That is where you see people shifting within different branches, someone leaving at a lower salary level and a new person coming in to target that area at a higher salary level, but movement within the department. Correspondingly in other areas you would see where that lower salary position went into the line.

\* (16:00)

**Mrs. Smith:** I thank the minister for that answer. If there are any further questions on that I can bring them up in Concurrence. I am looking forward to getting this listing, because it will give me a better picture of how the movement in Manitoba Education and Training has occurred. It will clarify a lot of the Estimates evaluations of the department.

I would like to ask some questions now about on-line learning for students. These are general questions that will go across the board. Madam Chair, if there is more staff needed we can continue that tomorrow as well.

**Mr. Caldwell:** I think we better. I want to get Sam Steindel here.

**Mrs. Smith:** Madam Chair, would it be possible to give Sam a call and see if he could join us, because I know he is a very industrious person and very knowledgeable in distance education? So we can go on to other things.

**Mr. Caldwell:** I have just asked Doctor Farthing to try and get the staff here maybe for half past four or so forth if it is possible. If not, we can pick it up tomorrow, but it is four o'clock now, so we may be able to get him here.

**Mrs. Smith:** From the minister's office, this is something that I know the minister will be able to answer in terms under his management for the testing that is being done in the province now, and I know often in Question Period this is a global kind of question that will go under the minister's jurisdiction. They are not going to be in-depth questions about testing and evaluation, because I think I can see under assessment what is being done and again. It is that travelling or interchange between programs.

Would the minister clarify for the Committee of Supply how the Grade 3 assessment is going to unfold this year? I understand teachers across the province are telling me it is going to be modified and that there is going to be a new approach, perhaps some of the work the teachers have taken away. So, if the minister could just give me an overview of how he feels the Grade 3 diagnostic assessment will unfold this year and in what curriculum disciplines, I would very much appreciate it. *[interjection]*

Madam Chair, just to inform the minister, perhaps we could have the staff from tomorrow here. Just to let you know, I am going to be asking a few questions. As I say, we had agreed on a global analysis of Estimates. I just have some questions for tomorrow in Administration and Finance, some in Assessment and Evaluation, some in Program Development, some in International Education, some in Community Learning and Youth Programs, some in the Native Directorate, some in Apprenticeship. I think that is about it. There are one or two in Distance Education. So there will not be a sifting through of every little detail. It will be some global questions and some specific questions as well, but perhaps for tomorrow the minister would like, you know, one representative who is knowledgeable from each of



those disciplines to be here so we do not have to call them, because I do not expect the Estimates process to be dragged out. I do not need that to happen.

There will be specific questions. Just to accommodate the minister, Madam Chair, to let him know about tomorrow, that might be helpful to you.

**Mr. Caldwell:** I appreciate that. I think we can have staff down here tomorrow. I think we have about 16 hours left globally in Estimates. So it is not that much longer. We do want to make sure we move expeditiously on those questions.

With regard to the Grade 3 assessment which was the member's initial question, there have been extensive consultations with the field with regard to the implementation of the new protocols for assessment at Grade 3. We had always talked about a two- to three-year rollout in this assessment, because it is moving away from an end-of-year standards test to an early-year assessment of competencies in numeracy and literacy primarily.

We have in the last number of months, the department in particular, Doctor Farthing, who has done yeoman's service in this regard, as well as some other staff within the Assessment branch and the department generally have met with over a hundred teachers as well as parents and school division administrators on the Grade 3 assessment to modify the implementation of that assessment for next year.

As I mentioned, over a hundred teachers have been part of this process as well as parents and administrators. Indeed, before we moved on this issue last year, we had a very thorough, in fact, one of the largest exercises in seeking input on anything the department has done with parents and teachers. I believe there were 14 000 survey forms that were distributed to teachers and parents around the Grade 3 assessment. There were some 7000 or 8000 returned. It was quite extraordinary, a very high return.

So we have tried to approach the Grade 3 assessment in a very thorough manner, recognizing that it is a substantive change in philosophy, as I said, moving away from the end-of-year standards test to an earlier

assessment in a variety of competencies for young Manitoba children. So it has been a thorough process in terms of consultation and dialogue with teachers, parents and school division officials.

During the meetings that have taken place in these last number of months since the school year began and the first round of assessments were undertaken, there were a number of challenges that were confronted by those in the field, teachers particularly, and there have been, as I said, a number of meetings and consultations since the first year of the assessment was completed in the fall term.

There are a number of adjustments being made. The critical competencies in math are being adjusted. The removal of the summary of the reporting procedure is being undertaken. The further clarification of competencies has been undertaken, so that there is an understanding amongst professionals in the classroom about exactly what are the competencies that should be assessed, and with parents as well, and there is also a clarification of the expectations with regard to professional judgment as exercised by teachers in the classroom.

The objective of the exercise is to ensure that young Manitobans are assessed and given every opportunity during the Grade 3 school year to improve their literacy and/or numeracy skills. Teachers may exercise professional judgment when identifying the process for gathering assessment information, and what the exercise of professional judgment means is the department does not expect nor consider it appropriate for every single student to go through a comprehensive assessment on each and every competency. In many cases, teachers will be able to make informed judgments and assessments about a student's level of particular competencies based upon their daily work with students.

\* (16:10)

So teachers may begin the assessment at the beginning of the school year with a general observation of all their students. Students who perform consistently and on task with high success rates may demonstrate sufficient evidence of achievement in their daily work,

therefore they will require little further assessment. Students performing inconsistently—and I know the member will understand this as a classroom teacher herself—will require more detailed, systematic assessment to better understand the challenges those students are facing with regard to numeracy and literacy.

So some of the students may have been assessed recently and may only require an updated assessment, while other students may require additional assessments using the instruments identified by the department or other instruments, indeed, should they occur where teachers feel they require more information to make an informed judgment.

So we are listening very assiduously to the advice that we are getting from educators and parents and school division officials, trustees and superintendents—and I know that the member and I are both teachers so we have some professional pride in this regard—so that there can be, in a very meaningful way, a partnership on both the way the student Grade 3 assessments are implemented and the further refining of those assessments.

I should also add that the department is undertaking a number of workshops right now, I think five in total, five two-day workshops with teachers around the province. There was one held in Brandon, a two-day workshop held in Brandon last week, and there is one going on in Winnipeg today and tomorrow, and there are three more planned, one in Thompson, as well.

So we are engaged in this. I expect the department will be engaged in this exercise—I have always anticipated a two- to three-year roll-out. We are not even through the first year yet, but there were a number of challenges experienced in the fall, and there are a number of adjustments being made to reflect best practices in the field around how to best assess Grade 3 students. It is something that is alive within the department. I do have to say Doctor Farthing I know has met with individual teachers from time to time on this matter, because I have. Usually I do not have all the answers and I do not know that Doctor Farthing has all the answers, but between the teacher and the minister and the

deputy minister, we usually puzzle out something that is appropriate.

**Mrs. Smith:** Could the minister please advise members on this side of the House with the Committee of Supply, will teachers—I just want to get a little bit of background. I know in some school divisions the Grade 3 test was not given for a number of reasons. I know that teachers found it very, very difficult to design the Grade 3 test. My question to the minister is: Will the teachers be the designers of the test in math and in language arts for next year?

**Mr. Caldwell:** We should not really be talking about tests, because it is not a test, per se. It is a subtle difference, but is a meaningful difference, and an important difference. The assessment protocols, the tools with which to undertake the assessment of competencies in Grade 3 are varied. The department provides the widest range of protocols to assess the competencies at the Grade 3 level, but there are a number of other appropriate protocols that can be used and indeed have been used. I think the Hanover School Division in this past year used Canadian Basic Standards Test, CBST, assessment tool.

I think the main concern is that there be consistency in the competencies that are being assessed and that the methods of ascertaining those competencies have validity in terms of best pedagogical practices, so that research and data based evidence support the assessment tool that is used. The most thorough is the department. I am quite confident in saying that but there are other support documents available.

I could share with the member. Doctor Farthing has just given me this. I do not know if the member has got it, but I will share with the member the support document provided by the Department of Manitoba Education and Training, dated August 2000, for the first round. I do not know if the member has got it or not, but I can share it with the member after the Estimates. In fact, she can have this document that I have here. There will be some revisions, of course, based upon what I have said earlier. The revised policy is designed to make the assessment more manageable for teachers and more informative for parents, while retaining the original intent, which is to understand the

challenges that students face with regard to their literacy and numeracy skills.

I will just pass this along to the member right now, in fact, so that she can have it for her own.

**Mrs. Smith:** Thank you for the support document. In my master's I took test design. Are you sure you want to give this to me?

I would like to ask the minister, for reading and numeracy, what the minister feels are the most valuable protocols that need to be used in each of those disciplines. From what I am hearing, and correct me if I am wrong, Madam Chair, but the Grade 3 assessment will be in reading, lecture and numeracy. I understand that.

Without looking through this document at my disposal right now, could the minister please outline? Because it is my understanding that teachers can design their test or teachers can use a test or whatever meets the protocols and the criteria that the minister expects the teachers and parents to be able to assess the children on. So could the minister please captivate or conceptualize the protocols that he feels are very important for teachers to be consistent in, no matter what tests they are using? There are certain things that will be consistent, in any test design, that are needed.

**Mr. Caldwell:** Winnipeg No. 1, for example, uses the comprehensive assessment program for their Grade 3 assessment, which has been developed by Winnipeg No. 1 over the last number of years. One of the major changes I suppose in terms of the implementation of the assessment in the year to come is in recognizing teachers professional judgment in the classroom and clarifying the expectations, as I articulated in a previous answer. So I think that will go a long way to resolving some of the challenges that divisions and teachers had this year, trying to refine again the rollout of this particular assessment, which as I suggested is quite a major shift from the year-end standards test, and moving into an early in the school year assessment, thus allowing the school year to be used to improve the children's numeracy and literacy skills.

I believe the member asked a question about my own reflections on competencies and what I felt was important in terms of the Grade 3 assessment. There are a number. I will just go over the reading competencies first. I think this was a document that went out to teachers. It is during the workshop sessions that are underway right now.

\* (16:20)

Certainly reading comprehension is a very important competency that we wish to assess early in the school year so we do understand a student's ability to draw conclusions from text and understand text. I think that is critically important. Oral reading skills and strategies for oral reading, assessing a student's ability to use a variety of strategies to read at a Grade 3 level, and reflection as a competency, assessing the student's ability to think about what he or she has read and how they have learned from that as the individual reader. So those competencies are very important. In fact we are asking teachers to provide further input on those competencies. The critical competencies involved the same for both the lecture competencies for speaking and literacy skills. In mathematics, I do not know if the member would like me to review the mathematics. Would you like the mathematics?

**Mrs. Smith:** Yes.

**Mr. Caldwell:** Okay. Critical competencies around the student's ability to sort objects using one mathematical attribute. For example, identifying attributes such as shape and size, a student selecting the appropriate standard unit for estimating measures and lengths, for example, metres, centimetres and so forth, a student's ability to recall addition and subtraction facts to 10, a student's ability to represent and compare numbers using such terms as "even," "odd," "more," "less," "same as," "to 100," "even number," "odd number," a student's ability to understand place values up to 100. That is very important, obviously—student's ability to identify, extend and describe mathematical patterns, for example, repeating and growing, student's ability to solve and create addition and subtraction problems and student's ability to read and interpret graphs, which, I might add, is something I still grapple with at 40 years old. It is fairly comprehensive but manageable within

the classroom context. As the member will know, too, being a teacher, most, if not all, teachers at that level, at the Grade 3 level and in fact throughout the school life, undertake these things as a matter of course.

*Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair*

**Mrs. Smith:** It is my understanding, from what I have heard across the province, that some school divisions were unable to put together a test for the Grade 3 math, in particular. They had particular trouble with the math end of it. It is my understanding that, in year 2, what is happening basically is teachers may design a test or they may use a test that is recognized in the school division, or as long as these basic competencies are capsulated in testing the children. Could the minister clarify this for me, please?

**Mr. Caldwell:** We really wish to allow educators, as professionals, to exercise their professional judgment in these regards, so we have broadened and opened up the assessment devices, the assessment protocols, the assessment devices as long as the assessment protocols provide the information required for parents and for children around the critical competencies. But the exercise of professional judgment by educators is recognized and will be recognized in a more thorough way in the fall of 2001.

**Mrs. Smith:** Will the school divisions involved shoulder the costs of these tests, or does the Minister of Education provide the tests for the teachers to utilize? For example, in Hanover, the minister was stating that CTBS was one, I believe he said, that would be used or another test drawn from another discipline. Who shoulders the cost of these tests?

**Mr. Caldwell:** It is fundamentally a shared responsibility. I mentioned earlier that there are workshops underway right now in Winnipeg, last week in Brandon and, in the future, in Thompson and in Winnipeg again, that departmental staff are leading. But it is fundamentally a shared responsibility between parents, teachers, administrators, I dare say, as well as the Department of Education. The release time has been provided by the department for

divisional teams that are attending the workshops, such as teachers attending the workshops, teachers' consultants, administrators and so forth. We truly desire, as a government, to ensure that the assessment becomes part of the ongoing practices in the classroom as we move forward through this process in years to come, that the Grade 3 assessment becomes accepted best practices in the classrooms of Manitoba.

**Mrs. Smith:** Maybe the Chair could share with us what book he is reading at this time. Is it something on Grade 3 assessment or something related to education?

**The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Martindale):** To members of the committee, my role, I understand, is to acknowledge members by name or by title.

**Mrs. Smith:** Could I please encourage the minister to give the Chair a poke when necessary. Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chair, would the minister please advise a little bit more specifically? It is my understanding then these two in-service days are being paid for by Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, so the substitutes are paid for so the teachers can be released.

**Mr. Caldwell:** Just to clarify, yes, that is true. The costs are being borne by the department, but I want to underscore it is not just teachers, they are teams from divisions. So it is teachers, administrators, consultants. I do not know if there are any trustees taking part, but there certainly is a wide array of educators taking part in the workshops. Again, that speaks to the desire of the department to institutionalize this in the culture of education around the province.

**Mrs. Smith:** Mr. Chair, could the minister advise the Committee of Supply what exactly is happening at these workshops, and in the event that the teachers are being schooled on test design, which I would think would be happening at these workshops, will the teachers then also be supported in the cost of putting these tests together so the school divisions are not weighted down with the costly design of these math and literacy tests?

**Mr. Caldwell:** The interim document that I provided the member with earlier is chock-a-block full of strategies for the assessment. Most teachers will utilize strategies contained within the Manitoba Education and Training document for their assessment of Grade 3. So a lot of that work, most of it, and if teachers decide, all of it, is contained within the support document provided by the department.

\* (16:30)

The workshops themselves that are underway presently are involved with a number of issues. Doctor Farthing is going to broaden this out, as I speak to it, but the first is reviewing what occurred this year in terms of the classroom experience and how the implementation is being modified for the future year around the exercising of professional judgment and around the issues of adjusting the competencies.

The workshops also are involved in the changes in format to the reporting form, the meaning of the levels of performance so there is a good understanding broadly as to at what level students are performing, the wording and terminology of the assessment protocols and the means of reporting back to the department on literacy and numeracy competencies around the province. I will just wait for a second here.

There is also some discussion—and the member may remember this because it was under the administration of Premier Filmon—the *Success For All Learners* document that was put out a number of years ago, '96, I believe, which refers to in a very broad sense differentiated assessment. That is also being discussed within the regional meetings right now. It is chapter 11 of the *Success For All Learners* document. Doctor Farthing is referencing it to me.

**Mrs. Smith:** I just have a couple of more questions because I see that our expert in distance information is here now. Mr. Chair, could the minister please outline: Are the teachers expected then to report to Manitoba Education, Training and Youth the results of what they found in their testing procedure, and do they report to parents? What is the reporting

genre that the minister has requested for the Grade 3 teachers?

**Mr. Caldwell:** They report back to each parent, first and foremost. They do provide information back to us, but it is more global information, frankly. The main thrust of this particular assessment is to have a meaningful exchange between teachers and parents focused on the child and improving that child's individual literacy or numeracy skills.

I note that Mr. Steindel is in the room. If the member would like to move to the other issue, we could avail ourselves of his time and then move back to this.

**Mrs. Smith:** Mr. Chair, I would be very pleased to do that. I have a few more questions, and thank you for the suggestion. I think it is a good idea to move on.

**Mr. Caldwell:** I just wanted to note that Mr. Sam Steindel is joining us right now.

**Mrs. Smith:** I must commend the minister on the expertise that he has in this area. I know Mr. Sam Steindel is indeed a great asset to Manitoba Education and Training. I know the minister will join me in saying that his expertise and his creative problem solving and his way of putting the technical expertise he has into Manitoba Education, Training and Youth is nothing less than outstanding. So it is indeed a privilege to be at the table with Sam today.

My first question has to do with the InForM Net. First of all, the InForM Net on-line courses offer high school academic credits to Senior 1 and Senior 4 students and adult students as well, for that matter. At InForM Net, it is understood that many students are involved in school activities, have jobs, families and other responsibilities. InForM Net is designed to accommodate students, Mr. Chair, by allowing them freedom and flexibility to work at their own pace and at times convenient for each individual.

So when we look at, Mr. Chair, what InForM Net is for, it is for students registered in high schools that may not be able to provide core, complementary, or optional courses for a

variety of reasons, for instance staffing, scheduling and enrolment or students who are currently on a home school program and have health issues and schools of choice decisions to make, mature and adult students in a variety of situations, those enrolled in adult learning centres, part-time students and those desiring upgrading or additional courses for continuing educational purposes.

Also, it serves students whose life and career goals frequently require extended periods of time away from the designated school, for example those students who are involved in the performing arts and elite athletics—Manitoba has students like that who rely on InForM Net in that area—also students whose family circumstances necessitate extended periods of travel or relocation, for example, missionary or humanitarian work, culture exchanges and career or job-related transfers.

I know that these students, Mr. Chair, I am sure the minister is very aware of this, benefit greatly, because school divisions can and do offer students access to advanced courses or electives that are not taught at the local high school. They offset teacher shortages, especially in maths and science. They resolve scheduling conflicts for individual students or small groups of students. They reduce costs to deliver specific courses to small numbers of students. They find solutions that respond to the needs of individual learners in unique situations, expand service delivery options and curriculum choices for alternative schools. They gain more flexibility in developing individual graduation plans which are specific to the academic and career interests of all students, and they provide students with technology experience that is valuable in the transition to university, college, vocational, technical school or the workforce.

Now, the students who participate in InForM Net are basically students enrolled in Fort Garry, of which I am the MLA, Interlake, Morris-MacDonald and St. James-Assiniboia school divisions and any other school and school division who is willing to grant credits obtained through an InForM Net course.

Right now, just to give some background, high school students currently enrolled in the

Fort Garry, Interlake, Morris-MacDonald and St. James-Assiniboia school divisions may register free of charge in any of the courses offered by InForM Net. Students currently enrolled in high schools outside the above-listed divisions need permission from their current school division and will also be charged the fee of \$400 per course. All interested high school students are encouraged to contact their school counsellor or school principal before requesting registration on-line.

Now, there are many, many uses in this day and age for the InForM Net. All professional staff members who service this particular genre are certified teachers. InForM Net teachers receive special training, as the minister probably already knows, an education to prepare them for teaching on-line, and are actively supported through the length of the course to ensure that they are successful.

Now, there are some questions that I have around this because it was the understanding of these school divisions that the present government would provide funding for students in this area who have selected to complete their education via on-line learning. As the minister knows, Alberta and Saskatchewan fund on-line students as regular high school students, so it certainly is something that is credited with this time and this age and this genre that we are in.

So I would ask the minister, Mr. Chair, what his plans are to fund students who have selected to complete their education through InForM Net.

\* (16:40)

**Mr. Caldwell:** Mr. Chair, there are a number of school divisions around the province that have developed Internet and high-tech programs. I believe that the department is currently aware of 12 that we are in partnership with now, and there are 7 more projected for next year, in the 2001-2002 year, I guess, which is this year; 2000-2001, 12 and 7, and 7 more in 2001-2002. So we do have a number of partnerships around the province with school divisions who are using on-line technologies to provide educational support and educational opportunities for Manitobans. We do undertake a lot of in-servicing, a lot of forum-sharing with divisions in this regard.

Of course, the member does know that the schools funding announcement does provide the level of support for students around the province of Manitoba on a nominal basis. That support this year was \$811 million or some such number. We will continue to partner with school divisions around on-line learning as we move forward, but we are not prepared to make statements in a broad way on how that support will manifest itself. As I said, the support that the Province of Manitoba offers to school divisions is in the neighbourhood of \$3,600 per student, approximately, and this year it represented \$811 million in the outflow.

We are engaged with those divisions using on-line learning resources in a partnership context, and InForM Net is one of those systems that we are in ongoing discussion with.

**Mrs. Smith:** Just in review, I know in 1999-2000 the revenue for the InForM Net initiative through the consortium divisions was \$150,000, and the course fees were \$1,500. The government in '99-2000 was zero dollars in InForM Net. The expenses were \$157,073. That was in '99-2000.

Now in the year 2000-2001 the revenue from consortium divisions was \$250,000. The course fees in total were \$30,000. The present government gave \$15,000 toward it. The expenditures were \$290,000. In the year 2001, expected revenue was \$349,700.

*Madam Chairperson in the Chair*

The expected expenditures were \$343,724. Included there was an expected \$51,500 from government. Madam Chairperson, I understand this figure was discussed on three occasions with the present government.

The InForM Net may be able to access \$30,000 through a partnership for course development program. The other \$21,500, which is a \$9,000 subsidy for non-consortium students and \$12,500 student grants, Madam Chair, I understand will not be made available to InForM Net. I understand there has been an offer of \$54,000 for all of our courses. The courses will cost InForM Net \$800,000 to develop.

My question is, clearly, maybe the minister, Madam Chair, could inform the Committee of Supply why is the Government not willing to provide funding for students who have selected to complete their education via on-line learning, and very specifically InForM Net?

**Mr. Caldwell:** As I mentioned earlier, in 2000-2001 the department was in partnership with 12 divisions around using on-line resources, and a further 7 are being partnered with this year, Mr. Chair, to make 19 divisions that the department is partnering with around the provision and development of on-line resource services.

