



Third Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 29, 1997

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Obstetrics Closure—Grace General Hospital

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of J. Sprange, L. Graham and Micheline Hay praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) consider stopping the closure of the obstetrics program at Winnipeg's Grace Hospital.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Ruth Hansen, Jennette McCalla and Betty Woodman praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Health consider stopping the closure of obstetrics programs at Winnipeg's Grace Hospital.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Obstetrics Closure—Grace General Hospital

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

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

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

THAT the obstetrics program has always been an important part of the Grace Hospital's mandate; and

THAT both people in the community and a number of government studies have recommended against the further closure of community hospitals' obstetrics programs; and

THAT as a result of federal and provincial cuts in the health budget, hospitals are being forced to eliminate programs in order to balance their own budgets; and

THAT the closure of the Grace Hospital obstetrics ward will mean laying off 54 health care professionals, many of whom have years of experience and dedicated service in obstetrics; and

THAT moving to a model where more and more births are centred in the tertiary care hospitals will be more costly and decreases the choices for women about where they can give birth.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) consider stopping the closure of the obstetrics program at Winnipeg's Grace Hospital.

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY
STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

Committee of Supply

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

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

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 37—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that leave be given to introduce Bill 37, The Highway Traffic

Amendment Act (Loi modifiant le Code de la route), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

**Bill 38—The Highway Traffic
Amendment Act (2)**

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), that leave be given to introduce Bill 38, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2) (Loi no 2 modifiant le Code de la route), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon four different groups. Firstly, we have forty Grade 11 students from Warren Collegiate under the direction of Mr. Jake Wiebe and Mr. John Smith. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns).

Also, thirty Grades 11 and 12 students from Sisler High School under the direction of Mr. Chris Bandfield. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

Also, 20 adult ESL students from Red River Community College under the direction of Mrs. Alice Landry. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos).

Also, fifty Grade 11 students from Churchill High School under the direction of Mr. Edwin Lenzmann. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford).

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

* (1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Drug Patent Law
Impact on Generic Drug Industry**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the acting Acting Premier, Madam Speaker. In the 1993 federal election, the federal Liberals campaigned under the platform of integrity, commitment and vision to remove the drug patent law here in Canada, Bill C-91. Unfortunately, since that time, the federal Liberal government has now come out with the report shared and authored by one David Walker which recommends that the 20-year period for drug patent laws be maintained here in Canada and that we accept this 20-year patent protection law.

I would like to ask either the Acting Health minister or the Acting Premier: What is the impact on drug costs here in Manitoba, and what is the impact on jobs here in terms of the potential for our generic drug industry in this province?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Acting Premier): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition because, as a matter of fact, Manitoba has the genesis of a very good generic drug manufacturing capability. We have some of the strongest opportunities here, which are being frustrated by the legislation as it is presently being maintained and being supported by the federal Liberal government. As a matter of fact, while the job numbers are not at my fingertips, Manitoba is missing an opportunity and the patients of this country are missing an opportunity in saving some costs.

Repeal

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): As I understand it, this will cost the drug plans about 13 percent annual increases in their costs and will cost consumers considerably, as well as the jobs here in Manitoba that are affected in a negative way. I would like to ask the Acting Premier or the Acting Minister of Health, Madam Speaker, whether in fact any other platforms here in the province of Manitoba—are there any other national parties campaigning on the repeal of C-91 which, of course, is in the best interests of Manitobans and the best interests, we believe, in terms

of Canadian consumers on drug costs and keeping those drug costs down for all consumers.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Acting Premier): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition puts his finger on what has been one of the most frustrating budgetary problems that this government and people across the country have been facing in terms of Pharmacare and being able to manage the Pharmacare costs. It is well documented that we saw uncontrollable increases in the costs of Pharmacare directly driven by the cost of drugs, not just the usage of the drugs but the direct increases in the costs and, unless we are able to start controlling those costs and delivering cost-effective drug therapy and drug treatment to the patients in this country, we are going to continue to see severe problems in financing health care.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, I agree with the minister. In fact, our side agrees totally with the minister. Can the minister explain why there is only one party in Canada proposing to repeal C-91 and why his national party is not going along with his provincial party after they have endorsed each other to repeal C-91 on behalf of consumers in Canada and on behalf of Manitoba jobs? Can he explain that to the people of Manitoba?

Hon. James McCrae (Acting Minister of Health): The honourable Leader of the Opposition is wise indeed to raise this topic at this particular time in the history of Canada. As a former Health minister, I, along with many other Manitobans, suffered under a regime that allowed patent protection beyond that which would be needed to keep an industry going in Canada. What is interesting—I have been made aware of some internal Liberal documents that show that Liberals are bragging in Montreal about all of the job creation under that Bill C-91 and in other places pretending to speak out for protecting senior citizens.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition is right to bring this forward. I remind him and honourable members about the red book promise for a review of that particular legislation. This government asked repeatedly the federal Liberal government to carry out that red book promise, and they turned their backs on that one too.

Orthotic/Prosthetic Services User Fees

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, a new question, a very serious question to the Acting Minister of Health: The Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) have been copied on letters indicating that the Health Services Commission is recommending to the provincial government an introduction of a 25 percent user fee for orthotics and prosthetics here in the province of Manitoba. I would like to hear from the government whether they have rejected this horrible, horrible recommendation that has been made to the government, which is totally inconsistent with the principles of a good universal health care system here in Manitoba.

Hon. James McCrae (Acting Minister of Health): Again, Madam Speaker, the honourable Leader of the Opposition raises a classic case of the federal Liberal approach, which is to cut provincial governments off at the knees when it comes to funding and then go out and tell people they are the ones that are out there protecting medicare. Certainly, as to the specifics of the question, I would pass that on to the Minister of Health so that he can get back to the Leader of the Opposition, but I have no doubt that the Minister of Health would not fail to call attention to the fact that some \$220 million is being removed from our social spending here in Manitoba by the federal Liberal government, and it needs to be brought out now. This is an important time for it to be made known.

Mr. Doer: I would like to table a number of letters for the attention of the House that have been sent to the Premier and the Minister of Health on previous dates, including dates as early as April 10, 1997, wherein they indicate in the letters—and this is from the Manitoba Orthotics/Prosthetics Association—that a young person with spina bifida that is required to pay this 25 percent user fee would in fact for \$4,000 worth of equipment be required to pay well over \$1,000 for this policy.

Will the government today, will the Acting Premier today reject this recommendation, this policy introduction that is being proposed in the provincial government health service? Will they say today totally that they are opposed to this and they reject it and will not accept it as a recommendation in our health care system?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Acting Premier): Madam Speaker, without accepting the preamble and the authenticity of the concerns that the member raises, let me reiterate that we intend to do everything we can to make affordable and quality health care available to all Manitobans.

Mr. Doer: The letter tabled, copied to the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), of April 10, 1997, from the Manitoba association, as I indicated, states clearly that people involved with the most difficult of disabilities will face the most elaborate costs and the most expensive types of equipment. They will be encumbered, and I quote, "with the greatest financial hardship."

Given the statement of the Acting Premier today, it seems to us to be quite logical that those who would have the greatest hardship would not be penalized by this government. Can he say today that they will not accept this recommendation of the 25 percent, and they will refuse to put this tremendous hardship on Manitoba citizens that require these very, very necessary health care services in this province?

Mr. Cummings: Again, I am not going to accept the authenticity or the preamble that the member puts forward, but I am sure that he appreciates the desire to deliver a quality and effective health care service. Something that strikes me as being relevant to this debate in terms of dealing with the costs and the volumes, certainly not related to the prosthesis situation but related to the volumes, that government, and through the health care services, is attempting to increase service availability. Contrary to what has been raised as concerns from time to time recently, we have seen an example over the last six years where cardiac service has grown by 50 percent, cataract surgeries by 44 percent, hip replacements by 24 percent. Madam Speaker, service needs to be provided and it will be.

* (1345)

Prosecutions Division Workload

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, to the Minister of Justice: For the third time this week alone, Manitobans are hearing about more serious foul-

ups in the Justice department. This time Mark Zoldy, a victim of an alleged death threat, an act of hate, who waited over one year for justice, found out the accused was acquitted because the prosecutor did not show up for trial.

My question to the minister is: Can the minister, who avoided our questions two days ago about understaffing and overwork in our courts following the flip-flop opinion on the Nancy Friday book, Robert Guiboche's mistaken release from the Remand Centre and Lisa Drover's case that went to trial with no witnesses, now admit there is a problem, there is a real problem, or is this a new standard?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, again we have the member of the opposition criticizing prosecutors in the department. In fact, the member specifically indicated that the prosecutor did not show up, and that is not correct. He is simply again casting aspersions on a member of the public service, and that is not called for.

What I want to indicate is that the officials in the department in fact have reviewed the circumstances surrounding provincial Judge Kopstein's decision to dismiss this charge, and departmental officials have concluded that the judge erred in law in dismissing that charge.

In this type of circumstance, Section 485.1 of the Criminal Code indicates and authorizes the Deputy Attorney General to consent to the re-laying of charges. After reviewing the situation, the Deputy Attorney General has provided his consent so that the charge will be relaid shortly, and the case can be heard before the Provincial Court on its merits. This member should apologize to the prosecutor.

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

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister, who misconstrues my question as one reflecting on the prosecutor when I am reflecting on this government's priorities, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for St. Johns that no preamble or

postamble is required prior to a supplementary question.

Mr. Mackintosh: My question to the minister is: Is it policy in his department that, when such a tragedy and a travesty occurs, the victim is not told of the mistake and the acquittal for six days later? Why was the victim not called when the prosecutor was summoned to the trial so he could come down and testify?

Mr. Toews: This matter is being relaid and will be heard on the merits before the courts.

You know, this is not unusual coming from the Leader or the member for St. Johns. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) stood up the other day and said a fair trial is simply a legal nicety. That is what they consider the law to be.

I have a higher duty than those kinds of words to the integrity of the system, and this member ought to realize that this matter will be proceeding before the courts and that the matter will be heard on its merits.

Operational Review

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Would the minister, who neglects to tell Manitobans that Mr. Zoldy will probably have to wait at least one more year for justice, admit or agree to this: Would the government order an operational review of Prosecutions and the courts, given this whole pattern of foul-ups, like they have done in Saskatchewan, to find out if resources and organizations have kept pace with the number of cases and their complexity, or will the government just continue to actually cut Prosecutions as it did this year?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, the member opposite and I had a long discussion yesterday about reorganization that is occurring within the department in order to assist prosecutors with their cases. We understand that there are often very difficult legal challenges. I can indicate that this department and the administrators in the department are doing everything to ensure that prosecutors deal with the merits of cases.

This is an unfortunate case, and fortunately there is an expeditious remedy that is provided in law. The departmental officials, the Deputy Attorney General have in fact indicated that this would be the appropriate way to proceed in view of the trial judge error in law.

* (1350)

Government Buildings Public Space—Art Displays

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, the Manitoba Archives building at 200 Vaughan Street is a public building and until recently included a public space where artists and arts groups could display their work, where members of the public could view Manitoba art and where public events could be held. Public space in public buildings is traditional in Manitoba, but soon this public space will house Elections Manitoba. People like the president of the Winnipeg Sketch Club, Mr. Ross Brown, say: There is no place for us to display our work.