Discussions are underway with InForM Net at the same level and with parity and equity with the other 19 divisions around the province of Manitoba with regard to the provision and development of on-line learning resources. That is how this Government is going to approach the issue of on-line learning. That is an approach that respects quality between divisions, respects the integrity of divisions in the development of on-line resources and the integrity of partnerships with those divisions, not to the advantage or disadvantage of any but rather the equality of all.

**Mrs. Smith:** Could the minister clarify then how does this reflect on InForM Net, the school divisions who students register in this particular genre?

**Mr. Caldwell:** We are in discussions with the InForM Net folks with regard to the same levels of support with InForM Net as we are undertaking with the other 19 school divisions.

InForM Net was a leader in on-line learning, as the member knows. Certainly they too have developed a very fine reputation from those who have used the resource. We are engaged as a government with InForM Net around, as I mentioned, having the same level of parity of support that we do with the other 19 divisions for work that InForM Net has undertaken and will undertake. We are looking at providing the support for work that they have undertaken in the past as well around this regard but at parity with the other 19 divisions, I guess, that are on line this year. No pun intended.

**Mrs. Smith:** Why is it then that the particular school divisions that have been mentioned, Fort Garry, Morris-Macdonald, St. James, and Interlake School divisions, which, I might add, you know, cover all political MLAs, why do they believe then that Manitoba Education, Training and Youth is not willing to supplement schools and our students willing to take on-line courses, as they do for independent study courses? So why do they feel that InForM Net is not being funded? Please advise.

**Mr. Caldwell:** Our funding support per student is done through the announcement on funding. I guess it is around \$3,900 per student, not \$3,600 per student, about \$3,900 per student. In terms of the resources that we are providing to those divisions who are involved in on-line learning, it is for development of the learning tools. It is not a per-student allocation. That per-student allocation is made under the general funding announcement, Madam Chairperson, but Education and Training does provide support for the development of on-line resources in partnership with 19 other divisions. We are in discussions with InForM Net around providing support to the same levels as being provided to the other 19 divisions, as I said, so that there is parity between those divisions who choose to embark upon on-line learning as one of their areas of interest as a school division.

\* (16:50)

The department also supports some infrastructure costs for these divisions who use on-line learning through offsetting their service support costs and some training, as well, I believe, training, management and servicing. But it is not a per capita support on a nominal basis per student but rather support for, as I said, program development, management training, server support and course development, those sorts of issues. We do not want to have a situation where division A is receiving more or less than division B. We want to have parity so that all divisions that have on-line learning as part of their program offerings do get equity and support.

I think part of the issue or part of the question is that InForM Net was a leader in this regard. They undertook this, I suggest, ahead of government and ahead of pretty much all other

school divisions. I do appreciate that initiative on behalf of Fort Garry. I know the Member for Fort Garry is doing her job in terms of being the MLA for her constituency, and I certainly appreciate that very much as the MLA for Brandon-East, I will tell you. But that is the answer to that question.

**Mrs. Smith:** So basically the minister, Madam Chair, has not talked specifically about what funding is going to be coming to InForM Net. What I am hearing is that discussions are under place right now.

I just want to remind the Minister of Education that part of the rationale for the emphasis on amalgamation is that consortiums of school divisions will sit down and they will talk and they will share services. I would like to point out to the present minister that here we have four school divisions who have sat down, they share costs and services to develop and deliver on-line courses throughout the province. So that goes in line with what the present government has said. It is very important in educational resources, and I would expect that the InForM Net would hear some good news from the Minister of Education and that there would be, because they have these shared costs and are servicing quite a number of students now, that the minister would indeed fund these students who have selected to complete their education via the on-line learning because we are talking about people, we are talking about lives, we are talking about students able to succeed in the workforce and in the world.

Based on some of the other things that I have stated here about InForM Net, I think the minister fully understands the relevance of how important this is, that it is not one school division or two school divisions doing their own thing but sharing. When does the minister expect, Madam Chair, to be able to make a final decision on whether or not InForM Net would be funded?

**Mr. Caldwell:** The ADM, Doctor Farthing, is arranging for meetings. In fact, previous to this he has been arranging for a meeting with the four divisions in InForM Net to take place within the next couple of weeks. So it has been



ongoing, and I know that the department has been working towards that.

I do take the member's remarks about shared services very much to heart because as the previous government undertook with the Norrie report and as this present government is undertaking with the consultations that are currently going on in the regions of the province around amalgamation, we do appreciate the efficient delivery of services, co-operation between divisions. If we could have a situation where we had one superintendent for those four divisions it would make me happy as well, you know, and one series of administrative staff and so forth, because those sorts of efficiencies free up dollars for the classroom and for things like on-line learning and so forth.

So I do appreciate the member's comments in that regard, and I think that divisions, as is shown by this particular initiative, do work very well together around creating efficiencies and striving to deliver the best quality program whether it is on-line or history, sciences, math, whatever, the best quality program that they can to children in Manitoba.

I appreciate the work that InForM Net has done. They have been leaders in this regard. I also appreciate that 19 other divisions are now on board with the Government in terms of the same sort of programming. We will be supporting InForM Net at the same levels as we are supporting other divisions in the province.

I have just been advised that this sort of initiative has been very, very positively received by the divisions.

**Mrs. Smith:** I thank the minister because it was my understanding that there would be no funding for InForM Net. What I am hearing today in Estimates is that the discussions are still underway and that there will be funding for InForM Net. That is really very gratifying to hear.

The other question I have is: Why was the applied math 20S Web-based course not taught this year?

**Mr. Caldwell:** While officials discuss that particular question, discussions are underway with InForM Net, in the assessment around levels of support for things like management training, server support and so forth. From the department's perspective, we have to have equity in the system. All school divisions must be treated equally in regard to these services, and that is the context of the discussions that are underway, and within that context will be the decisions around resource allocation.

The question about the math, 30S applied math course will be delivered beginning in September, and the S4 has been completed and also will be delivered this September. Those two courses are coming on-line this coming school year.

**Mrs. Smith:** I know there were some students who needed the applied math 20S Web-based course, and it was not taught this year, and my question was: Why was it not taught this year?

**Mr. Caldwell:** The 20S course is not available on-line yet. It is a print course to date, and we are currently working with partners who are interested in delivering it on-line to attempt to make that available in the future. The prioritization on what we develop first is made in conjunction with school divisions, and I am just advised that we have asked school divisions what their priorities are for the delivering of courses, and that is how the decision making has proceeded in this regard. I am just advised that is why we are doing math right now on-line and not English as a second language, not ELA, sorry, English language arts, sorry, that is why we are doing math and not English language arts on-line because of the priorities that the divisions have set.

\* (17:00)

**Mrs. Smith:** When the minister is considering the math courses and the applied math 20S course, would the minister base this on the number of students that want to take this course and the number of trained teachers available, and if so, could the minister advise the Committee of Supply how this training is going to be impacting on the teachers so they can teach these courses?

**Mr. Caldwell:** The decisions are made by school divisions based on their ability to deliver the courses. Most of them deliver courses by print, but the decision is fundamentally one of school divisions.

**Mrs. Smith:** One last question in this area is: When could the minister advise the Committee of Supply or myself regarding the funding of the InForM Net initiative in these four school divisions? When will the decision be made as to how much funding is given this consortium? I just want to, before the minister answers that, point out that the minister has absolutely recognized the on-line learning as a relevant way of learning for a number of reasons, because it often catches the students who fall through the cracks. I have grave concern about this very forward-thinking initiative that has come up from these four school divisions because a lot of the students that have successfully gone through it and are successfully participating in it will be in jeopardy if the funding is not supplied to Inform.net.

**Mr. Caldwell:** Well, it fundamentally depends upon how quickly there can be some agreement reached between the consortium and the Province around appropriate levels of support, comparative with the work undertaken by the other 19 school divisions. It could be very quick, or it could be very slow, depending on the level of discussion and how quickly consensus can be reached.

**Mrs. Smith:** So overall the minister has indicated that this is a very important initiative and that it will be funded to whatever degree is decided upon after the talks have taken place and certain things have been agreed upon. Is this the case?

**Mr. Caldwell:** Within the context of support to other divisions, that is exactly right.

**Mrs. Smith:** Madam Chair, I would like to ask the minister what his vision of distance learning and on-line students will have. What vision does the minister have for the education of the on-line students generally, because I know Manitoba Education and Youth have people who are very, as Mr. Steindel is, knowledgeable about on-line learning, and as we go toward the year 2002, we

will be seeing more and more on-line initiatives occurring throughout the world, really. Having said that, could the minister state what is going on right now in this area and what vision the minister would have in the near future for increasing the staffing and the expertise at Manitoba Education and Youth in this area?

**Mr. Caldwell:** Madam Chair, the member is quite right. This is a very exciting and dynamic area of education globally right now. The Province and school divisions who have taken the lead on these issues are working in a symbiotic way right now, basically learning off of each other and with each other as we move forward, and I think, in the near future, that is the way that we are going to proceed as a government, is within a partnership context with the divisions that have undertaken on-line learning. I think that, at this stage, is the best way to proceed, but we do recognize certainly that on-line learning is a growing, dare I say, enterprise globally and that we do have a role and a responsibility to work with school divisions in Manitoba to ensure that we are the best that we can be, as well.

**Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie):** I was just wanting to add to the conversation in regard to on-line curriculum proviso. We have moved to a common curriculum involving the western provinces and territories as well, and it does not have to be produced at any one location because of proximity to students when you are considering yourself with on-line. It can anywhere.

I am wondering whether you, as the minister, have had dialogue with other jurisdictions to pool your resources and to effectively co-ordinate and have a very concise plan of delivery, with resources all focussed in making certain that the best use of those resources is provided for.

**Mr. Caldwell:** I appreciate those remarks, as somewhat of an efficiency aficionado myself. We have had discussions with my western Canadian colleagues, had some conversations around the matter of co-ordinating curriculum development and so forth, program development. There are challenges with that. All of us, I think, in our own provincial jurisdictions have

some pride. I daresay, Madam Chair, that my colleague, Minister Lyle Oberg in Alberta—if we moved everything to Alberta, he would be very happy. Having it farmed out in other jurisdictions somehow does not make him quite so warm to the idea, but we do have discussions around those issues. We do have the western Canadian protocol, which was what the member was referring to, around these issues, and we are trying to have some common consistency around curriculum and course offerings and so forth, for western Canada at least, as the member mentioned, western Canada and the Territories.

We have had some success in this area though, as well. It has not just been talk. We have traded some courses, two courses, with British Columbia, in terms of curriculum courses, and we are discussing a couple more with British Columbia. I know that the minister, Honourable Glenn Hagel from Saskatchewan, is the Chair of the Canadian Ministers of Education right now, and I certainly have a very good relationship with Mr. Hagel. We have discussed issues of common interest in combining resources and efficiencies around broadcasting and television usages of very public education, and so forth. So those conversations are kind of a regular feature, I suppose, of the Canadian ministers. I expect my predecessors, Mr. Derkach, and those who are no longer with us, Mrs. McIntosh, also had discussions in a similar vein.

We have made some progress in terms of courses with British Columbia, but I have to smile because this was something that was raised. I do not know if it was the last time I was meeting with the ministers or not, but I think the minister from Alberta would love to have all the curriculum developed out there. Justifiably so, I would love to have it all developed in Manitoba, and it would be a great boon to our own educational infrastructure in Manitoba. So there is some modest progress there.