Consequently, I want to ask the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship to tell this House what alternative public site she has arranged for those artists and groups who formerly exhibited in the Archives and, if no arrangements have been made—

An Honourable Member: Question.

Ms. McGifford: I am trying to ask the question—and if no arrangements have been made, will she make a commitment to find an alternative public site?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, that space was, as the member said, in fact used previously to display some work. However, there are a number of other sites which are available. I understand most groups have been advised of this, areas such as areas in the Legislature. The Pool of the Black Star is also an area which is available.

If the member knows of any groups or artists who need further specific information, I will be more than happy to see that they get it. There are alternative sites, and I think the names and places have been made available.

Ms. McGifford: I thank the minister for her response, and I will certainly take her advice.

**Elections Manitoba
Relocation—Archives Building**

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): I would like to ask the Minister of Government Services if his department consulted with his government's heritage building specialists before the construction of the Elections Manitoba offices in the Archives building and, if this was done, what advice was given?

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, one of the objectives of the Department of Government Services in terms of dealing with office space for government departments is to be able to—and those associated with government—to take a look at the efficient use of space that we have under the authority of the department and, as such, utilizing space efficiently is one of the objectives of the department.

In response to the specifics of the question that the member asks with regard to the heritage of the building, I would have to take that as notice, and I will get back to the member on that.

Ms. McGifford: I look forward to hearing from the minister.

I want to ask the Minister of Government Services, who must know that the Archives building was established as a public building during the 1930s, why he has chosen to move Elections Manitoba into this space rather than into already empty government space, for example, in the Norquay Building. What is the reason for this?

Mr. Pitura: Madam Speaker, Elections Manitoba is a group that is apart and has to be arm's length from government to be able to carry out the duties assigned to them. Therefore, it is imperative that they be allocated space where they can carry out these functions in an arm's length way, and the Archives building was the most suitable space identified for that use.

**Education System
Financing—Property Taxes**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The other day I talked to a constituent who lives in Meadows West, and we talked about the school portion of property tax. In 1988 she paid \$1,080 on her property tax; today she pays \$1,516. That is a \$436 increase on property tax, because this government has chosen to neglect the financing of public education in the province of Manitoba.

My question to the Minister of Finance is: Why does this government continuously abuse the need for resources in public education in this province?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Really, Madam Speaker, that question does not have much credibility coming from the member for Inkster when he stands up day in and day out and supports the reduction in funding from the federal Liberal government to Manitoba of some \$240 million over the last three years, funding very directly for health, post-secondary education and support to families.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Beauchesne's is fairly clear in the sense that the minister has an obligation to answer the questions. We have seen all sorts of fed bashing for the day. Maybe the minister can ultimately try to answer the specific question about abuse from this government as opposed to trying to pass the buck onto what is happening in Ottawa. Take responsibility.

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

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Yes, Madam Speaker, it is incredible the lengths this honourable member will go to try to protect his federal cousins from their own past and their own behaviour. The honourable member clearly has no point of order whatsoever. It was simply a matter of dispute between he and the Minister of Finance.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Inkster, indeed, does not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

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

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, when you look—and the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) has said it on many occasions—at our increase in funding to public schools since 1988, it is in excess of a hundred million dollars. If you look at our support for municipalities, almost each and every year municipalities have received additional support from our provincial government, because we are the only government in all of Canada that actually shares our personal and corporate income with our municipalities. I believe we are still the only government in Canada that shares some of the revenues of VLTs. So we are treating both school divisions and municipalities very fairly in Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the Minister of Education can tell this House—while his party was in opposition, they advocated that 80 percent of the financing of education should be coming from general revenues. Now that they are in government, things have changed. What has changed?

An Honourable Member: The federal government has changed.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, as is being pointed out to the member for Inkster, one thing that has certainly changed is the federal government, and as a result of that change, I remind him again—and I have certainly offered to share with him the numbers because he seemed to call them into question yesterday—today, three years from 1994, we have \$240 million less in support from the federal government for areas like health and education and so on.

If the member for Inkster is advocating that some of the taxes be removed from property taxes for education, then where is he advocating that that be made up? Is he suggesting that we increase provincial sales tax? Is he suggesting we increase personal income tax? Is he suggesting that we shift more responsibilities to

municipalities? If that is the position that he is advocating, where is he suggesting that money come from? Either that money will come from tax increases or offloading other responsibilities onto municipalities.

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

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Finance acknowledge that it is a question of priorities? If you take a look at what this government has done, they have spent more, invested more on the standard exams for Grade 3s than they have invested in public education in the last two years. Will he acknowledge that as being factual?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I will acknowledge that budgets are about priorities, and today we are spending 53 percent of all of the money we spend in two areas, health and education, and that is certainly more as a percentage of our budget than when we formed government back in 1988. It clearly shows that the priorities of this government are quality health and educational services for all Manitobans.

Manitoba Housing Authority Play Structure Approval

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Housing.

Today the Manitoba Housing Authority board is meeting, and one of the proposals and budgets that they are considering is from the Triplex Tenant Association on Robson and Plessis Road to erect a play structure in the constituency of Radisson.

I want to ask the minister to give his consideration to the fact that, in order for the tenants association to ensure they have access to the \$29,000 that they fundraised in grants, they must have approval from the Manitoba Housing Authority for this agreement immediately. I want to ask him: Given that the board is meeting today, will he ensure that this is on the agenda, that they give it approval and consideration, and then could he tell me when it is that that approval would reach the community so that they do not have their grants jeopardized?

* (1400)

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that question because I think that, as she has indicated from time to time—and I am also a strong proponent of tenants associations and the endeavours that they bring forth for the betterment of their community and their complex. We will continue to work very closely with these tenants associations in the endeavours that they feel are proper for their complex, and if they have identified that a play structure is where they feel that the money should be going, I feel that is an endeavour they should be congratulated for. If they are fundraising toward that, I certainly do not think that my department would be adverse to them spending. I am not familiar whether that has gone on the agenda because, as she mentioned, the board is meeting this afternoon. I will make myself aware of what the decision is, and I will convey that to her as soon as possible.

Ms. Cerilli: I thank the minister for that. I would be willing to discuss that with him after Question Period.

Play Structure Insurance

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I want to ask him: What is this government's and the Manitoba Housing Authority's policy with regard to insuring structures, like a play structure, which are erected by a tenants association or community group and all the funds are raised by a tenants association? What is the policy of the government for insuring those types of structures?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing): Madam Speaker, with any type of endeavour on Manitoba Housing property, we would always ensure that there is a sense of supervision by our department for the installation or the modification of any type of structure, whether it be on the grounds or in the buildings, to our specifications and our codes. I would naturally assume and I would believe that our department would have some sort of monitoring involved with the installation of this structure to make sure that it is done to code and to safety satisfactions because of the fact that the children would be playing on this.

Tenant Associations Grant Access

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, my final supplementary is: I am wondering if the

minister would also tell us the government's policy with regard to tenant associations having access to the entirety of their per-unit grant and if he would consider having some consideration for the Robson-Plessis Triplex Tenant Association so that they would have access to the entire \$2,352 of their grant for '96 and '97. It is a new association. I am hoping that he would meet with me to discuss this and ensure that they have access to all the funds that they were entitled to.

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing): Madam Speaker, one of the policies in giving grants to the homeowners' association in any type of public housing complex is the fact that it is monies for these associations to delegate in the manner that they feel fit for the betterment of their complex. I see no reason at all why we would restrict them in any way as to what they felt was the endeavour or the direction that that money could be used. We are naturally involved to the extent that we are made aware where the money is going, but the final decision as to the allocation as to what they feel is the best for their complex, I would trust that the association's decisions would be the ones that we would follow.

Personal Incomes Decline

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Will the Minister of Finance now admit that his previous attempts to answer my question on the decline in real after-tax income since 1988 failed and that he did not properly answer the question, that indeed real disposable income in 1996 is 4 percent less than it was when this government took office in 1988? In other words, will he now admit that Manitobans have less money in their pockets today than in 1988?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I will admit no such thing, and I encourage the member for Brandon East to look at some of the recent information that has been provided. Certainly the most recent information is 1996 where Manitoba's personal after-tax income posted a 4.4 percent increase, more than four times Canada's increase. Canada's increase was 1 percent during that particular year. I encourage the member for Brandon East to look at all of the economic indicators, because if you look at all of the

traditional economic indicators, he will find that Manitoba is consistently performing amongst the best in Canada. In fact, in the last week alone, we have had the Conference Board of Canada, we have had the Investment Dealers Association of Canada and we have had Statistics Canada all point to how well Manitoba is doing in all areas, whether it is growth in employment, growth in our economy, growth in our retail sales, and the list goes on.

Mr. Leonard Evans: A supplementary—for the life of me I do not know why the minister does not want to acknowledge that we are comparing ourselves with 1988. What has happened since 1988? The minister is not answering that question.

Will the minister acknowledge that one reason for lower real after-tax income since 1988 is that we now have a higher percentage of workers in the low-wage, part-time wage sector today than in 1988? In other words, there has been a shift in the make-up of the workforce from higher-wage to lower-wage industries.

Mr. Stefanson: No, I will admit no such thing, but if the member for Brandon East wants to go back to the past, go back to the period 1981 to 1988 when Manitobans were faced day in and day out with tax increases from that administration, dozens and dozens of tax increases, increasing our provincial sales tax, increasing our personal income tax. If there was a tax in Manitoba, the NDP increased it from 1981 to 1988, unlike the last 10 years in Manitoba when there have been absolutely no increases in any major taxes in Manitoba. In fact, we actually have decreased our personal income tax, and today we have one of the lowest provincial sales tax rates in all of Canada. That is the kind of record that Manitobans are looking for.

Mr. Leonard Evans: My final supplementary—and we still have less money in our pockets today than when you were elected. We have less money. Do you not realize that?

Will the minister acknowledge—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am certain the honourable member for Brandon East has a final supplementary question.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Will the minister acknowledge that the increase of 31,000 jobs between 1988 and 1996, 28,000 or over 90 percent of them were in the low-wage personal service sector and that the higher-wage manufacturing sector has actually declined from its 1988 level, fewer people in manufacturing today, more in the low-wage, part-time personal service sector and, therefore, that helps to explain the drop in real disposable income?

Mr. Stefanson: I assume, Madam Speaker, that the “we” that the member for Brandon East was referring to were members of the NDP caucus when he was making those statements.

Again, I will admit no such thing, and I encourage the member to look at how Manitoba's economy is performing today, that in the last year, the year-to-date numbers for the first four months of 1997, there are 17,000 more jobs in Manitoba today than there were a year ago, 70 percent of those jobs are full-time jobs and every single one of those jobs is in the private sector, being created with private-sector investment.

But I also encourage him—if we want to look forward, Madam Speaker, like most Manitobans want to do—look at the recent Conference Board report that came out just last Friday that shows for 1997 the employment growth in Manitoba is projected to be 2.8 percent, the employment growth for Canada is 1.3. Manitoba is more than double the growth in Canada, but best of all, Manitoba's growth is projected to be No. 1 in all of Canada. Those are the facts, and that is what Manitobans are looking for.

Orthotic/Prosthetic Services User Fees

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I am sure the Minister of Health has received the correspondence from the Manitoba league for the physically disabled, as well as the correspondence to the officials of his department, talking about the 25 percent user fee that the department has advised both users and the providers of orthotics, that it will have to be paid for this service effective May 1 of this year. I wonder how the ministry, in light of the comments of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) who talks about no tax increases, could possibly propose a tax on

the sick for people who require much-needed medical devices.

* (1410)

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, first of all, I think whenever you talk about the implementation of any fee for any service, it sets off a great deal of concern. I have had a chance very, very briefly to see the two letters that the member has tabled and referred to. I think one of them from the Manitoba league extends well beyond what the facts actually are, and I appreciate the concern that they may have had whenever you discussed this.

We have had some budget decisions made last year with respect to fees for orthotics, not with respect to prosthetic devices. We have entered into some discussions with the Manitoba Orthotics/Prosthetics Association. They have come back with an alternative plan for achieving our goal that makes eminently good sense, and we are going to be considering it.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, how can the minister try to get out of a responsibility of saying to people who use devices to the amount of over \$2.6 million a year that they are going to be charged 25 percent or some cost of the fee for devices that they have no choice but to utilize, and without these devices they will not be able to work and, in some cases, will not be able to live their lives? That is totally unacceptable in this province where the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) has talked about holding the line on taxes, and yet the line on taxes is not held for those who are sick and disabled.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, the point that the member makes with respect to a 25 percent charge for certainly those people who would have a significant demand, certainly, that is a very, very valid point. In fact, the suggestion that has come back to the ministry only very recently is that we might want to consider a \$100 deductible for all orthotic devices, which basically, in most cases, are foot lifts and that this quite possibly could meet our necessary budget requirements. We have received it, we are studying it now and certainly going to consider it.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, how can any minister in a modern health care system talk about putting a

deductible or a user fee—and the minister talks about foot raisers. It is far more orthotic devices than just foot raisers, and it deals with people's lives. How can a minister talk like that in our modern medical system when these individuals have no choice but to have those devices? I spoke with someone today who told me but for his back restraint he would be in bed all day long and would not be able to work.

Mr. Praznik: That is exactly my point. I am not disagreeing with the member that, on that particular proposal as it now stands, it does have the possibility, if you deal with a straight percentage, to cause the difficulties the member has outlined. But surely to goodness, in a system where virtually all medical care is free, to ask for a relatively small deductible—and you have to appreciate, for the large expenditure that the member is talking about, and I believe the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) quoted some \$4,000, yes, 25 percent would be a very excessive fee. The proposal that has come back from the association is for a \$100 deductible, which certainly would not put people in the position that he has indicated, and I am certainly prepared to look at that and discuss that with my colleagues.

Mr. Chomiak: With a new question: Will the minister not indicate that the association that wrote to the minister said, we do not agree with any deterrent fee, any user fee, any cost on these much-needed devices? The minister is holding a gun to the head of these people and saying, you have no choice but to impose a cost on the sick and disabled. This is intolerable, and the minister ought not to misuse the facts or misuse these letters to indicate that they have come back with another proposal. They said no to this proposal, and the government ought to say no to this proposal, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, I would acknowledge that, like any group or any number of people who are facing any particular fee increase, their first position or issue is usually, please do not do this. But having said that, it is not unusual to make a recommendation as to how a particular issue can be dealt with in a more fair manner and less disruptive.

We are always flexible to give consideration to that, as we intend to do, but let us put some of these things

into perspective. Manitobans with our Pharmacare program, our home care program, a whole host of services, have a far greater degree of free public health care than probably anyone else in most of the world and certainly in many parts of Canada.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, how can the Minister of Health responsible for the province of Manitoba put in a category the disabled of this province as a special group and put the group or organization that put together a proposal and not recognize the fact, the very simple fact, that these people, because of their disability or illness, through no fault of their own, have no choice, unlike many of us in this Legislature, but to have these devices in order to live their lives? It is not a case of them having an option; they have no choice and they ought to be provided.

Mr. Praznik: Two points to be made here: First of all, that is why in fact the new proposal, the proposal that has come from the association talks about a deductible which in effect would probably eliminate the cost of most of the foot lifts, which are a big part of this particular program—and certainly are not individuals who I think that the member has characterized. We recognize the people you are talking about who require significant devices. Madam Speaker, this proposal makes very good sense, and that is why we want to consider it.

The second point is there are many people who require pharmaceuticals for their life through no fault of their own, and yet when the New Democrats brought in Pharmacare, under our Pharmacare program, there are deductibles. We still provide a significant contribution towards the costs of whether it be pharmaceuticals or orthotic or prosthetic devices to ensure that people have that care. I would love to live in a perfect world where there was money for absolutely everything but we do not.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The time for Oral Questions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I understand there is a disposition to waive private members' hour today.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to waive private members' hour for today? [agreed]

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

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

FAMILY SERVICES

Mr. Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply will resume the consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Family Services. When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 9.2. Employment and Income Assistance (a) Client Services on page 52 of the Estimates book. Shall that item pass?

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Could the minister tell me if she has figures for the costs to Manitoba for Income Assistance because of cutbacks to the federal Employment Insurance program. My understanding is that only about 46 percent of workers are now eligible or covered by EI, which means that in the past when people collected EI, they may have gotten a job or it may have taken much longer before their EI ran out and they were on Income Assistance.

But now with fewer workers eligible, it seems to me that many of those people are going to go from losing their jobs to social assistance, so that would imply that there is a greater cost to the Province of Manitoba, and I just wondered if the minister has figures on that.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Given that the EI changes have started gradually and are coming in gradually and I think there are changes still to happen until the year about 2001, it is really hard to—we do not have any hard data or statistics. I think our estimation is over that period of time that the implications for the province would be

somewhere between \$2 million and \$3 million, but we do not have specific information that we can provide to my honourable friend. We do know that there has been an impact, although it will continue on a slow basis as the changes continue to be implemented.

Mr. Martindale: Is this something that your department could keep track of in the future?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think it would be pretty difficult to keep track of it. It is just one of many things that is happening as a result of changes that the federal government has made. I guess as we see improvements in the economy and more jobs being created and more people able to access jobs, hopefully we will still see our numbers on social assistance decreasing on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to move on to another topic. I have with me today a letter dated March 3, 1997, written by the Honourable Mike Radcliffe to one of his constituents in River Heights, and I assume he sent this letter out to many people. In it he says that since the Employment and Income Assistance program was introduced in May 1996, our provincial caseload has decreased from 13,888 to 12,876, and we have helped many Manitobans gain independence through employment.

I would like to ask the minister where Mr. Radcliffe got those figures since it does not correspond with either the Winnipeg subtotal for April 26, 1997, or the provincial total which on April 26, 1997, was 25,359. So I am very perplexed as to where he got his information and the accuracy of the numbers.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Of the provincial caseload, those are the numbers of single parents and general assistance caseload. That excludes the disabled caseload. So those are the numbers that would include single parents and general assistance caseloads that would be impacted by our welfare reform, Employment First initiative.

Mr. Martindale: I think they are very misleading figures because they imply that there are only 12,000 or 13,000 people on income assistance. I am wondering if the minister can show me on the monthly cases by

category and district office, that I receive, which columns have been added to get those figures.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, my understanding is it would be the mothers' allowance, fathers' allowance and general assistance categories together.

Mr. Martindale: Would these figures that he was quoting be for the end of April or the end of March? Or, sorry. I guess if the letter went out March 13, presumably those figures are for the end of February.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, it would have been February or March of this year. No, it would not have been March because it went out the middle of March. It would be January or February, I guess. We are trying to get the exact figures, and we will provide them to my honourable friend as soon as they are pulled together.

Mr. Martindale: I would appreciate the accurate figures since the year-over-year figures show that there is a reduction of 864 individuals, whereas Mr. Radcliffe shows a difference of 1,012 in only three categories, and I had 864 in all categories. So I would appreciate a clarification of that, and I am sure when the minister has the figures she will introduce them.

I would like to move on and ask the minister questions about fraud investigations, as I always do, and I wonder if the minister can tell me how many fraud investigations there were and how many actually went to court and were prosecuted.

* (1450)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I have some information here on the prosecutions and the charges laid, but my honourable friend asked the question about the overall number also.

Mr. Martindale: Yes, I wonder if the minister could tell me how many investigations there were, how many prosecutions and how many successful prosecutions.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We will look for and get the number of investigations, but I do have the number of prosecutions—we will start there then—and the charges laid. There were 65 charges laid, 47 convictions; 48 of

the 65 prosecutions were under The Employment and Income Assistance Act; 17 of the 65 prosecutions were under the Criminal Code; 34 of the 47 convictions were under The Employment and Income Assistance Act; and 13 of the 47 convictions were under the Criminal Code.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me if the people charged were during the last fiscal year or whether this is an accumulative total, since I know that fraud investigations go back at least 10 years?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, that is just for this year. Some of the charges may have been laid last year, and there might have been some carry-over, but this is for the year 1996-97.

Mr. Martindale: Would those figures include the municipal assistance act and The Income Assistance Act?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, yes, that is all cases.

Mr. Martindale: I wonder if the minister could tell me what the caseload was for both municipal and provincial, the total caseload, say, at the end of the fiscal year.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, the provincial caseload in '96-97 was 25,730, the municipal caseload was 17,251, for a total combined caseload of 42,981.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me what percentage the 47 convictions are out of a caseload of 42,981?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, we can work on that, but I think my honourable friend has to recognize and realize, too, that there were several cases investigated, and I am still trying to get the number of how many cases were investigated by our investigative unit and, of that, some cases would have been closed without any charges laid. Other cases would have had overpayments they had received that they were not entitled to that would have had to be paid back, and we will get that information.

In instances, charges were laid; in other instances, there were no charges laid but an overpayment program

instituted or cases closed as a result of ineligibility for welfare.

Mr. Martindale: When the minister's staff have figured out the percentages, as they do for me every year, you will read that into the record. Going by memory, in recent years it is usually about .02 percent or less, which is a very small number, contrary to what the government would like the public to believe and is quite a contrast to statistics on tax avoidance and tax cheating.

For example, a survey was done and an article was written by Diane Francis in the Financial Post showing that two out of five, or 42 percent, of Canadians admit to paying cash for goods or services in order to avoid taxes, either federal or provincial. One out of five, or 20 percent, admitted they have hidden income in order to evade income tax, and 72 percent say they would pay cash to avoid taxes if given the opportunity; 56 percent, they would hide income if they could; 13 percent admitted they cheated whenever possible by paying cash and 5 percent hid income when possible. Seven percent of men owning businesses write off personal expenses to cheat on taxes whenever possible, compared to 1 percent of women owners.

In a separate set of questions, people were asked if they owned or operated a small business, and those who owned a small business were asked if they spent business money on themselves or their families to avoid taxes. Some 31 percent of owners said they cheated whenever possible, while the rest said they never cheated in that way. So it will be interesting to compare tax avoidance and cheating with welfare fraud once the minister has the percentages worked out and read into the record.

* (1500)

Mrs. Mitchelson: I have some additional information to add to the record. I think my honourable friend would know that the fraud line has been up and running for about three years now, close to three years. I think in June it will be three years. The estimated savings in just under three years is about \$7.6 million as a result of activity related to the fraud line; 9,416 calls were received, 8,464 calls have been reviewed and there are still some outstanding to be reviewed. Corrective

action was taken in 1,674 cases, and 1,264 were closed; 410 cases remain open but have either had an overpayment assessed or have had their budgets reduced. I can give the breakdown between the municipal and the provincial caseload, if that is valuable information. Okay.