**Mr. Faurchou:** Thank you very much, and I appreciate my colleague from Fort Garry allowing me to inject a couple of questions here.

I would like to ask the minister's ideas as to his direction now that he has received the AMM report on educational funding and the ideas to

which are shared in that document. I do want to add particular emphasis from my constituency, being that just in the past week, they announced the new assessments for property. The elevation of farmland in value over the last number of years will effectively shift significantly the proportion of school tax now levied by the Province and by the local school division from actual households through to farmland, because the farmland has appreciated in value more significantly than have other dwellings or holdings, which subsequently will actually enhance or exacerbate the actual amount of education dollars that are extracted off the farmland.

I would like the minister to express his direction as to how he is handling the ideas of that document and to potentially share with us his timetable to address this.

\* (17:10)

**Mr. Caldwell:** The member may be aware that there is no ESL on farm property since 1990. The previous government made that provision in 1991. Well, it was your government, but we have kept that. That is something I am cognizant of, and it is a concern of mine. The member may know I was on the board of the UMM and the AMM in a previous life as a municipal councillor and have known personally all the major players on the board and the executive and have worked with them pretty closely over the last number of years. I take their advice very seriously and with a great deal of respect and consideration.

There were some very constructive suggestions within the report, which incidentally is being analyzed now by Education as well as Finance and I believe Intergovernmental Affairs, the three major departments that have an interest in the property tax question. That analysis will be coming back to the ministers in the next few weeks. I have some initial reactions to it, responses to it, but I do not have an in-depth feeling of the implications for some of the recommendations at this stage because the analysis from analysts, and in particular in Finance, has not been completed yet.

My initial feeling about the AMM task force and the work done by school trustees, municipal

officials and business officials as well, was a very positive one. Grant Buchanan, the chair of the task force, who I have worked with again for a number of years, is from The Pas, is a municipal official from The Pas, and I have worked with him as a municipal official very closely over the years. We have had a number of occasions to chat about this as well as some formal meetings obviously when the report was presented to the public around recommendations from the report.

I think having a broad discussion throughout the province was a very positive step. I know I made a bit of a, it is not a joke, but I made the remark I guess about 14 months ago when the AMM took on the report, one of my colleagues in the AMM said: Drew, do not worry; we will have this problem sorted out for you in six weeks. Of course a couple of months later they were phoning my office asking for some support from the department so they could puzzle out exactly what the issues were.

It was a very good learning experience for municipal officials too, Madam Chair, because again as a former municipal official, most municipal councillors take, not great delight but some delight, in their budget deliberations, because generally municipal budgets come in balanced or maybe with a small increase, or in my own municipality of Brandon with small decreases over the years, and of course school division budgets have been escalating quite dramatically over the last decade or so. So school divisions were a happy target, and school trustees were a happy target, for a great many municipal councillors over the last decade. When they did wade into this I think there was a very positive education that took place amongst municipal officials as to the complexity.

I know the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) was a school trustee previously, so he was likely the unhappy beneficiary of some of those barbs over the years from municipal officials. It was, I think, a very good learning experience for municipal councillors. I think their involvement in this task force and their involvement generally in the broader issue is a very positive one, because it is a very complex issue, the whole area of property taxation in the province, the relative degrees of

taxation absorbed by the commercial sector, the industrial sector, the resident homeowner, the resident farmer and farm property. Every Manitoban is fundamentally interested in this issue because every Manitoban of the age of majority is directly impacted by property taxation.

The analysis of the departments, as I said, Intergovernmental Affairs, Finance and Education, is underway right now, the AMM report. I thought the report itself was a very constructive report from the perspective of what it offered government, from the perspective of having a broad discussion around this issue at a provincial level and from the perspective, I think, fundamentally of educating municipal officials as to the great pressures that school trustees are under and the complexity of the public school system with regard to the resource requirements of the public school system.

Certainly it was not six weeks in coming; it was fourteen months in coming. I think there was an understanding on the behalf of municipal officials that previously was not there. I think that is good, because there will be now a shared empathy with school trustees rather than an antipathy toward school trustees around the issues of property taxation.

**Mr. Faurichou:** I agree the process was an enlightening one for all concerned. Very specifically though, does the minister have a time line that he will in fact be addressing the education special levy concern that all of us have out there?

I am sorry for, in fact, including farmland, and when I say the province benefits you are absolutely correct. The provincial ESL remains on farms, not on the actual arable land but on the farm buildings that are in production. Once again, could he share with us his ideas as to when in fact the three departments will come to some type of resolve on this?

**Mr. Caldwell:** My expectation is the analysis of the AMM document specifically will occur over the next six to eight weeks. That is my expectation. The whole issue of property tax assessment broadly within the reassessment year I expect will take somewhat longer because it is

somewhat broader than just the schools. The member is urging me on, with a grin on his face, so he understands the complexity of this particular issue and the nuanced complexity of this issue, and also the political volatility of this issue, obviously.

\* (17:20)

In terms of property taxation, I think all of us agree it is not the best means to assess wealth. Property only has a value when you are buying or when you are selling. In the interim it may go up or down on the vagaries of assessors, but it certainly does not go up or down in the pockets of Manitobans. We have I think a shared view in the Chamber, frankly, with all parties that property taxation is not the most equitable way to generate resources for government, and that is municipal, school division, or provincial for that matter.

It is the method by which we have traditionally in the province accessed funds, at least at the local level, for schools and at the local level for municipalities, more broadly, but it is an issue that over the last decade, because we have seen such an explosion of property taxation, particularly around schools, it is an issue of considerable political saliency everywhere throughout the province. So it is something that we want to, and I want to, act expeditiously on, but I also want to act responsibly in making decisions that are not going to be capricious, that are not going to create bigger problems. I do want to take the full opportunity to act in a measured way on this matter. I am expecting the AMM, I know the member wants some dates and times, and the standard phrase is in the fullness of time, and so forth, but I do not want to say that we are not acting expeditiously on it. We are acting in a manner that does reflect the serious nature of the property tax issue in the province. As I said, I expect an AMM analysis in the weeks to come, and for the broader property tax question sometime after that, but also within a context that is reasonable for Manitobans, so that the decisions being made are not hasty, yet still quick enough so there is some assurance we are moving forward on it.

I do particularly note the point about agricultural land. That is something that is important to me personally as somebody from western Manitoba. Madam Chairperson, I note the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) is here, so she is keeping track of farmland issues I know as well. I know the Member for Portage (Mr. Fauschou) will be diligently too.

**Mrs. Smith:** I would like to, Madam Chair, now direct my questions to the funding formula with the minister. The minister said when this current government first got into power that the funding formula would be something that was of paramount importance and something that would be addressed. Could the minister please advise the Committee of Supply as to where he is with the funding formula initiative at this point?

**Mr. Caldwell:** I think I have been pretty widely quoted in the media over the last number of months that the department is assessing the funding formula with a view to making changes in the context of the reassessment year currently underway.

When I first made those comments, it would be in January, I guess, when we brought down this year's funding announcement. I gave the department about 18 months to work with other government departments, most notably again the Department of Finance and the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs, because, Madam Chair, these changes, have pretty significant impacts for provincial revenues generally, municipal revenues specifically and obviously school division revenues. Much like the response to the Member for Portage la Prairie in the question previously, we want to continue to make progress on these issues and move forward, but we want to do it in a thoughtful way that ensures that when changes are made that they are positive and not capricious and that they are well thought out and mindful of the impacts elsewhere.

It is almost like a Rubik's Cube, the whole property tax issue. It is where you make a change in one area and it has an impact, not even necessarily in the school divisions, in the school funding, but it has an impact more broadly on provincial revenues and municipal revenues. My expectation at January 2001 when we made this year's funding announcement was within the

context of reassessment, and that scale is an 18-month period.

So discussions, meetings and analysis of this issue is ongoing within government, and the deputy was just advising me the department has been meeting with staff from IGA and Finance in this regard and are making some progress to ensure that a toggle switch turned in education is not going to create a problem in Intergovernmental Affairs and vice versa. It is very complex, as I said, almost like a Rubik's Cube, and any changes that are made have to be made in the full understanding that impacts go beyond just the public school system but rather have some salience for Intergovernmental Affairs and Finance in particular.

**Mrs. Smith:** Could the minister elaborate on the funding formula, the part of the funding formula that has to do with equalization amongst school divisions? What are the minister's thoughts on this part of the funding formula because I know that is one part that has come up for great discussion?

**Mr. Caldwell:** The funding formula has been in place, I believe, since the early '90s, 1992-1993, so we have been working with this particular funding formula for almost a decade now. The formula does strive for equity around the province known as Manitoba and the school divisions, redistributing resources from wealthier areas of the province to poorer areas of the province so that there is some equity for children wherever they go to school across the province and some equity for divisions across the province. I think any formula that is devised with the public school system in mind is devised around the ideal of equity.

I think that Manitoba over the last decade of use with this particular formula has performed reasonably well. The formula has performed reasonably well in terms of providing equity. Of course, the great pressure is the reduction in provincial support over the last decade; it has had a corresponding increase in the need of local school divisions to raise revenue off their property taxes. What was not delivered from the Province had to be made up from the local property taxpayer.

In the last couple of years I think the issue has come to a bit of a head because, while there

have been some significant increases in provincial government support in the public school's funding announcement, property taxes are still increasing pretty dramatically. So it has not had the effect of reducing the yearly impacts on local property taxpayers, and so that has kind of brought the issue to a head, I think.

In my view that is why it has come to a head because my first funding announcement in January 2000 was \$22.5 million in new money, and I do not know what that represented, 3.8 percent or 3.6 percent—[interjection]—\$29.7 million which represented about 3.8 percent increase in support year to year from 1999 to 2000. My expectation as a rookie minister at that time, having been there for three months, was that we likely would not have a huge property tax increase around the province because there was such a large increase coming from the provincial treasury.

I was shocked and horrified, of course, when there were increases, not right across the board, but pretty much across the board. There were some divisions that were flat, and I think even a couple came in a bit less. You know, 90 percent of the school divisions had property tax increases with a pretty wide range. I think we had double digit in a couple of divisions, so of course that correspondingly brought howls of protest from property taxpayers in those areas that got a fairly hefty tax increase. Of course, part of the issue was the funding formula in terms of enrolment patterns and assessment bases and so forth. I know the member knows about this, and she is nodding.

This year, January 2001, we made another significant increase into the provincial contribution to the public school system in the neighbourhood of \$22 million, and, of course, in my home division, in Brandon School Division, it corresponded to an 8.5% further increase in local property taxes levied by the division.

So it did bring the issue to a head on the funding formula while equity was and will remain a central feature of any funding formula for the Province of Manitoba; and, while this current formula has served since 1992, I think, there was this year a decisive understanding gained on the part of myself and my colleagues that we were going to have to have a pretty

thorough re-examination of the funding formula with a view to providing greater equity across the system so that these historic levels of provincial support translated into some relief for local property taxpayers while still maintaining the level of quality in public school systems that Manitobans are accustomed to and deserving of.

So the context for changes is the reassessment year. The time lines are within the 18-month period from January, and that is what I estimated in January, 18 months. I think that we may have—and there have been a number of suggestions brought forth to me from around the province—the sharing of the commercial tax base so that school divisions have equity around residential tax base, but the commercial tax base should be shared around the province because we do have areas in the province, my home constituency included, that have a higher commercial tax base than some other areas of the province.