So I guess the issue that my honourable friend talks about in tax evasion and whatever are all legitimate concerns and legitimate issues, but I think as a responsible government we have to look right across the broad range of services that are provided. When I break down the savings to our welfare program as a result of reviewing and finding fraudulent activity, we are looking at a saving of about \$2.5 million a year.

That to me is not insignificant when you look to the taxpayers of Manitoba to pay for the services that are provided, and I think that every Manitoban believes that we need to pay social allowance, social assistance to individuals that need our support. But I have every sense or every feeling that Manitoba taxpayers would not like to see \$2.5 million per year provided to people who do not deserve that money under the program that is available. That is \$2.5 million, and if we can work to try to address the other issues of tax evasion and people that are beating the system in some way and there are other savings to be achieved, that money could be better spent in ensuring that we have programs for children, we have programs in our education system or programs in our health care system.

I think Manitobans in general, and I hope my honourable friend too, would want to ensure that there is accountability for the tax dollars that government is spending. If, in fact, there is \$2.5 million here that can better be spent ensuring that we can maintain our budget in health care, maintain our budget in education so that all Manitobans benefit, I think that is the most appropriate way and that is the most accountable way for a government to deliver services.

Mr. Martindale: I certainly agree with the minister, and my party certainly agrees. I am quite happy to go on record saying that we do not countenance fraud in any way. From time to time, I have received information from members of the public which I have passed on to program specialists and asked them to investigate.

One of my constituents phoned me because he was asked to provide information about a Court of Queen's Bench decision regarding a marriage separation and maintenance arrangements, in 1986, I believe. He was asked to provide documents, and the impression that I got was that the onus was on him to prove what the details of the separation agreement were. So he went down to Court of Queen's Bench and was informed that they would charge him 50 cents a page for photocopying, and the total cost of this document would be \$20 to \$25. Is it the government's policy that if there is an investigation the onus is on the individual to provide the information? It seems to me if the department has concerns or suspicions that they should be seeking out the information not forcing an individual to go to a great expense to provide the information to the department.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I am told that we try to work very co-operatively with people through these processes, and they are always very difficult processes. We would try our very best to ensure that, if there was information that needed to be photocopied or provided, we would provide those kinds of services to individuals. I guess, I would need to know a little more detail around the specific case and then maybe try to shed a little more light on it. But we do try and work co-operatively and provide as much assistance as possible through the process.

Mr. Martindale: On a different topic. One of my constituents temporarily lost his job as a welder in Rosenort due to the flood, and because he had a mortgage and car payments and a family to support but no income he applied for City of Winnipeg Social Services. He was turned down because he did not meet their eligibility rules. Now, when I intervened on his behalf, I was told, oh no, we will help out individuals in these circumstances, namely, because of loss of income due to the flood. By the time someone in city Social Services contacted him, he had secured another job and the temporary problem was gone, but the result was he got no assistance. I am wondering why he applied for assistance and did not get any, but when I intervened he was told, oh, yes, you can get assistance. What was the City of Winnipeg's policy for people who had no income during the flood?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, it is my understanding that individuals who were not evacuated

but were not able to work as a result of the flood would be eligible for EI. If they needed temporary assistance pending the processing of their EI claim, they would be subject to the normal welfare eligibility criteria, including liquid asset limits and such. So that should have been the policy that was followed through the process.

Mr. Martindale: Well, it is unfortunate that my constituent was not informed about EI.

Can the minister confirm that flood evacuees received \$7.20 per day per person for food?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me what persons on municipal and provincial and families receive per person per day for food?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, this amount was based on the rates paid by municipalities for restaurant meals based on the municipal assistance regulation. So that is how the rate was determined. It was not broken down any differently than that. It was \$7.20 per day for food.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask the minister policy questions arising out of a letter that was written to her dated April 17 by Jean Friesen, the MLA for Wolseley. I certainly will not put the name or details of this individual's problems on the record, but it is really quite amazing that an infant who has respiratory and digestive problems needing special fortified formula was given \$15 a month extra food allowance, but the cost of the formula was \$150 a month. I am wondering why provisions could not be made to help this young, single mother to get the financial assistance she needed to buy this special fortified formula.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am informed in this case that the doctor recommended a special diet, and we provided the funds for that special diet through the program. So, it was on the recommendation of the doctor.

* (1510)

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister confirm that since this letter was written on behalf of the individual that \$150 a month was provided rather than \$15 a month?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Based on the doctor's recommendation, the amount that was required to cover the special needs or the special diet was provided. I am not sure where the \$150 figure comes from, but in the meeting with this individual it was clearly indicated that if there were more requests for anything more, as a result of a doctor's recommendation, we would provide that, and to date she has not come back to us with any additional requests.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to thank the minister for that answer.

I wrote to the minister on April 21 with a number of questions about Taking Charge! contracts, and I am wondering if the minister has the responses to all four of my questions.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We have all that information pulled together, and I will provide a copy to my honourable friend.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister confirm that contracts were signed with both for-profit and nonprofit organizations?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes.

Mr. Martindale: Some of these organizations, especially in the nonprofit sector, I had certainly heard of before, but I suppose it was the ones in the for-profit sector that I had not heard of before. I am wondering if the criteria is the same for both for-profit and nonprofit organizations in being awarded contracts.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is my understanding that Taking Charge! has a program development committee, and all of the projects or proposals that come forward are reviewed by the committee. It is a subcommittee of the board, and they make decisions based on standard criteria.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me if there is any information available yet on graduates and how many got jobs in the paid workforce?

Mrs. Mitchelson: At March 31, 1997, 1,000 single parents were in training and 404 were employed.

Mr. Martindale: Were there any goals or targets set out for Taking Charge! program graduates in terms of being in the paid workforce?

Mrs. Mitchelson: For the year 1996-97, the projected activity was that there would be 1,100 in training and 500 employed. As I indicated just a moment ago, at the end of the year there were 1,000 in training and 404 employed.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me how many Taking Charge! clients received, I guess, a subsidy case in a licensed child care facility or family day care home?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Over the 1996-97 fiscal year, the on-site daycare served 812 infants and 1,958 preschool children. So that would have been for some of the training programs, and sometimes for a short period of time while a facility in their community that met the needs of the family was found, and 306 children were placed in community child care facilities.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me what the average number of children per day was at the Taking Charge! child care facility on Vaughan Street?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The facility is licensed for 24 preschool children and 8 infants, and I do not have those figures. I would have to go back to Taking Charge! and ask that question.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister also find out what the utilization rate was, like what percentage of occupation there was to licensed spaces? Could the minister tell me if the cases that were allocated for Taking Charge! clients came out of the existing subsidy pool, if you like, or whether that was over and above the budgeted child care subsidy cases?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We had a number of spaces set aside specifically for welfare reform and they would have come out of that pool.

Mr. Martindale: Going back to Taking Charge! contracts, were the companies that were hired and the nonprofit organizations that were hired under obligations in terms of the success rate of their graduates? Were there any targets set for how many of

their graduates were supposed to get jobs after their training?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think it depended on the goal of each of the initiatives, but there were certain targets set and certain percentages set for outcomes or expectations that people would be employed at the end of the program. I think it was on an individual basis based on the program that was being delivered and what types of individuals they would have been dealing with, whether they were job ready or whether they needed a lot of training and a lot of support in order to get them to the stage where they would be able to be employable.

So it was different with every contract that was negotiated with those that were delivering the Taking Charge! programs.

Mr. Martindale: Were those goals part of the contract with the individual organization or business?

* (1520)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, those goals would have been part of the contract, and there is an evaluation that is to be submitted on each participant no later than 30 days after the participant completes their involvement with the project.

I want my honourable friend to know that we are doing an evaluation of the Taking Charge! initiative to see whether it is achieving or meeting its goals or objectives. That is just in the process of starting I think right now.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I can certainly ask next year about the evaluation.

I would like to ask the minister some questions about a program being run, I guess, co-operatively with the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce and the departments of Education and Training and Family Services, and basically they were taking part in the minister's Employment First initiative. According to their newsletter from last fall, they said that nearly 400 job vacancies had been involved. I wonder if the minister has information about how many people who were previously on income assistance were able to find paid

employment with the assistance of the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The role of Family Services in this initiative is to refer individuals that might meet the skills required to enter the jobs that are identified by the chamber. Education and Training is the lead department that does interface with the chamber. To date, I believe there are 19 income assistance clients that have been hired through this process, but there are over 200 employers from across the province that have indicated their support. To date, 68 employers have identified current job vacancies and will consider income assistance clients to fill these jobs.

So there are companies that are interested, and I think it might be realistic to anticipate that there might be a small percentage of those on our caseloads that might be hired through this initiative. I suppose every individual that has an opportunity to move from welfare into the workforce is a positive for all Manitobans.

Mr. Martindale: I think this is probably one of the most, or maybe even the most interesting statistic I have received since starting these Estimates, because the Chamber of Commerce would like everyone to believe that jobs are going begging and that we do not have enough people who are willing to work to fill those vacancies. Yet, when they entered into a co-operative arrangement with the provincial government, the number of people that they were able to successfully place is amazingly small.

In fact, when I talked to Mr. Lance Norman a couple of months ago, they had placed seven people, four in the city and three outside of the city of Winnipeg. I am glad to hear that is up to 19. They have almost tripled the number of people that they have placed, from 7 to 19. Yet the municipal caseload, according to the minister, recently was 17,251, of whom about 90 percent are in the city of Winnipeg. So the chamber has found jobs for 19 people out of 17,251. That is really quite amazing.

I wonder if the minister can tell me why this program has not been more successful.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess, with any new program, there is a starting point and there is some building that

takes place along the way. I think that, for every job for every individual that moves off of social assistance and into the workforce, there are many positive implications, not only for that individual—it might be for that individual, and if they have a family or children it certainly does impact more than one life.

This is something that is new. It is a new partnership that has been formed, and I would hope that my honourable friend would ask the same kinds of questions next year when we see—it is a matter of communicating to the private sector out there that we know there are people that are on social allowance that may fit into the job opportunities that become available in the private sector. It is a matter of starting to work with the business community and build upon the relationships that are developed.

It is certainly not the only initiative when we talk about the chamber. It is one thing that they have done and they have agreed to work with us on, and I commend absolutely everyone that comes forward and indicates that we need to focus on those that are on our social allowances caseloads as well as those that are on employment insurance that have had attachment to the workforce in the past.

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

As we move and as we continue to forge these partnerships, we are going to see more and more successes.

As I said, it is a new program, and we will have to continue to monitor to see what kinds of positive results can be accomplished. I know that we challenged the Manitoba Chamber and they have come forward and said, we will look to your caseloads as options and opportunities for filling positions that become available or filling new jobs that are created as a result of increased economic activity.

This is just one small piece of the whole picture. You look to Opportunities for Employment, the project that we started last year with the Mennonite Central Committee, the Mennonite business community and Trainex, and we just had the one-year anniversary of that program last week. I participated in just a small reception at Palliser Furniture, which has been one of

the main contributors to that program, and we see 130 people now employed that were on social assistance in the past, some from the municipal caseload and some single parents from our provincial caseload.

I had the opportunity to meet several individuals who are now employed in full-time meaningful jobs. One was a single father with two children who was just thrilled at the opportunity to work. I was extremely impressed with the sense of pride that he felt in his ability to work and provide for his children. He was telling me about the issues around child care and how he had had to search out the right placement for his children so that he could work.

Another was a young single woman who was actually working in the Opportunities for Employment office and helping others who were coming in and inquiring about the program or referred to the program. She was just absolutely thrilled to have that opportunity, not only to have a job herself but to be able to help others who were in the same circumstances she used to be in.

There was also an individual with credentials and skills who had immigrated to Canada who really had the skills to be employed at an executive level. He was overqualified to do many low-paying jobs, and he was not given the option or opportunity when he applied to take those jobs, and yet, his English was not good enough for him to participate in many of the executive positions that do become available, a very interesting case. He was Spanish-speaking. Palliser Furniture is looking at major expansion and they needed someone with the language background. He has become an executive within their corporate office, and he was just absolutely thrilled to have had the opportunity.

* (1530)

So these are the kinds of individuals who have been supported and have been helped, and that is one program that, after a year, has had a success rate of 130. I think out of 160 or 165 individuals who have been associated with the program, 130 are now employed in full-time meaningful jobs. The project with the chamber has not been up and running for even a year. So I think we have to start these partnerships. We have to look for every opportunity that we have to provide an option and an opportunity for people who have not had

that chance before to gain the training that will lead to full-time meaningful jobs.

So I am not sure that I agree with my honourable friend when he says that just 19—I mean, there are at least 19 lives, as a result of a partnership that was not there before, that have been impacted in a positive way through the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, and we hope there will be considerably more into the future. As businesses open their minds to looking at giving an opportunity or a chance to individuals who may never have had any workforce attachment in the past—and sometimes there are additional barriers that have to be overcome as a result of sort of helping people prepare to enter the workforce for the first time—and as businesses see results, positive results in other small businesses in their communities, they will open their doors and their minds to working with social assistance recipients. So I think every step in the right direction is a positive step, and we need all kinds of these programs. We need the message to be out there that people really do want to work, and we have to give them that chance and that opportunity.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to congratulate the Mennonite Central Committee. They have certainly been successful in training people and finding employment for them. The Chamber of Commerce—it is certainly not due to lack of publicity—they notified all their members, and 62 chambers in Manitoba. Certainly, we can ask next year how many placements they have found. Their publicity was sent out under a heading called Business Advisory and it is rather interesting. They advertise the benefits of this program as being the following: Save time and money on hiring process; training incentives for potential employees; no commitment required—that one really perplexes me—and low- or no-cost probationary employees.

Can the minister tell me if some of these welfare recipients are indeed at no cost to businesses? In other words, the businesses are not paying any wages to them.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is my understanding because the negotiations happen between the Department of Education and Training and the Chamber of Commerce—but from time to time or in some situations there would be a wage subsidy paid. So we would take

the amount that we normally pay on social allowance and provide that as a subsidy to the business while they are training or evaluating whether that person is the right person for the job.

Each job, I guess, is individual, based on the individual needs. There might be shorter or longer training periods required, and Education and Training may pay for some of those training costs or some of the courses that might be needed in order to have that person be ready to meet the job requirements, if they do not have all of the skills to take on that job. So, I guess, there is some support through Education and Training, and some of that is billed back to the Department of Family Services, but it is an individual agreement made and individual circumstances with individual clients and companies.

Mr. Martindale: So just for clarification, there is a wage subsidy involved.

Mrs. Mitchelson: There may be and there may not be. It is all individual, based on individual circumstances.

Mr. Martindale: Moving on to 9.2.(c) Making Welfare Work, although I guess we have already gotten into this. I read a really interesting article in the Free Press titled Welfare Recipients to Work as School Crossing Guards. It looks like the City of Winnipeg and Winnipeg School Division No. 1 have co-operated to hire people formerly on social assistance, or I guess maybe still on social assistance if they are only working 15 hours a week. I am wondering if these people are better off working in terms of income; and secondly, if they are entitled to any benefits such as child care or transportation or clothing allowance.

* (1540)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Clients are eligible for the work incentive because we want to ensure that they are better off working than on social allowance, so they would be making more working than they would be on social allowance.

They are eligible, as anyone would be eligible for child care, but I think they have tried to—I think the project is six individuals being hired, six positions, and they were trying to identify individuals that would

require the least amount of support. There might be a single parent whose children are attending that school that might be hired as the crossing guard, and I guess they were some of the criteria that were used for choice of individuals.

Mr. Martindale: I have crossing guards very close to my constituency office so I see them out there year round and in the winter freezing, and I am wondering if these individuals are entitled to an allowance for work clothes. I would not want to do that job without a parka and ski pants or a skidoo suit. So could the minister tell me if they are entitled to a clothing allowance?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, they would be entitled to whatever might be needed in order for them to do their jobs.

Mr. Martindale: Would that include bus fare?

Mrs. Mitchelson: My understanding is the individuals who have been hired have been hired right from the community.

Mr. Martindale: So they would be eligible for child care for a subsidy case and for a clothing allowance, if that was requested.

Mrs. Mitchelson: If that was required.

Mr. Martindale: I have received complaints from individuals about telemarketing companies hiring people and hiring them on a probationary basis for a few days and not paying them and sending them home. Has the minister received any complaints like this?

Mrs. Mitchelson: No, I have not, and I would be very interested if there were those situations taking place and my honourable friend sharing information with me.

Mr. Martindale: I wish I could share the information, but I have not got any individuals who are willing to talk on the record, so it is a little hard to verify what I am being told, but if what I am being told is true, then it is quite disturbing. I have also been told that people have quotas, that they have to sell a certain amount of whatever it is, a good or a service on the phone, and if they do not meet those quotas, then they are being let go. Is the minister aware of this?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think most of the projects or programs that we have been involved in either through Education and Training or previously through Taking Charge! have been fairly extensive training programs where individuals graduate from those programs and move into jobs and from time to time have been promoted in the system in those jobs. I guess, for any of us, whether we be social allowance recipients or whether we be individuals that have never been on social assistance, there are certain requirements of any job that is undertaken and there are evaluations that are done, and people have to meet certain expectations. I do not think there is any difference between one employee and another employee, whether you are someone who walks in off the street and gets the job because you have some experience or whether you are someone who goes through a training program, because we have a program available through the Department of Education or through Taking Charge! to help to assist single parents who have not had an attachment to the workforce.

You know, there are standards to be met. We know that we have to be accountable, and we are judged probably more often than a lot of other people are judged at election time, and there is not any job security in many instances. There is no job security for many Manitobans, so I do not think when we are discussing this issue that anyone that might have been on social allowance previously is treated any differently from any other employee.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I would certainly hope that telemarketing companies would not treat them any differently. However, it is a very stressful job. I was told, I believe by Mr. Norman at the Chamber of Commerce, that there were 200 vacancies at the time that I talked to him in February, but he said that it is not a natural job because I guess you are inside all day and you are under a lot of pressure. In fact, I have been told that one of the telemarketing companies has a smoking room and a crying room. I wish I could give you the name of the company, but I do not have it with me.

The minister says that it does not really matter who you are, that the job expectations are the same. Well, I disagree with the minister. It really does matter who you are if you are an income assistance client because there are consequences if you cannot keep that job. For

example, if they do not call you back, then income assistance could deem that you quit the job, and they could phone the telemarketing company and ask if that employee quit, and the company would not care; they would probably say that the individual quit, and that has consequences for the income assistance client because they could have \$50 a month or \$100 a month deducted from their cheque or they could lose their entitlements entirely, so I think it does matter who these people are, and I hope that if they are being let go, whether it is a probationary period or paid employment, they are not being penalized when they reapply for income assistance.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I guess that is the whole thrust of our welfare reform, is to look at individuals as people who have the ability to succeed and become independent, and so a lot of the focus in Taking Charge! or in any of the other programs is to develop individual plans, to assist wherever possible in training and then to follow up to ensure that, if there is not success the first time—and we all know that from time to time things just do not work out or it is not the right kind of job—we are there to support them and to encourage them and to help them to move onward and upward and to try something new or something different.

That is what Employment First is all about. That is what welfare reform is all about. That is what all the individual needs assessments and the working with individuals to try to help them succeed is all about. So I think we have a much more proactive and much more sensitive approach to dealing with our social assistance recipients than we ever have before.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister verify for me that City of Winnipeg social services clients or I guess any municipal client is transferred to provincial to the single parent category when they become seven months pregnant? Is that accurate?

Mrs. Mitchelson: My understanding is in their third trimester they move from the municipal caseload to the provincial caseload.

Mr. Martindale: Given the research that the minister is familiar with, including by people like Dr. Fraser Mustard, has the minister considered moving these

clients at an earlier time or providing a supplement for nutritional purposes, in other words, providing more money for the food allowance for pregnant women on income assistance?

* (1550)

Mrs. Mitchelson: My understanding is if there is a doctor's recommendation that a special diet or enhanced diet is required by an individual, that is provided.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister verify for me that when these clients are transferred at the seventh month of their pregnancy, that if they have taken any kind of training or education or upgrading, then they are deemed employable at seven months pregnant?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We do not put any work expectations on them when they are seven months pregnant. I think we talked a little bit yesterday and we can continue to talk about the whole issue of helping single parents understand that a life on welfare will commit them to a life of poverty forever and that not only do you have to plan on how to parent or how to continue to parent in a very responsible way—because I think that one of the most major undertakings any woman or man has when they decide to bring a new life into this world is to take their parenting responsibilities very seriously.

So I think that every individual has to not only look towards how they are going to manage their life and their circumstances as they become a parent or add another child to their family, but they are also going to have to look at very seriously and understand that in order to work their way out of poverty, they need an education and they need to start to plan ahead for what they are going to do with their life and with their future.

So they are certainly not considered—or do not have work expectations placed on them, but we really want people to think seriously about what their plans for the future are and how they can best achieve self-sufficiency and independence.

Mr. Martindale: One of the most frequent complaints that I get, both from advocates for the poor and also from poor people themselves, is that it is almost impossible to find a job if you do not have a telephone. I am wondering what the minister's policy is on income

assistance clients who are deemed employable and their eligibility for a phone.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Most of our clients do have telephones. I know that I certainly have been in the community facilities in my honourable friend's constituency and elsewhere where there is a telephone fairly readily available for individuals that need that telephone. So I have to indicate that most of our clients do have telephones. I do know that we do certainly provide, through employment connections and through some of our education offices and at training sites, fax machines and telephones and all of those things that will help to lead people toward obtaining employment.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Item 9.2. Employment and Income Assistance (a) Client Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$10,825,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$4,046,700—pass.

9.2.(b) Income Assistance Programs (1) Employment and Income Assistance \$215,610,500—pass; (2) Health Services \$16,790,100—pass; (3) Municipal Assistance \$103,056,000—pass; (4) Income Assistance for the Disabled \$9,340,000.

Mr. Martindale: I have some questions about 55 Plus and CRISP. I wonder if the minister could tell me if the caseload has remained relatively constant or whether there have been significant increases or decreases. The most recent figures that I have are the annual report for '95-96. I assume that the '96-97 report is not out yet.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, in 1996-97, we budgeted for \$13,500 in the 55 Plus senior component and the actual uptake—and I think we are pretty close on—was \$13,326. For the junior component of 55 Plus, we budgeted for \$4,737 and the actual uptake was \$4,316. Did my honourable friend want some information on the CRISP program, too?