\* (17:30)

These are suggestions that are coming forth from trustees around the province. That was one suggestion that was made, and it has been made to me repeatedly, but there are divisions, of course, that have a high commercial tax base that would resist such a sharing of resources. They are looking out for the interests of their particular ratepayers in their particular division, and I understand that. That was a suggestion, as I said, that has been made by a number of divisions. There are suggestions about, again, more provincial resources which is always helpful but not always useful in terms of changing funding formulas. I think the member will appreciate, from where she sits in the House, the calls for tax cuts that her party makes on a regular basis, and tax cuts means less provincial revenue. So it is difficult to give more provincial dollars at the same time as having less provincial revenue because you are taking from somebody. You are taking from Peter to pay Paul in those regards.

Those are suggestions that have been made. Certainly the Government is not shy of making significant contributions to the public school system because we have been investing at historic levels in both capital and operating in the public school side. In fact, with \$76 million

added to capital this year, it is the largest announcement in the province's history for capital support. That came on the heels of last year's \$51-million announcement, so there are quite significant dollars flowing into capital and operating from the Province of Manitoba, as I said, at historic levels.

But the emphasis has to be on greater equity around the province on issues of educational funding. I think that has to be the emphasis, and that is certainly the direction that was set by the previous government in '92 with this current funding formula. It will be the underlying principle in our deliberations about how to modify or create a new formula. I suspect it will be more of the latter than the former, a new formula that stresses and underscores greater equity.

We are getting a lot of advice from school divisions on this issue, and not all the advice is just give us more money. There is some thoughtful advice as well. More money is nice, but, in the context of what is possible for Manitoba taxpayers, we have to be mindful that Manitoba taxpayers do contribute a great deal to our provincial management of health care system and the educational system, and we have to be mindful that Manitoba taxpayers are on the hook substantially in terms of property taxation levels that have risen dramatically over the last decade.

So it is a complex issue with no easy answers. I think all parties realize that now. When I was a municipal councillor, it was pretty easy to take shots at trustees, I have to say. The mayor of Brandon, during most of my time there, Rick Borotsik, who is now a Conservative M.P. and a good friend of mine, used to delight almost in taking shots at the Brandon School Division. But I think the current discussion around this issue of property taxes, school funding has been a really positive experience, particularly for municipal officials, in getting a greater understanding of the challenges that school trustees face and the challenges indeed that Manitoba faces in supporting the public school system in an equitable fashion, in a fashion that is fair to Manitoba taxpayers and in a fashion does understand and respect that we cannot continually, year in year out, have—and I

would consider anything over 2 or 3 percent kind of a massive tax increase. Year in and year out we have had massive tax increases, property tax increases, at the local level at first, in direct response, I think, to the provincial offloading of responsibility for the funding. But with the last two years funding announcements being at historic levels, we still have pretty significant property tax increases going on at the local level.

That really did, in a very meaningful way, get my attention and get I think the attention of all of us in government on both sides of the House and municipal officials through the AMM as to, gee, we have to take a look at this and build a better widget. Certainly that is what is taking place in government and, I would suggest, more broadly with the AMM task force around the province.

We do want to be thorough in this analysis. We do want to be thoughtful and mindful of what taxpayers are confronted with right now and what trustees are confronted with in their efforts to maintain the best education system possible. I think that is what we are doing. We do have officials from Intergovernmental Affairs, officials from Finance and officials from Education working together on this issue so that a shift in the Rubik's Cube does not have an unexpected impact on someone else.

**Mrs. Smith:** How will the minister deal with jurisdictions or school divisions that have a high industry base and who have had increased taxes on a regular basis? If indeed what the minister is saying, that we will take from the people who have balanced their budgets and worked with their budgets and who have industry in their areas, we will take from them and we will give to others, how does the minister reconcile these school divisions that have worked for years to balance their budgets and work within the confines of the funding they have from the Province and indeed who also experienced raises in taxes? How does the minister compromise this?

**Mr. Caldwell:** Perhaps, Madam Chair, the member misunderstood me, or perhaps I was not clear in my answer. What I was saying is this is something that has been suggested to me by school divisions. It is not something that is on

my table. It is something that has been suggested to me by a number of divisions. It was to illustrate that there are a number of suggestions coming in from the field.

**Mrs. Smith:** I know that there is a lot of blood, sweat, and tears that goes over in making an Education budget. Lots of tears, yes. I would agree it is like a Rubik's Cube, or maybe dominoes would better describe it. You do something and you have everything follow through after that.

Having said that, though, the funding formula is something that the minister has committed to looking at and to making either some changes or introducing a new funding formula. Could the minister advise the Committee of Supply how teacher negotiations are going now and the ramifications of Bill 42 in terms of the funding for school divisions, because, as the minister knows, a vast majority of the funding that goes to school divisions is spent on salaries, and rightly so. Being a teacher of 22 years, I can see the kind of expertise teachers take to the classroom, the kinds of time they put in, the dedication and commitment.

So maybe the minister could comment on if he knows or feels there is any direction coming out of Bill 42 that might impact on the funding and on the funding formula.

**Mr. Caldwell:** I understand that where collective bargaining is taking place right now that there are a number of challenges being faced by trustees and in fact by teachers. The collective bargaining process that is underway I have a lot of respect for. There are always challenges in collective bargaining processes. There is always give and take on both sides. So I do not know, because I am not privy to the management of individual school divisions, what in fact is transpiring in Brandon School Division, or Pelly Trail, or Fort Garry for that matter. I do become aware of things from time to time when there is an arbitrator asked for or when there is a newspaper story, but I do defer to locally elected officials to bargain with their teaching complement in the individual school divisions where they do their business.

\* (17:40)



In terms of salaries, I know that the bulk of the funding announcement goes to providing support to educators across the province. I think pretty much in any enterprise salaries are the major cost of managing a business or managing a department, as the case may be. I do know we talked about this, I think, at our last Estimates meeting, that when I was on my way out to Brandon during that ice storm it was to contest the hiring of a fourth superintendent in the Brandon School Division to the tune of \$95,000 and additional costs, which as the MLA for Brandon, of course, brought quite a barrage of interest into my constituency office to the point where I could barely walk down the street without someone saying hey, you have got to take on the school division. Of course, as a minister that complicated the matter somewhat because I am the minister for that particular constituency as well. It is tough to be the MLA and the minister and you have got a school division issue. As the member knows, it places one in somewhat of an awkward situation, being someone that also respects local autonomy in these matters. The decision of the Brandon School Division, in this matter, is their decision and they are responsible for it.

As the MLA, I was also responsible for transmitting the views of my constituents on that particular salary issue in Brandon. The view from the constituency was: Put that money in the classroom and not into the school division office. Having said that, I respect the decision of the school trustees in making that decision. They are privy to information I am not privy to that may influence their decision making in that regard.

I do know that the bulk of expenditures in school divisions is related to salary, that collective bargaining is never easy in whatever context it takes place. There is always give and take. As for what is transpiring in the school divisions around the province around this issue, I am not privy to any specifics with any specific division, but I do know that generally with new legislation both when Bill 72 was passed a number of years ago by the former administration and with Bill 42, that with new legislation there is always a new colour I suppose to bargaining. What is transpiring out in the field, I am not really privy to. I think that

whenever there is collective bargaining pretty much the sky is the limit and then you negotiate back from there.

I know management puts forth proposals and labour puts forth proposals, and they hash it out between each other. At the end of the day you have some compromises that emerge between the two positions, and that is the nature of collective bargaining. That has been the nature of collective bargaining, I suppose, since it was first enshrined as an effective method of labour relations.

I do not expect anything untoward. I know that when we put the legislation forth last year the historic record had been previous to Bill 72 there were about 40 years, approximately 40-odd years, of collective bargaining that took place previous to Bill 72. Then there were a few years with Bill 72, and now we are into the first year with Bill 42. Throughout that period of time, that 50-odd years, the settlements ranged around 2 percent historically. Some years you would get higher, sometimes you get 4 percent and other years you get 1 percent, but the average throughout that period of time was around a 2% increase. From a global perspective, that was what I commented last year. From a global perspective, my expectation would be that that historical trend would continue.

New issues come up from time to time. Carpal tunnel syndrome was not a problem in 1950, but in 2002, with a lot of time spent in front of a computer and so forth, that becomes an issue for Workplace Health and Safety. Other issues, chalk dust, which may have been an issue in the past, is not so much of an issue today with the IT equipment that is in the classroom, PowerPoint and so forth. These sorts of things evolve, but the dynamics are relatively consistent and, over the last 50 years, settlements have been around the 2% range. But you get nuances as times change. So, apart from that, those general comments, apart from the general comments, I do not really have anything more to add. It is a challenge, though. I will say that.

**Mrs. Smith:** I thank the minister for that answer. I know we are all, I can say from this side of the House, and being a teacher for 22 years, my husband still teaches, I am a strong

supporter of teachers. I think that the workplace has to be a workplace where teachers feel comfortable teaching, where kids can learn. I am a strong supporter of teachers, of course, getting the higher wages that they need and the working conditions that they need.

I believe that teachers are very wise and insightful in their management. I think they have a huge job. In fact, I know they have a huge job. They are more than the caregivers. They are the professional teachers responsible for teaching the curriculum in an ever-changing world. So there are challenges for teachers all across the province that both the minister and I know need to be addressed.

In response to what the minister was saying about Brandon, I guess the minister is fully aware that I believe very strongly in local autonomy and that the minister, being the Minister of Education, fortunately swerved off the road. I did not believe he had any place being there, although I do understand, as MLA of that area, you are responsible for addressing the concerns of the constituents. I think Minister of Education supersedes that because it is a title that can be all-powerful and intimidating.

On a personal level, I do believe that the Minister of Education should not interfere with decisions made at the school division level. So now we have a lot of extra things coming into play. I can acknowledge that the Minister of Education has a tremendous task when it comes to funding formula, when it comes to all the ramifications of funding the education of our students here in Manitoba in an ever-changing world. Certainly, thinking outside the box and problem solving are going to be a great factor in what happens to the students. My first consideration, above everything else, is the students in the classrooms.

I want to know what the timeline is. The minister referred to 18 months for the funding formula. So that would put us, from January of 2001, into 2002 and a half. So basically would the minister advise the Committee of Supply: Is he waiting to see how Bill 44 does unfold and impact? Is he waiting to see the results of the AMM joint report with AMM and MAST to see how that unfolds, to make the kind of decisions

that need to be made on the funding formula for the students?

**Mr. Caldwell:** No, we are not waiting. Actually, we are working diligently right now. It is just the nature of the task is such that there is a substantive amount of time required to undertake it. That is the timeline I gave. You know, it may occur sooner, it may occur somewhat later, but I learned I guess pretty early in this game, in this Legislature, that when you set firm time lines, Murphy's Law automatically kicks into place.

So I did want to place it and we as a government placed it within the context of the reassessment year which is underway now, so that the major players within government who have an interest in the property tax regime in the province—Intergovernmental Affairs, Finance and the Department of Education and Training specifically—could work together around this particular very complex issue. So it is not a matter of waiting 18 months to start. That is how long it will take to do it. In fact, the department has been working since January with the other partners within government and indeed with the AMM. The AMM report was only presented to Government maybe a month ago, roughly, some mid-April or some such date.