Mr. Martindale: Well, first of all, let us continue with 55 Plus. Could the minister give me the total? I forgot my calculator this time. What is the total for the senior component and junior component of 55 Plus for the last fiscal year?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, we budgeted for \$18,237. The actual uptake was \$17,641.

Mr. Martindale: So if we are to compare that with the latest figures in the annual report which would be for '95-96, the previous year, there has been quite a significant decline if the figures are accurate on page 37. The total was \$21,103 and the minister is indicating that for the '96-97 fiscal year it is \$17,641, so that is a huge drop in percentage terms in the number of people taking advantage of 55 Plus. Is that correct?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, one of the reasons for that happening is that in the past welfare recipients used to receive their benefits through the 55 Plus program. They now receive those benefits through the welfare program so they no longer receive it through 55 Plus. If you take that factor into consideration, there is not that significant a drop in the uptake.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I am just going by memory here, but my recollection and actually my experience dealing with one constituent is that, for a while, people on municipal who were over 55 were actually forced to apply for it but then it was deducted, so they were really no further ahead. Well, I think the rule has been changed so that they are no longer forced to apply, but on the other hand, they do not get any more money, whereas before they used to be eligible for 55 Plus, so they were financially better off. Is that true?

Mrs. Mitchelson: No, that is not true. They used to be eligible for 55 Plus. They would receive the dollars from 55 Plus, and that would be taken away from their welfare payment, so they are receiving the same amount of money now. We have just said why make people apply and then remove it on the other side? You have extra bureaucracy and extra paper work. It really did not make any sense at all, so no, they are not any worse off. It is just that we are providing it through the welfare system and that we are not asking them to apply to 55 Plus to have it clawed back on the other side.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I think I understand the minister's answers here, and if I do understand them correctly, then this would explain why the numbers of cases are down. So let us look at the budget figures. What amount of money approximately was expended on 55 Plus, both senior and junior, for the fiscal year ending '96-97?

Mrs. Mitchelson: In 1995-96, it was \$8,303,000. In 1996-97, we estimate, and I think we are pretty close, \$7,033,000.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me why there has been a decline in the spending by about a million dollars?

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is exactly the same issue. Those dollars are being paid for out of the welfare program rather than welfare recipients receiving dollars through the 55 Plus program. We are just paying the full amount of their welfare payment through the welfare program, so it is not required through 55 Plus.

* (1600)

Mr. Martindale: So basically this program is still as I guess it was originally intended, and that is a targeted program for low-income seniors who are working or have some sort of income but are not on social assistance. Is that correct?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me if her department has any idea what the take-up rate is, that is, the percentage of people who may be eligible for 55 Plus?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We do not know that, but it is distributed fairly widely to seniors organization, to seniors clubs, to available—in all of our offices.

Mr. Martindale: Would the Minister of Family Services consider writing or talking to her colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and publicizing this information through the income tax system? My understanding is that it is very easy to program a computer to print out on people's returns or refunds, something to the effect: based on your income you may be eligible for 55 Plus. I understand from talking to officials in Finance that it is doable and it seems to me that all Manitobans who are eligible could be at least notified, and the result would be that the takeup would probably be higher.

Because one of the problems you have with any government program if it is not universal, and this is a problem of all targeted programs, is that if you do not find out about it, you do not ask, and if you do not ask, you do not find out if you are eligible and you do not get it. It is the same problem with my constituent that

I mentioned who was applying for a pension from the government of Great Britain. She came to Canada in 1933. She is 89 years old. She just found out six months ago that she was eligible for a British pension, so I am helping her apply. It is going to be kind of fun to see if she is eligible. She may get a retroactive lump sum payment going back to age 65. So I am interested in seeing that this program is more widely publicized so that there is a take-up rate by those people who are eligible for it but unaware of the programs. I am wondering if the minister is willing to follow up on my suggestion.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I just want my honourable friend to know that we are following the same policy that was followed when his party was in government.

Mr. Martindale: Well, that almost sounds like a no. I think this minister should be open to new and innovative ideas, and maybe the computer programming is better now than it was 10 years ago, so I will repeat the question. Would the minister be willing to write to her colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and suggest that there is an additional way to publicize this targeted program?

Mrs. Mitchelson: In order for my honourable friend to get a response to that kind of question, I might suggest that he write to the Minister of Finance and ask that question. I am sure he will receive a response on a timely basis.

Mr. Martindale: I would be delighted to write a letter to the Minister of Finance to that effect. I am disappointed that the minister will not. I think she might have more clout actually with the Minister of Finance—

An Honourable Member: I am not sure. I am not sure. You might be surprised.

Mr. Martindale: This minister went to Treasury Board last year and got something approved which I do not think happens very often with this government. It suggests to me that she is willing to stand up to some pretty influential people and ask for something and actually get it, and I will be commending her for this later on again in the Estimates on a more specific line.

If this minister were to write to the Minister of Finance, it would suggest that she endorsed the idea and that it was something that she was in favour of. Certainly coming from another minister, the government would have a lot more weight than coming from an opposition critic. However, I will rest my case because I do not think the minister is going to do it.

I have some questions about CRISP. I wonder if I could get figures about the number of cases for '96-97 or estimated cases and the expenditure.

Mrs. Mitchelson: You will probably find the same issue around the CRISP program as you did around the 55 Plus program, because there is a significant reduction from 1995-96 to 1997-98, and the caseload would have dropped from just over 6,000 to just over 3,000—close to 3,000. That would be, again, the same issue. Those that are on social allowance would see the payment flow through social allowances rather than through the CRISP program and then clawing it back from their social allowance.

Mr. Martindale: And if my memory serves me correctly, this was municipal assistance clients because provincial clients were not eligible.

Mrs. Mitchelson: No, Mr. Chairperson, this is both.

Mr. Martindale: So, is it correct to say that there is no change in the income of these families? They were not any better off or any worse off.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, that is right.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 9.2. Employment and Income Assistance (b) Income Assistance Programs (4) Income Assistance for the Disabled \$9,340,000—pass.

Is there agreement with the committee that we take a 10-minute recess? [agreed]

The committee recessed at 4:09 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:23 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply come to order. We will resume the Estimates of Family Services. When we recessed, we were under Resolution 9.2.(c) Making Welfare Work \$4,000,000—pass.

9.2.(d) Income Supplement Programs (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$618,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$335,100—pass; (3) Financial Assistance \$9,120,400—pass.

Resolution 9.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$373,742,400 for Family Services, Employment and Income Assistance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1998.

Continuing on with the Estimates of Family Services, Resolution 9.3. Community Living (a) Regional Operations (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$13,021,500.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell how negotiations are going on vocational rehabilitation with the federal government?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, might I say slow. It certainly is an issue that we discuss every time we get together. The working groups are working trying to make some sense of what might be there in the future, but I am not sure we have anything concrete at this point.

Mr. Martindale: What is the minister proposing to the federal government? What would you like to see happen in Manitoba?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, right now we have a working group with our disabled community that is attempting to determine what we believe is best for Manitobans. I am not sure that government wants to indicate our intentions without having the disabled community make their comments and provide their suggestions and ideas, so that work is ongoing.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I certainly endorse the idea of working co-operatively with people in the community who will be affected by these program decisions.

Is the minister concerned that since we no longer have the Canada Assistance Plan and the funding flows

in other areas through the Canada Health and Social Transfer that the federal government may be considering ending agreements on vocational rehabilitation?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, we absolutely are concerned. I think we were extremely upset when the announcement was made that there would no VRDP funding in this past year and who knows, again, what the federal intentions were. Did they extend the program for another year just to get them through an election campaign or are they, in fact, serious about redesign of programs that is going to provide an opportunity for disabled people to have a chance to enter the workforce or have as meaningful lives as possible? We are concerned, and we want to ensure that we have the opportunity for input.

In the absence of something new, or better programs, I would again encourage and support that we continue on with what we have until we find a better way of delivering service.

Mr. Martindale: Is there a danger that there will be no money from the federal government and then the design and delivery of the programs and the funding is entirely up to Manitoba?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I guess we do have a commitment from the federal government to work with us in trying to design new programs. Where that will ultimately lead, I am not sure. I think we have seen what has happened with the national child benefit, and I believe the federal government, again, has taken the provinces seriously. What we have is a program that, hopefully, will lead to incremental and sustainable funding from the federal government to ensure that all children in low-income families will be delivered support through a federal system that has some standards and is equitable across the country, and we would hope that same kind of mechanism would happen for those with disabilities.

Mr. Martindale: What would happen in terms of budgeting if the provincial government was going it alone in this area?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I think that is a hypothetical question right at this point in time. It is

if—we have to trust and believe that the federal government is going to continue after the election campaign to work with us. It has been something that the Premiers have asked for. It is something that the Prime Minister has agreed to. We have put our officials together working towards trying to find some solutions, so I would hope it has not been just a good-faith gesture but a very meaningful gesture that will continue to achieve some positive results, but we are concerned, and I am glad that we have the extension of VRDP. I would hope that, through collaboration, we would end up with the result being the people that we need to serve are being served in the best way possible.

Mr. Martindale: Is the minister in favour of the Canadians with disabilities act similar to the Americans with disabilities act?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I know there is nothing like that right across the country, and the federal government has expressed interest in looking at options, but there really has not been any discussions at the federal-provincial level around that issue.

* (1630)

Mr. Martindale: In the absence of federal legislation, would the minister be in favour of a provincial Manitobans with disabilities act?

Mrs. Mitchelson: In consultations and discussions with our disabled community, they certainly want to be very much as much a part of the mainstream as they possibly can be. When we looked at our welfare reform initiatives, we had some meetings with the disabled community, exploring the options and opportunities of moving somewhat in the direction that British Columbia has moved in in a separate income support program for the disabled. At the time we had those discussions, they came back to us and said that they did not want that in Manitoba.

It was before the government in British Columbia moved in that direction, but they felt that they wanted to be a part of the mainstream as much as possible. They certainly did want us to recognize the special needs and circumstances that they would present and try to ensure that we were sensitive to those needs. That was their position at the time, and so we decided

not to look at a separate piece of legislation at that point in time but to work with them to ensure that we dealt with their issues and supported them as much as we possibly could, based on working together. So it was not a direction the disabled community in Manitoba wanted us to take, so we did not at that point in time bring in any separate legislation.

I think whatever we do in Manitoba has to be in complete consultation and co-operation with the community that is served through the programming we provide.

Mr. Martindale: It is my understanding that the American legislation confers certain rights and benefits on disabled people. Would you be willing to see that kind of legislation in Manitoba, particularly where it applies to access so that, for example, all buildings would be accessible and individuals would not have to depend on the building code or by-laws of individual municipalities?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think we want to continue to work toward full accessibility for all Manitobans regardless of their ability or disability. I, at this point in time, certainly have not thought of Americanizing our Canadian system, and I know it is very much the American way of doing things. From time to time my honourable friend and his colleagues certainly criticize the United States when it comes to issues around health care and other issues.

It just seems to me, again, and we talked a little bit yesterday about being in opposition and having it both ways. On the one hand, certainly we want to look at any country that is doing things in a very positive and proactive way, but I would caution my honourable friend that there may be many Manitobans and truly Canadians that would be quite upset if we adopted American standards in absolutely everything we did across government, so I just want to put those few comments on the record. I am not sure that legislation is the answer.