This is an illustrative example as well. As I said, my friends from the AMM said, oh, we will have this straightened out for you, Drew, in six weeks. Well, fourteen months later, we did get the report, and the report, incidentally, has as many questions as it does answers.

I spoke to that in terms of the education of municipal officials, Madam Chair, particularly on the complexity of this particular issue, because I know that there will be some people very disappointed that they will not be able to take the free shots at trustees anymore in terms of the decision making because it was, as I said, a favourite sport of some of the colleagues I served with at the Brandon City Council—including myself from time to time, I might say shamefacedly now, given the position I sit in—that there was not really a very thorough or full understanding on behalf of most of my colleagues who were councillors in municipal politics as to the great challenges that trustees face on an annual basis in terms of their

budgeting and the restrictions that they have in terms of their budgeting essentially to property taxation.

\* (17:50)

There are other avenues available for municipal officials in the City of Winnipeg, the entertainment tax, for example, and other avenues of resources available, but trustees are limited to their property tax-paying residents of their school divisions.

So it is a difficult issue and it is one that I do not want to undertake with undue haste but rather one I want to undertake with due diligence.

**Mrs. Smith:** I need to put on the record that coming from a school division like Fort Garry, we have a very high industrial base. Having said that, there was still an increase in the property tax, and people are struggling under the weight of that.

I would appeal to the minister, because the school division has managed their books and their programs, that he not just catch the rug out from under them and see that school divisions such as these are put in jeopardy because of decisions made that have to do with the property tax, that have to do with the funding formula, particularly the equalization part, because I will put on the record right now, Madam Chair, that a lot of school divisions are very fearful about this equalization portion of the funding formula, that the minister will say I will be the knight in shining armour and do this. It is the belief of many of these school divisions like St. James, like Fort Garry, that this will not solve all problems at all. So I will appeal to the minister to pay very special attention to that aspect of it.

But another thought I did have that I wanted to share and ask the minister about: Has the minister looked into expanding the International Education, bringing international students over? I know some school divisions benefit financially and culturally and in lots of ways from enhancing the international teacher and student program. In fact, I was speaking on behalf of Fort Garry, which the minister alluded to with Mr. MacLeod. Having travelled with him, the international student initiative has been very bold and very exciting. I would ask the minister,

instead of just rejigging the funding formula and the equalization part, whether he has some other plans where he can look at.

I would be glad to work with the minister in this area, because my main thrust is for the good of all students in the province and having had considerable experience in the school system have some ideas as well. I think that we have to think outside the boxes and be non-partisan as much as we can when it comes to the educational funding. That is why in Estimates I am wondering whether the minister does have some plans in that area as well.

**Mr. Caldwell:** I am really heartened by that, and I would encourage the member to cross the floor tomorrow and join with us in this educational endeavour that we are undertaking. One of my colleagues said I better consult caucus first, but to be serious, because we just only have a couple more minutes here before the afternoon adjourns for the evening, I am very open to a number of solutions. The member is quite right that it is a complex issue and there is no one simple, easy solution for it, whether it is equity or what have you.

I have the FRAME report before me. Just to give you an illustration, the member references Fort Garry School Division, which has an assessment per resident pupil of \$154,000 on its property tax base, and we have Frontier at \$21,000 or Lynn Lake at \$12,000. So there are huge inequities across the province between wealthy school divisions, St. James-Assiniboine at \$157,000 assessment per resident pupil to Lynn Lake at \$12,000 or Leaf Rapids at \$57,000 or Duck Mountain at \$61,000 or Garden Valley at \$90,000, Seine River at \$81,000. So there are very wealthy divisions in terms of assessment per resident pupil and there are very poor divisions in terms of assessment per resident pupil. I am very conscious of those issues of equity and I am conscious as well of not in any sense diminishing the efforts of wealthier divisions, but I am also conscious of providing opportunities for those poorer division.

The member is quite right. I think that we have to look at this in a very holistic way. Certainly, I am very bullish on International

Education from my own personal perspective and my own personal experience in my own life as well as the initiatives that were undertaken by the former government that we are endeavouring to carry on with Henan province in China, and so forth.

The member might be interested in, and this will wrap it up, I was in Brandon at the Brandon University spring convocation over the weekend. My colleague Len Evans, my predecessor in Brandon East, received an honorary degree, Doctor of Laws, at that convocation, which I am just thrilled for him to achieve. It was a very, very deserving and a very nice day and at the same time as the Guess Who were getting their honorary doctorates of Music.

There were a number of Chinese students graduating from Brandon University this year, and, you know, the three or four years that those students spent in Brandon put hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars into the local economy, into the local school system and into the university. So your remarks are spot on, and I appreciate them.

**Madam Chairperson:** The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

\* (16:30)

**Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos):** Will the Committee of Supply come to order please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

We are on page 106 of the Estimates book, resolution 13.1. This section of the Committee of Supply agreed to have a global discussion. The table is now open for questions.

**Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte):** Just with regard to subappropriation 13.5.(e), where I believe we were finishing off, I would just like to confirm that the minister will provide a list of the breakdown of the grants for me for each individual item in there. I cannot remember if I asked that question on Thursday or not.

**Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Yes, I think you

had asked for the REDI feasibility grants at the end. I think that is the line we were on. Is it, or which ones are we on?

**Mr. Loewen:** Sorry, Mr. Chairperson, I am on the grants to the organizations, Economic Development Winnipeg, Urban Green Team, \$17,750,000. If I could get just a list of how much each grant is to each individual body there?

**Ms. Friesen:** Yes, I remember that now. Yes, we had read them out, and the member wanted a list. We will do that.

**Mr. Loewen:** Just for clarification. There were sort of two areas. One, I was asking for the differences, which is what you read into the record, but I would also like a list of every one, even the ones that are the same, just to clarify that.

We can move on to subappropriation 13.6.(a)(1) Unconditional Grant - Urban Community Development, this is the grant to the City of Winnipeg on net VLT revenue. I am just wondering if any analysis has been undertaken that would indicate the possible effect of opening four, possibly five Aboriginal casinos, if the opening of those extra gaming sites, if any analysis has been done in anticipation that it may have a negative impact on the amount of gaming that takes place in Winnipeg.

\* (16:40)

**Ms. Friesen:** Before I answer that, I wanted to introduce three additional staff who are here today: on my left, Laurie Davidson, Director of Provincial-Municipal Support Services; facing her, Jill Vogan, the director of the infrastructure secretariat; and, on Jill's left, Denise Carlyle, departmental controller.

To respond to the member's question, I think he probably knows—it may have been just a miss, slip—there are no additional casinos proposed in Winnipeg. I think he may have meant province-wide.

The question he is asking about analysis I think is one that is better directed to the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Ashton). This particular line simply deals with the distribution

of existing lottery money, which is a formula-based assumption about unconditional grants to municipalities, either to the rural municipalities or to the City of Winnipeg.

**Mr. Loewen:** I thank the minister for that. I understand the proposal calls for the new casinos to be outside of the city of Winnipeg, but certainly some of them that are being discussed are close enough to the city of Winnipeg that it, I am sure, will have some effect on the amount of gaming that takes place in the city of Winnipeg, particularly during the summer months because some of them are talked about being closer to some of our cottage country.

My understanding is that the funding provided on net VLT revenues is generated in Winnipeg. I am just wondering if it is anticipated that as a result of the proximity of some of these casinos, that there may be less revenue to distribute in Winnipeg. If nothing has been undertaken by this department and it all falls within the Minister of Government Services, I would be glad to take the question up there, but I just want to clarify that.

**Ms. Friesen:** I think the question is still better directed to the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Ashton) on the effect of additional gaming.

**Mr. Loewen:** With regard to video lottery terminal activity within the City of Winnipeg, part of the press announcement with regard to the funding for a new downtown arena-entertainment complex, part of that included a commitment to the True North proponents with regard to VLTs and an annual contribution. Could the minister advise the exact nature of that proposed contribution?

**Ms. Friesen:** I think part of the agreement with the True North group, if I can call them that, is to reallocate a number of VLTs from within Winnipeg to the complex, thus enabling them to have a revenue stream.

\* (16:50)

**Mr. Loewen:** Can the minister advise the number of VLTs and the anticipated annual revenue stream?

**Ms. Friesen:** Mr. Chairman, I believe that there are in the region of 50 VLTs that are being spoken of, and that the revenue from that could be an anticipated \$1.5 million.

**Mr. Loewen:** I understand, if the minister could confirm, that the revenue stream to go to True North is unlike the revenue stream that a normal VLT would produce, say, if it were in a hotel or a restaurant or a lounge. Could she give, does she know the percentage of revenue that will flow to the True North group from each VLT? I understand the normal is 90 percent for the province, 10 percent for the owner of the establishment where the VLT is located.

**Ms. Friesen:** Mr. Chairman, what I can tell the member is that VLT support for True North is similar. The formula is similar but not as generous as the arrangement provided to the Jockey Club. I think he is probably familiar with the arrangement that the previous government made. They receive 140 VLTs at 75 percent.

**Mr. Loewen:** Would the 50 VLTs provide the 75% return to the True North Project as well?

**Ms. Friesen:** I wonder if the member could repeat his question and clarify what it is he needs. In part, what we have here is departmental Estimates. We do not have a great deal here. At least I do not have a great deal here on True North, and I think he is looking for a level of detail that I do not have with me but that we could provide later if he would be clear on what it is he is looking for.

**Mr. Loewen:** Well, I am looking for information that presumably would be included in the business plan, but I understand that a minimum of 50 VLTs has been committed to the True North Project and that they are to provide a revenue stream.

So I am basically looking for all of the information on that, including the amount. There is a percentage of revenue that will flow to True North, if it is the same as the Jockey Club at 75 percent or if it is higher. It has been estimated to generate revenue at a rate of approximately \$1.5 million a year. I would like to know if that is a maximum, a minimum, or just an estimate and what would happen if it generated \$1 million a

year or \$2 million a year, if are there other commitments there.

I think, most importantly, I am looking for information on the contractual obligations that will flow with these VLTs. In particular, what would happen if the City of Winnipeg, within its legal authority, conducted a mandate and requested that VLTs be removed from the city of Winnipeg. There is, I think, a likely possibility that may occur in the near future, and if this Government has signed a 25-year contract, then I think that is information that should be made available.

\* (17:00)

The reason I am asking it under this section in Estimates is because I would like to know what the possible future effect might be to this grant to the City of Winnipeg, given that 50 VLTs generating revenue at 90 percent would be taken out of the system and put into, I guess, another location which would not generate as much revenue, possibly a million and a half to two million dollars less revenue from the VLTs, and what effect that would have on this operating grant. So, in a nutshell, Mr. Chair, that is information I would like to obtain from the minister.

**Ms. Friesen:** I thank the member for making it more specific. Mr. Chair, we do not have all that information with us. In fact some of it I think is in other departments as well, but we will do our best to answer the questions he has raised as soon as we can.

**Mr. Loewen:** Just one other issue in that area. There has been a document, a Cabinet briefing document, that indicates the possible revenue may be as high as \$1.8 million a year. So if the minister could advise that as well I would appreciate that.

**Ms. Friesen:** I am not sure I heard the member correctly. Did he say Cabinet briefing document that says something—is that the right title? Is that something we should be looking for?