I think that as we move, and we have moved very much in our Canadian society and right here in Manitoba, into support and mainstreaming and community living—and I think we want to continue in that direction and do it in a manner that is sensitive

towards the issues and the needs of those who are trying to serve and I believe that, as recommendations come from the disabled community, we have to look at those along with them, but I am not sure I am willing to impose anything at this point in time through law.

Mr. Martindale: The minister is distorting and twisting the intent of my remarks. Certainly I was not saying that we should adopt everything from the American system. I was only inquiring about adopting one of the better pieces of American legislation.

Maybe, to get things back on track here, I should congratulate the minister on increasing the expenditure level in Community Living by about \$4.4 million. Can the minister detail what these new funds will be spent on? I can see that the largest part of this is in adult services, but I wonder if the minister can tell me exactly how this money will be spent, particularly in adult services.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, the additional money will provide more individuals with being supported in community residences or supported in independent living settings, support for additional care, their additional care and support needs to enable them to live in the community, respite and day service spaces. So those are the areas where the money will be spent, so that money will go to individuals for service that they need.

Mr. Martindale: It is my understanding that the majority of this supposedly new money is going to support individuals who reach the age of majority. Is that correct?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Some, but not all.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me if Children's Special Services is part of Community Living?

Mrs. Mitchelson: No, Mr. Chairperson, that falls under Child and Family Support.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me how she is addressing the concerns of the Manitoba Coalition of Service Providers? They met with the minister on November 13, 1996, and I have a summary of their concerns. I am wondering if any of the new funds are

going to address any of their concerns, for example, salaries of employees in group homes and other settings.

* (1640)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I think that we have a fairly co-operative working relationship with the Coalition of Service Providers, and their issues from time to time are salaries and wages in the system. I guess our main priority and focus with the increase in funding is to provide an opportunity for more adults to be served and receive services than the wage issue. I have talked with them about that, and as we still see people that are in need of additional support through programming, to enable them to live as full lives as possible, our priority will be on ensuring that as many people as possible receive the services they need.

But I think we have a fairly co-operative working relationship. We have a group working together with them to try to see how we can address the issues and the needs that come forward. It would be wonderful to have unlimited resources to try to meet the needs of absolutely everything within the system. The reality is that there has been more money year after year. I have said many times that this is the one area within my department where I work really hard to try to obtain additional resources year after year and have been fairly successful because I think our government understands that there is a real need and that there will be an increasing demand, not a decreasing demand for services in this area as we move forward.

So I do not have all the answers and all the solutions. I hear the issues that are raised by the coalition, and I will continue to work with them to try to address the needs over a period of time, but I think the critical issue for us is to ensure that as many people that need our services are supported with the services and with the additional resources that we have available.

(Mr. Jack Penner, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Martindale: It is my understanding that the Manitoba Coalition for Service Providers would like to see an approximate 5 percent increase in funding which they would pass on to staff who now have starting wages in the range of \$5.40 a hour to \$6.50, and that

because the wages are so low, it is very hard to keep trained employees. It is also my understanding that the Yetta Gold report recommended \$10 an hour minimum for staff in Community Living group homes. The Wiens report recommended a salary increase. Some of the group homes have had a letter-writing campaign and have written to the minister about the issue of wages.

This minister knows that you were funding group homes for staff salaries in the amount of \$5.01 an hour when the minimum wage was \$5.40, and to get around this and to create the illusion that the funding is accurate, there is no longer a per hour for funding. What is the minister going to do to address the wage concerns?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I wish I had an easy answer to that, and I wish I could say we could increase grants substantially. I cannot say that, and I cannot address that issue at this point in time. All I can say again to my honourable friend is that we, on a year-by-year basis, require additional resources and there are more people that are needing services through this area. We will continue to try to work to address that issue, but there are no resources available this year to address it.

Mr. Martindale: So even though there is approximately a \$4.4-million increase in the budget for Community Living, none of this is going to be available to address the wage concerns.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think ultimately the dollars that go to serve individuals will flow with those individuals to the service providers that provide that service, and if they are able to re-adjust or reallocate or look at different ratios or different types of staff, there may be the ability within those additional resources that follow the individual to make adjustments, but that will probably not be an across-the-board situation.

Mr. Martindale: Does the minister's answer imply that there will be more money going to the agencies which they could pass on in staff salaries?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The money does flow to the agencies to provide services for individuals, and it is my understanding that right now, certainly not a high

wage but most of the facilities are providing a wage of around \$6.50 an hour.

Mr. Martindale: When the Manitoba Coalition of Service Providers met with the minister in November, they recommended that overnight supports be paid. Since then, as the minister knows, there have been orders from the Department of Labour to require compliance with Regulation 50/88. My understanding is that these orders were retroactive to April 1. Given the serious funding problems of these agencies, can the minister tell me if, first of all, they are going to comply as they want to do, and secondly, where are they going to get the money to comply?

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Mrs. Mitchelson: We have been working as a department with the Employment Standards Branch of the Department of Labour and the Manitoba coalition to try to better understand the nature and the scope of the issues that have been presented and to promote I guess a better understanding of the Employment Standards regulations and how they may be applied. We will continue to try to identify what the best practices are out there in the industry, and I do not have an answer today. We will continue to work with Employment Standards and the coalition to see how to best resolve this issue.

Mr. Martindale: Best practices sounds to me like a euphemism that does not really mean anything. We are really talking about compliance with a piece of provincial legislation, The Employment Standards Act. Since this is the end of May and the regulation compliance order was issued several months ago, I would like to ask the minister if the agencies are complying with this order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, when this issue was first identified there were some agencies that were not complying, but it was probably because of a lack of an understanding of what the rules were. As we work together with them, it becomes clearer that possibly they could comply, and some of them are complying by changing staff ratios and different things to make that happen. So we are working aggressively with Employment Standards, with the coalition, with agencies to help them understand what the regulations

are and interpret the regulations so that they have the opportunity to comply.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister explain what she means by changing staff ratios? Does that mean that there may be fewer workers on a shift or that some employees may have been let go?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I might be able to give an example. I think I used staffing ratios, and maybe I should have used staffing patterns in my last response. Maybe I will just give an example for my honourable friend where there might be one agency that has several different facilities, and they would employ the same employee for five hours in one of their facilities and then five hours in another facility. They would think that they were meeting or complying with the standards, but really they are one employer and 10 hours of work would constitute two hours of overtime. So if they take a look at changing those staffing patterns so they do not have any one employee working 10 consecutive hours, although it be in two different facilities, then they would be able to comply with the standards.

* (1650)

So that was the interpretation of the rules or the regulations that made them feel they were complying with Employment Standards but they were not. So those are the kinds of issues that we are discussing with facilities and with employers to ensure that they are following the rules that are set up by Employment Standards.

Mr. Martindale: So as far as the minister knows, none of these agencies—and I think we are dealing with 68 agencies—have laid off staff in order to meet the compliance order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Not that I am aware of.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister indicate whether any of the increased funds will be available for agencies for administrative purposes?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, every time we create a new space, there is an administrative grant that goes with it.

Mr. Martindale: So what the minister is implying is that the only way that agencies' budgets are going to increase is if they have more clients that they are providing service to.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes.

Mr. Martindale: So, in other words, there is nothing in terms of new money for administration or staffing or anything for existing agencies whose client load has not increased.

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is right.

Mr. Martindale: So the only way to meet the compliance orders is to change hours of work in order to not be paying overtime, but I am not sure that works in all situations because we are talking about a problem of overnight work where people previously were not paid and now they are being told that they have to be paid. So is the minister saying that all these agencies have solved their problem by cutting down in overtime?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, each situation or circumstance is different, and I do not think that you can generalize or across the board say that this has to change in absolutely every facility. There are circumstances where we have to identify what the issues are. In the case my honourable friend raised, it might have been a circumstance or a situation where a facility was having overnight staff that came and just slept there, did not have to be late night staff, but they were not really being paid as staff because they were giving these people a place to live or to sleep, and that has happened. I guess what we have to do is sit down and work through those circumstances and situations with Employment Standards and with the coalition or the facility that has been undertaking that kind of practise and identify what the solutions might be.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me if she has acted on another one of the recommendations of the Coalition of Service Providers, and that is, that the department implement long-term planning for all individuals who live with a mental disability?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We are working fairly proactively with families and with individuals trying to develop individual plans, trying to develop a transition process

when individuals are moving from school, out of the school into community living, so we are trying to develop on an individual basis long-term plans. I think we are going to have to be more diligent in that process as we see the issues emerging around more disabled people, children that in years past would not have survived that are living through increased technology and new approaches.

We will see more and more children in our communities, in our schools with mental disabilities that will have to be transitioned out of school and into adult programs. I think it is going to be very important that we develop at a very early age a plan and to be a lifelong plan for these individuals so that they can move through different stages of their lives and into programs, or whatever, that will provide them with the best option and opportunity to live to their fullest potential. So there are major challenges in this area in the years to come, and we are trying to work to ensure that we develop individual plans with families that will lead to the best possible support we can provide.

Mr. Martindale: It sounds like the minister is in favour of a long-term plan for every individual. Are you in favour of attaching funding to that plan?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, that is an interesting question and I am not sure exactly what my honourable friend is asking. In every circumstance, we provide support in whatever way. I guess I might say to my honourable friend that I am very much in support of working with families. I know we have one project, In the Company of Friends, that is running where families and individuals purchase the kinds of services that they want and they require on an individual basis.

I, quite frankly, think we need to work with families more to see whether that is an option or an opportunity, so very often we develop programs and then we try to fit individuals into those programs, rather than developing plans around individual needs and funding those plans. I think that the more ownership families and individuals can take over developing what they believe is in their best interests is a direction that we may want to go.

* (1700)

I think we have had success in some of the pilots that we have tried. I think that what we would want to do is try to ensure that as we develop plans and look to the future for long-term case planning that we might even be able to better determine what the cost requirements might be. I am not sure we are at that point yet, but I suppose—I do not know what my honourable friend is asking. We budget on a year-by-year basis, and we have no way of determining whether someone is going to have an accident and die tomorrow and we will no longer need the funding for that individual or if they are going to live 40 years versus 50 years. I mean, I am not sure what kind of funding he is talking about when he talks about funding going along with the plan.

Mr. Martindale: I was told that there is a research project at the University of Manitoba called Lifespan Research Project. I guess it is being conducted by Mr. Mike Mann in recreation studies. Does the minister have a copy of that research or a summary of the research, and if so, is it available to me?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, we do not have a copy here, but we can provide that.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to thank the minister for that.

The coalition recommended that supported employment become a long-term project. Is the minister in favour of this?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I think in many instances we are supportive of supported employment programs. This is the one area where, of course, the federal government has had some desire to withdraw funding, and I think that we have lobbied very strongly for that funding to be maintained and for individuals to be supported as much as possible. I, generally speaking, am very much in favour of supported employment, and we want to ensure that the resources are there at the federal level to continue that kind of activity.