**Mr. Loewen:** The Cabinet briefing document is a document that I believe is out, and the media

has a copy of. It estimates the revenue could be \$1.8 million a year, and I would like to know.

Well, Mr. Chair, I look forward to getting that information from the minister, and for the time being if then we could move on to subappropriation 13-6B-2D on page 99, the Infrastructure Development grant, and this one particularly is a grant to the R.M. of Portage la Prairie regarding Simplot, as well the Rural Municipality of Hanover. My particular interest is with regard to the grant to the city and the R.M. of Portage la Prairie to meet the needs of the Simplot development.

I guess the first question is, and I know that it has been announced that the project is delayed by at least a year: Is the minister still expecting this project to go ahead and this grant to be needed within this fiscal year?

**Ms. Friesen:** Yes, there has been a delay in the Simplot project, but we have been given every assurance that it will continue. The member is asking whether the grant for waste water in this coming fiscal year will thus be required if the project is to be delayed. It is my understanding that the grant encompasses planning, research, engineering study. I do not know what the date of beginning construction is, but certainly the money will be expended in that preparatory work in the fiscal year.

**Mr. Loewen:** I thank the minister for that. We will look forward to further announcements regarding the Simplot development in Portage la Prairie.

I would like to turn to the Canada-Manitoba agreement, section 13.7., particularly as it deals with the infrastructure agreement. The input deadline for the first round, I believe, was sometime in January. I am just wondering if the minister could update us on where the process is at in terms of the evaluation of the infrastructure requests that were submitted through the first round. I know they were going to be subject to an evaluation by a team working on the infrastructure project. I am just wondering where the process is at today.

**Ms. Friesen:** The first intake deadline was January 31, 2001. I believe in that round there

were 300 applications with a total request of \$418 million, thus exceeding requests in this first few months of application by a ratio of three to one.

The second program intake will be October 31, 2001. As the member knows, this is the first year of a six-year program.

Five projects have been announced so far: \$1.6 million for the Winnipeg Floodway, the improvements known as the notches; \$2.3 million and \$2 million to improve water quality for two communities who have "boil water" advisories, Balmoral in the R.M. of Rockwood, and Haywood in the R.M. of Grey; \$400,000 for a water treatment plant upgrade in Cormorant, northern Manitoba, and then the True North downtown entertainment centre.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Minister, for that information. What I was really looking for was further information on where the review process is within her department and the group that is working on reviewing all of the applications that were submitted prior to the January 31 deadline.

\* (17:10)

**Ms. Friesen:** Modifying the previous practice, we do have a federal-provincial consultative committee which reviews proposals and makes preliminary recommendations to the two levels of government, who are the partners in this partnership agreement with the federal and provincial governments. They have done that for the first intake and have made recommendations to both levels of government, and those are proceeding through the various systems, approval levels, of both levels of government.

If I could perhaps take this opportunity to read into the record the names of the people who are serving on that advisory committee and also take this opportunity to thank them for the work that they do, it is a tremendous amount of work, not just in the reading and preparation of applications, but also in the selection of applications. In the first round of any program like this, it is extremely difficult to make recommendations since there are a great many applications and a great range of needs. In the

areas of infrastructure, the needs, I think, across western Canada are particularly clear and, in some areas, quite severe.

The names of the people involved are: Wayne Motheral, the President of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities; Grant Buchanan and Stu Briese, who are both vice-presidents of the AMM; Sonny Cline, President of the Northern Association of Community Councils; Brenda Boulet, the northern capital board; and Jim Perchaluk from Aboriginal and Northern Affairs on behalf of Manitoba.

I think the AMM has been very much involved in this in a previous program. What we did this time was to add to the previous consultative committee representation from the north. Part of the priorities for the infrastructure program is to deal with infrastructure right across Manitoba, and we thought it would be very important to have the advice of the northern representatives.

It has not been an easy task, but it is certainly one that I think people have both enjoyed and found very fruitful and very useful to have representation from right across the province.

I know that the work involved is very intensive, and I know that our staff work very intensively on those days when the selection is done. This is the first in a new program, so there are always I think new procedures and new principles that need to be established, so that one anticipates that later intakes will be done a little more quickly; although you never know, as you come to the end of a program, you also have to make very difficult decisions, too. So perhaps that is not the right approach to suggest.

These are always difficult decisions, and this is, of course, a program where we had anticipated more money from the federal government even within the constraints of the kind of program that they were proposing across the province. We had anticipated, until a year ago last October, that we would have several more million dollars to deal with. We did not. The formula was changed, and I think that is something that was unexpected and has meant that Manitoba has less than we had anticipated. Given the needs of infrastructure across the

province, I think, and in other provinces as well, there is great concern about the funding of future infrastructure programs.

Nevertheless, this is what we have. It targets green infrastructure in the federal program generally, but also has secondary priorities for dealing with tourism, with local transportation, cultural and recreation facilities, rural and remote telecommunications, affordable housing, high-speed Internet access for local public institutions. Those are all secondary priorities.

So I think, Mr. Chairperson, within those constraints, the committee has worked very diligently and indeed very quickly to make its recommendations. Now there are procedures through which both federal and provincial must pass, and that is really where we are. We have announced the ones that can be announced at this stage, and we are doing our best to move the others as quickly as possible in conjunction with the federal government.

**Mr. Loewen:** Just for clarification, I thought the minister early in her response indicated there were eight people on the committee. I only heard six names. I am wondering, did I miss two?

**Ms. Friesen:** Six people.

**Mr. Loewen:** I thank the minister for that clarification.

The City of Winnipeg passed a unanimous resolution prior to the January 1 deadline and submitted a list of eight projects that were based on that unanimous resolution. I am just wondering, Mr. Chairperson, if the minister could indicate how those projects were ranked.

For the record, I note that the arena was not one of those projects highlighted by the City of Winnipeg's amendment. I am just curious to know, given that the process is complete and the minister indicates the recommendations have been made, how those eight projects fared.

**Ms. Friesen:** What I was indicating had been completed in the first round were the rural and northern projects that are dealt with by this consultative committee.

The City of Winnipeg projects are dealt with in a different way, and as in the previous agreement, the City of Winnipeg puts forward its list of priorities which it did as a result of a council resolution.

City Council, as the member knows, approved seven infrastructure programs: Water-front drive; Provencher pedestrian bridge; street system renewals, a package of those; the St. James Centennial Pool expansion; a rapid transit corridor, or at least phase one of a rapid transit corridor; Assiniboine Park improvements; and Kenaston underpass. The City did not, as the member knows, indicate any priorities amongst those. Again, the list of infrastructure projects that the City submitted exceeds in large amount, the total is—just to complete that, the actual applications, I believe, total \$133 million from the City. The federal and provincial governments, and the member is right that True North is not on that list, are looking at those and trying to make the best decisions they can about the choices that need to be made for the city of Winnipeg.

If I can put it in context again for the member, it is a six-year agreement, and it is an agreement of \$181 million for the province as a whole. The deputy minister is correcting me; I said 181, it is 180.

\* (17:20)

**Mr. Loewen:** I thank the minister for that. Is she suggesting then that the City of Winnipeg applications do not go through an independent evaluation process, that they are purely political decisions, or is there an evaluation committee made up of—and I am not sure whether it would be staff from the City and the Province or whether it is volunteers that would analyze the applications with particular focus on meeting the project types, as described in the infrastructure program information that was released with the application. If she could just clarify what the process is with regard to those items.

**Ms. Friesen:** The City, as I said, put forward its proposal, a proposal which would have taken a fair chunk of the six-year agreement and much of the provincial money. So they indicated what their range of priorities are. What happens after



that is there is a federal-provincial infrastructure staff who work with three people from the City to look at where the fit is. Just as the infrastructure staff work with the AMM advisory committee, they work with the committee from the City. Mr. Chair, the City has designated Mr. Rick Borland, who is the director of Transit; Mr. Jim Thompson from the City Streets department, and Ernie Gilroy from the mayor's office. Discussions are continuing with staff of the infrastructure program on how the large range of priorities the City has indicated can best fit with the priorities of the federal and provincial government partnership.

The next step once staff have met and discussed then is discussions also continue with the management committee. Mr. Chair, I think that is indicated in the agreement. The management committee consists of Jim Eldridge from the provincial government, the Deputy Minister of Federal-Provincial Relations; Orville Buffie from Western Diversification for the federal government; and the two alternates are Marie Elliott, the Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs; and George Skinner from Western Diversification as well, also an alternate. I think some of that is laid out in the agreement.

**Mr. Loewen:** Where I run into difficulty, both Jim Eldridge and Marie Elliott, directly or indirectly, work for the Premier (Mr. Doer). I am a little bit amazed that the Premier has been in public as stating he would not provide support or provide funding for the Kenaston underpass project. I am wondering if the minister actually believes this committee could do—she mentioned Rick Borland, Jim Thompson and Ernie Gilroy from the City—whether they and others involved in these discussions could really have an appropriate discussion, given that political statements have been made that the Kenaston underpass would not be funded under any circumstances, just somewhat incredible that we would have this type of talent working on the merits of this proposal without being prejudiced by the statements made by the Premier.

I am just wondering what credibility the minister believes can be given to the process she has described when the Premier has been out in front of it for over two months indicating that,

for no other reason than his personal like or dislike of a project, it will not be funded.

**Ms. Friesen:** I understood what the member was asking for earlier was what was the comparable process for the AMM northern reeves and mayors' process that I had described earlier. What I was describing to him, through the management committee and the resolutions of council, was an explanation of how the projects are assessed by the secretariat against the program criteria.

\* (17:30)

**Mr. Loewen:** I appreciate what the minister is describing. It is interesting to note that there is a process. I guess my question is: Why, from a policy perspective, do they bother putting these people through this type of process when the decisions are obviously purely made on political grounds?

**Ms. Friesen:** The City Council, by its political will, has indicated, a resolution of council has indicated, a number of proposals without attached priorities. The role of the Province and the federal government, the two departments in this agreement, will be to determine where those priorities fit with the priorities of the program that has been put together under the infrastructure secretariat and the needs of the federal and provincial government in this program, the criteria that they have established, and the needs of the citizens of Winnipeg as they can best interpret them.

**Mr. Loewen:** My question to the minister is quite simple, I think. Does she actually believe, if Jim Eldridge and Marie Elliott felt that, of all the projects listed, when based on the criteria that the Kenaston underpass was the highest priority, based on the priority assigned to the project in its description, that they would then be in a position where they would be able to do an independent analysis and indicate that it should be given the No. 1 priority when the Premier, who they either work directly or indirectly for, has already stated publicly that there is no way that the Kenaston underpass will be funded? How would they give a proper evaluation, and why would they bother, given the Premier's statements?

**Ms. Friesen:** The member was asking as to what advisory committees are in process at the rural and urban level. I have indicated, in my answers, the difference between the two. Mr. Chair, the City of Winnipeg, by its political direction, has indicated a list that is \$133 million long. They chose not to make their priorities known. In the end, those priorities are going to have to be established by the federal and provincial government. We have committees, such as the management committee, such as the staff committee that I indicated to the member who can assist with looking at the merits of the programs and the cost, the competing priorities, and just as the AMM northern mayors' committee looks at the details and the proposals and the priorities of the program in their analysis of the many, many projects that came in from rural and northern Manitoba.

Again, I remind the member that this is a six-year program. It is \$118 million and the City of Winnipeg has put in a list of projects that are \$133 million without listing what their priorities are.

**Mr. Loewen:** I appreciate the fact that there is a committee looking at the details and placing priorities on the different programs. I would ask the minister: Has she seen the output from the committee that is going through these proposals and ranking them according to priority and how they match up with the infrastructure program? To her knowledge, has this analysis been given to the Premier, and if so, when?

**Ms. Friesen:** What I can say is that I think—I do not know if the member had experience or has had advice from previous processes for the infrastructure agreement. I think in previous government, it was run quite directly by the Minister of Finance or out of the Department of Finance.

There are a number of changes that have been made, and what we are doing is taking the process through to Cabinet committees. I think also that the federal government is applying some of the recommendations of the auditor on the HRDC issues so that there are lengthier procedures for both federal and provincial governments.

\* (17:40)

**Mr. Loewen:** I do not want to belabour this point too much, but given that since I have been elected we have had a young mother killed in a collision with an automobile and a train along that stretch of road, quite likely because she was trying to beat the train. On the weekend we saw a 75-year-old man was hit by a train, not at Kenaston and Wilkes, but certainly in that vicinity, in a situation that the building of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes would have created a safer situation. This is not a matter of convenience; this is a matter of safety.

We have a situation that exists now where ambulances, fire and rescue units are instructed not to use that route as they try to get from their station on Waverley simply because of the trains. This is a matter of public safety, and quite an important one, as well as a matter of economics. Certainly from my analysis of it, I do not think there is a project on a proper factual analysis that would receive more points for meeting the criteria of the infrastructure program than the underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes, certainly not amongst the list of seven that the City has prepared.

Perhaps the minister would be willing to ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) the next time she sees him at Cabinet how many more people will have to die or be injured as a result of collisions with trains before he gets off his political agenda and lets the process come to the desired outcome that would otherwise arrive without his political interference.

**Ms. Friesen:** Well, I will perhaps leave aside the manner of the member's question. Nobody accepts deaths in that manner. Nobody takes pleasure in that, nor does anybody take pleasure in the difficulties that are faced by people who live in that part of the city. I think people are aware of the long-standing nature of the transport issues in that sector of Winnipeg.

I again remind the member that the City of Winnipeg, which is the list that we are dealing with, put forward a number of projects. They did not indicate this was a priority, nor did they indicate any of their other pieces was a priority.

That is the issue that we have to deal with and that is the issue that, I think, is the one that we are talking about here.

**Mr. Loewen:** Nobody is disagreeing that the City did not prioritize their list of seven. They certainly passed unanimous consent, but at the time, they unanimously approved that motion, I do not believe that they, for one instance, thought that they would not, those seven projects would not receive a fair and equal evaluation. The fact that the Premier jumped the process in the same way he is jumping ahead of the process without all the facts being in with regards to floodway expansion, I would hope that the minister would take this up with the Premier and perhaps indicate to him that maybe, before he goes out on a high-handed method and recommends one project, or makes claims that another project will never see the light of day under his watch, maybe he should wait until the facts are in.

I would like to move to subappropriation 13.8., Neighbourhoods Alive! Program, and I would like to ask the minister: In the election campaign in 1999, certainly, under the Neighbourhoods Alive! promises, there was a promise to offer six days of unpaid leave per family. I am wondering if the minister could indicate where legislation is with regards to fulfilling that promise.

**Ms. Friesen:** I do not want to leave the member's hyperbole about the Premier on the record. I am challenged. I think that was unnecessary. I think we are faced with an issue of the City of Winnipeg listing a number of projects without indicating a priority. Now I understand that the member represents that area and I quite understand him bringing forward these concerns. That is his responsibility to do that. As I said, I think that the issues of traffic in the area that he represents are of long-standing nature. There was a government in this province for 11 years which chose not to deal with that particular issue. So we are faced with it as part of a series of proposals on behalf of the City of Winnipeg which total \$133 million, for an overall pot, I remind him, of \$180 million for the entire province. We are doing our best, in conjunction with the federal government, to allocate, as best we can, the highest priorities for

the City of Winnipeg, as well as for the rest of Manitoba. Those are the issues which the Premier is dealing with.

The member asked about Neighbourhoods Alive! The Neighbourhoods Alive! is a community revitalization program. I think the member has, perhaps, attributed to that program issues which are not part of a community development program, but may be issues that may be raised with other ministers. The Neighbourhoods Alive! program deals with a number of communities in Brandon, Thompson, and the several communities in the City of Winnipeg, and is a means to begin, and I say begin advisedly, because this is something which is going to take a considerable amount of time. Community development, in any case, always takes time because it takes discussion. It takes reflection and it takes a lot of local people getting together in many different ways for projects for which they have to determine the priorities, and for which they also look for partnership with governments and, indeed, with other agencies. Although it assists, it certainly is not part of family services or of labour legislation such as the member might be addressing, Mr. Chair, but it is about revitalizing communities in the heart of Winnipeg, as well as in Brandon, in Thompson.

I say it advisedly that it is a lengthy process, because it is not just the process of community revitalization itself which takes time, but it is the fact that there are a number of communities in the heart of Winnipeg which have deteriorated considerably, and whose infrastructure and community participation needs a great deal of support. This is not uniform across the communities that have been designated as Neighbourhoods Alive! communities.

\* (17:50)

There are some communities which have had a number of years of community revitalization and have been blessed, I should say, with organizations within the community which have been very significant players in this. Others have been less fortunate, Mr. Chair, but are equally suffering, perhaps even more so—the deterioration that we have seen, and which in part, I think, leads to the kind of arson problems

that we saw immediately upon our taking government in Manitoba.

As the member knows, there are a number of ways in which we did pool the resources of departments to deal very quickly with those arson issues, from the Department of Justice, to the Department of Labour, to Intergovernmental Affairs, and the development of the Neighbourhoods Alive! program.

The issue of family leave, which I think is the general issue he is raising, is not part of the Neighbourhoods Alive! program.

**Mr. Loewen:** I just have one more question, and then, subject to some of the information coming back which the minister agreed to, I guess I will have some more questions during Concurrence. With regard to the providing of \$10,000 per home for the purchase and renovation of homes, could the minister revise, and I appreciate she may not have the number right here today, but how many grants have been given in total? How many of those up to \$10,000 in grants have been given?

**Ms. Friesen:** I understand that the member may well have it in the material in front of him as part of Neighbourhoods Alive! The part of Neighbourhoods Alive! that I am responsible for does not include all of the housing. In fact, much of the housing portion of it is done through the Department of Family Services and Housing. The Department of Family Services and Housing, as you know, Mr. Chair, was able to bring all three levels of government together, the City, the Province, and the federal government, to create the WHHI, the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative, which is pulling together all the resources of each level of government to provide the very significant housing component of neighbourhood renewal.

What Neighbourhoods Alive! as a program does, and that is what this department works with, is basically to say housing is not enough. We know that housing is very significant, perhaps one of the most significant things which you can do to make a difference in a family's life, so that the pulling together of all the resources across three levels of government, I think, was a very significant achievement and one that that the particular question that the

member is asking about that specific component, is better addressed to the Minister of Housing, who would be able to give you the context of the program, the federal requirements, as well as the way in which the programs have all been harnessed together.

What Neighbourhoods Alive! does is to say yes, housing is important, but housing is not enough, and that what is needed is also community renewal, whether it is in the provision of landlord tenant assistance, whether it is in the provision of playgrounds in recreational areas, or whether it is in the area of community development and planning, or indeed of community economic development as well. So Neighbourhoods Alive!, in a sense, is adjacent to the housing piece. I am very much supportive of it. The staff of the two programs work very closely together, but the actual piece of the program that the member is interested in, would be better addressed to the Minister of Housing.

**Mr. Chairperson:** No more questions? Resolution 13.2. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$990,500 for Intergovernmental Affairs, Boards, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

*Resolution agreed to.*

Resolution 13.3. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,694,700 for Intergovernmental Affairs, Community and Land Use Planning Services, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

*Resolution agreed to.*

Resolution 13.4. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$9,597,700 for Intergovernmental Affairs, Provincial-Municipal Support Services, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

*Resolution agreed to.*

Resolution 13.5. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$35,669,200 for Intergovernmental Affairs, Economic and Community Development

Services, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 13.6. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$73,450,500 for Intergovernmental Affairs, Financial Assistance to Municipalities, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 13.7. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$14,116,200 for Intergovernmental Affairs, Canada-Manitoba Agreements.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 13.8. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3 million for Intergovernmental Affairs, Neighbourhoods Alive!, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 13.9. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$463,400 for Intergovernmental Affairs, Amortization of Capital Assets, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

***Resolution agreed to.***

Resolution 13.1. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,471,500 for Intergovernmental Affairs, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2002.

***Resolution agreed to.***

This concludes the Estimates for Intergovernmental Affairs. 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 (Tuesday).

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 28, 2001

## CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>		Praznik; Barrett	2342
		Schuler; Barrett	2342
<b>Presenting Petitions</b>		Maguire; Barrett	2343
Kenaston Underpass		Pine Falls Paper Company	
Stefanson for Loewen	2331	Praznik; Chomiak	2336
Pitura	2331	Praznik; Caldwell	2336
Driedger	2331		
Manitoba Hydro Lines Routes		East St. Paul	
Schuler	2331	Gerrard; Chomiak	2337
The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba		Water Testing	
Asper	2331	Gerrard; Chomiak	2337
<b>Reading and Receiving Petitions</b>		Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program	
Manitoba Hydro Lines Routes		Dyck; Caldwell	2338
Schuler	2331	Manitoba Lakes	
Kenaston Underpass		Enns; Caldwell for Lathlin	2339
Pitura	2332	Lake Winnipeg	
Stefanson for Loewen	2332	Enns; Selinger for Lathlin	2340
<b>Tabling of Reports</b>		Disaster Financial Assistance	
Annual Report of the Automobile Injury		Pitura; Ashton	2340
Compensation Appeal Commission for		Canada–Manitoba Adjustment Program	
the fiscal year ending March 31, 2001		Jack Penner; Wowchuk	2341
S. Smith	2332	Environmental Hazards	
<b>Introduction of Bills</b>		Praznik; Caldwell	2342
Bill 27–The Manitoba Hydro Amendment		<b>Members' Statements</b>	
Act (2)		Darwin School Cabaret Night	
Selinger	2332	Asper	2344
<b>Oral Questions</b>		Mr. John Friesen	
Esso Terminal–Henderson Highway		Jim Penner	2345
Schuler; Caldwell	2333	Heritage Park Playground Structure	
Schuler; Barrett	2333	Rondeau	2345
Maguire; Caldwell	2334	Farm Family of the Year	
Cummings; Caldwell	2334	Maguire	2345
Cummings; Chomiak	2335	Canadian Peacekeeping Service Medal	
Praznik; Chomiak	2335	Korzeniowski	2346
Caldwell	2342		

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**Second Readings**

Bill 20–The Farm Products Marketing and  
Consequential Amendments Act  
Wowchuk 2347

Bill 15–The Mortgage Amendment Act  
S. Smith 2348

Bill 23–The Highway Traffic Amendment  
Act  
Ashton 2349

**Committee of Supply  
(Concurrent Sections)**

Health 2351

Education, Training and Youth 2374

Intergovernmental Affairs 2404