Mr. Martindale: The coalition, when they met with the minister, also recommended that services for those who live with a mental disability be mandated. The model that was suggested to me was The Child and Family Services Act, so that, presumably, people would

be entitled to service; they would not have to ask for service or lobby for service. I am wondering if the minister is in favour of that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, again, an interesting question from my honourable friend. You know, I am not sure that any province or any government right across the country, regardless of political stripe, is looking at legislation mandating services. I think that we have to be held accountable as governments for the money that we spend and the budgets that we provide to provide the kinds of services that we can provide. I think that our record speaks for itself in this area as far as the increased support year after year for services for individuals, and so I am not in favour of a mandate through legislation for services. I am in favour of being sensitive to the issues and the needs and trying within our resources of government to prioritize these areas of expenditure. I think you would probably find that would be the position of governments, regardless of political stripe, right across the country.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me who the project group is and what their mandate is or what they are doing?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The project group was a consultant that was hired to consult with the community and bring forward suggestions or ideas on new and innovative ways of delivering services to the disabled community, and we will be reviewing that report and discussing it with the disabled community and seeing whether there are new directions that we should be taking as a result of that.

(Mr. Mervin Tweed, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Martindale: Did the project group consultant look at the physically disabled community or vulnerable persons community?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The vulnerable persons community.

Mr. Martindale: I presume the report was written for the minister and the department.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Martindale: Could I get a copy of the report?

Mrs. Mitchelson: In due course, yes. What we want first to do is discuss with the stakeholders some of the issues and see whether there is a consensus on any changes in the way we do things, and certainly after we have shared and discussed these issues with the community, I would be prepared to provide a copy to my honourable friend.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): The honourable minister for Burrows—member, whatever, minister.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I am both.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Yes.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister tell me what the top five recommendations were by the project group?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Not at this point in time.

* (1710)

Mr. Martindale: I have had concerns expressed to me by agencies that operate group homes that in some cases they are being required to comply with health and safety and fire codes, that sort of thing, but they do not have money to comply. Can the minister tell me if any of the new funding in her department will help with capital grants so that they can comply with making improvements to their facilities?

Mrs. Mitchelson: With the funding allocation that we do provide, there is some minor or small amount of money in there for minor capital repairs. If in fact there was a need for anything over and above that to deal with any unusual circumstances that were beyond sort of basic upkeep and basic capital repairs, we do have a little bit of flexibility within our budget to accommodate on a case-by-case basis, but we have not had any requests for that in the recent past.

Mr. Martindale: It was suggested to me that a capital fund be set up, and I am wondering if the minister would consider that so that there would be capital funding available for these agencies.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I do not think we are looking at a major capital fund at this point in time. I know a lot of organizations do their own fundraising for any major capital. I do know that there are programs like the Community Places program that is available if there is some fundraising done. Through the Department of Culture, they will match funds for capital for construction for renovations.

I go back again to say that there is a need in our community to provide the support services to more and more individuals on an ongoing basis, and I think our priority still has to be that support in the community for individuals that need it. So, as I said earlier, there is a small amount of capital built into the budgets for facilities, for agencies, and we are not looking at any major capital fund right now. I certainly would encourage, if there is anything significant or major, that there are grants that can be applied for through Culture, through the Community Services Council, as another example for major capital renovations or construction.

Mr. Martindale: It seems to me that the agencies that operate group homes must be concerned about their lack of capital funding which was why they raised it with me. I received a copy of an item that was sent to the minister—I cannot really call it correspondence because it was a photocopy of a newspaper article from the Winnipeg Free Press, dated Friday, April 18, 1997, and it was titled Dad could not save son from fire—and the only comment that went with it was on the bottom it says: Can you say inadequate respite? The minister might recognize this. I am wondering if respite was an issue in this situation where an adult, I believe, died in a house fire.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I do not recall seeing this come across my desk. Now I do not know when it was sent. I do not see any date on—this was from the Winnipeg Free Press, Friday, April 18, and I do not recall. I could certainly go back to my office and see. I recall seeing the article. It was a very tragic circumstance but the issue of lack of respite has never been raised with me or with my department.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I have a problem with anonymous comments and I am sure the minister does too, so it is a little hard to advocate for someone when

you do not know who they are. My only question was if respite was an issue in this death or not.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Not that we are aware of. It has never been an issue that has been raised with us, and certainly we do not believe that there would have been any cause to think that there would have been a problem.

Mr. Martindale: Pass.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): All right. Item 9.3.(a) Regional Operations (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$13,021,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$2,119,900—pass.

9.3.(b) Adult Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask the minister if there is a list of external agencies that might be available to me under item 3.(b) so that I know who the 68 agencies are, or however many organizations there are that are funded by Adult Services.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We do have the grants list that we can provide to my honourable friend—I think we have it here—but not all of these agencies would be on the grants list because some of them are funded with per diems, not grants. If my honourable friend would like that we could undertake to put that together and provide it to him.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to thank the minister for this list. This is the list that I ask for every year in Estimates and always get in Estimates, and it includes the agencies that work with Vulnerable Persons as well as Child and Family Services. It is all the external agencies funded by the Department of Family Services.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I just want to clarify that those are all the agencies that are grant-funded. There are other organizations or agencies we deal with that just have per diem funding, so it would not be a grant.

Mr. Martindale: I have some specific questions about one or two agencies, and I am wondering which would be the most appropriate budget line to ask those questions under.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I guess it would depend on which agencies my honourable friend has the questions about and then I could tell him.

Mr. Martindale: Well, it will come as no surprise to the minister to know that CNIB is one of them.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, that falls under this area.

Mr. Martindale: I will also have questions about financial reporting by United Way-funded agencies, but I would like to stick to vulnerable persons for a few more minutes.

A number of individuals and organizations have spoken to me about their concerns for vulnerable persons who are living at home with parents, and many of those parents are elderly, they are aging, and they are very concerned about what is going to happen to them—well, not so much to them, but to their children when they end up moving out of a home and into an apartment or to a personal care home, feeling that there are not enough services for their children and believing that there needs to be plans in place; there needs to be independent living arrangements or suitable group homes.

I am wondering if the minister can tell us what plans she and her department have for looking after the needs of this particular client group.

* (1720)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, some of the most difficult meetings I have had since becoming the Minister of Family Services are with families, aging parents, who have really committed their lives to providing a loving home for a child—that is no longer a child—with a mental disability and really understandable fears and uncertainties about what the future will hold. I guess that is why we have an additional \$4.5 million in this area, and that is to help to resolve some of the issues for these individuals and these families.

Aging parents find they can no longer cope and can no longer provide the kind of support that they have in the past. We will continue, as resources become

available, to try to deal with those issues and plan for the future of those adults.

Mr. Martindale: But it is my understanding, from answers that the minister gave earlier today, that the bulk of that \$4.4 million or \$4.5 million is going to new clients when they turn 18.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I want to clarify that. I think that was the question that was asked of me, and I said no, and maybe I could read the list out for my honourable friend.

I want to indicate to my honourable friend that about half of those individuals that we will be able to provide support to are age of majority and the other half are critical needs like the individuals we have just been speaking about.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to thank the minister for refreshing my memory. I wonder if she could tell me what the 50 percent will be spent on in terms of critical needs. What sorts of services, what sorts of programs? What will be available for these individuals?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess the supports that will be provided for those that we have just been speaking about would be community residences, supported apartment living and more in-home supports, if they are required. So those are the areas of highest priority because they are the areas of highest need.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I am sure that the parents of these individuals who are now seniors will be happy to hear about that. Could the minister tell me what kinds of clients are making up, well, I guess not just a majority, but who is it that are turning 18, becoming adults and becoming new clients of Community Living? My understanding is that a lot of them are fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect, and I am wondering if that is the case.

Mrs. Mitchelson: No, the majority are not fetal alcohol, although there is an increasing incidence of fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effect children that will be moving into the adult system. It is not significant numbers. Still the majority of those that are moving from the school system to the adult system are

those with mental disabilities that are not necessarily fetal alcohol related.

Mr. Martindale: Since the population of Manitoba is growing relatively slowly, and since the budget for Community Living has increased more than just one year—I believe for several years there has been increased funding. My understanding is that one of the reasons is the age-of-majority people. Are there more individuals who need service? Are we seeing an increasing proportion of the population and, if so, why?

* (1730)

Mrs. Mitchelson: I guess it all depends on how you want to interpret it. I mean, I have indicated that children are living longer. Infants with disabilities are living longer. They are surviving longer, I suppose. They are moving into our adult system, and at the far end we have many that are becoming seniors with disabilities that years ago would not have survived nearly as long with the new technology.

So we are seeing increasing numbers move into the adult system and we are seeing at the far end not as many moving out of the system. So it will be an ever-increasing issue and problem that governments and society will have to deal with, and I think we all recognize that as a major challenge. I suppose we have to start to look at our programming to see whether we are doing things in the most efficient and effective way and finding that we are supporting people in an adequate fashion, attempting to evaluate what we do today and whether there are better ways of delivering service tomorrow. But I do know that expectation will be that we will need increasing resources in this area for many years to come.

Mr. Martindale: Would one group that the minister is referring to be children at St. Amant Centre who are turning adults?

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is a different—well, I mean, one and the same, it is part of it, but there are sort of many issues around St. Amant. As we move more towards community living and not institutionalization of individuals, we will see less and less young children entering St. Amant, but we will see an aging population and a shift in focus I think by St. Amant. They have

been doing an awful lot of work on a new vision and a new strategic plan on how to deal with the issues that will be presented to them as they do not admit children and as their population ages. There certainly is an issue of transition out of St. Amant and into the community, and they have really responded to the challenge by creating community residences and developing programming that deals with adult day programs and support to adults that are living in the community with a disability. So that is part of the issue, but there are other more challenging issues for St. Amant as they look to an older and an aging population in the client group that they serve.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Item 9.3.(b) Adult Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,551,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$582,800—pass; (3) Financial Assistance and External Agencies \$63,706,900.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask the minister where she is at in terms of some of the problems being raised by clients of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. Last year when I asked questions in Estimates, the minister did not really want to get involved in what she deemed, I believe, the internal affairs of an agency. However, since then I believe she has met with some of the advocates who want to see some changes. I was pleased that when I raised this in Question Period, I got quite a different answer from the minister. It seems to me that now the minister is willing to take their concerns quite seriously. I guess what I am looking for is a progress report, and that may suffice. If it does not, I have a rather thick file that I could get out and ask all kinds of detailed questions, but maybe we could start with the generalities of where the minister is going on this issue.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I think anytime those who are being served in our community, because of special needs or circumstances by any organization, anytime those people come forward with some issues or concerns around whether the organization is serving them well or not, we have to look at that seriously. I think we have taken the issues and the letters, the comments and concerns that we have received very seriously and we, as a result, are meeting with those who have brought the issues forward. We have also discussed the issue of the CNIB with the United Way,

which is another fairly significant funder of CNIB, and as times evolve and things change I guess organizations have to ensure that they are being relevant to the clients that they serve.

We would hope that is happening, but if there is dissatisfaction and people are coming forward, I think we need to develop some sort of a process where we can have everyone together around the table and see what direction needs to be taken into the future. We are prepared to facilitate that kind of a process, and see whether we can resolve some of the outstanding issues. I think it is too early to determine what that resolve might be, but I think it is incumbent upon us to become involved and not to dictate or determine, but to try to facilitate a process where everyone sits down and discusses the issue and let us find the best way of using the dollars that we have available to support individuals in the best manner possible so they are satisfied as people receiving the service, and we are satisfied that taxpayers' dollars are being spent in the best manner possible.

Mr. Martindale: That is a little too general for me, so I will have to ask some specific questions. I have a list of concerns that were raised by the coalition for service accountability for the visually impaired. They have quite a serious list of concerns, and I would just like to read seven issues that they raised with me, namely, waiting list for service, cutbacks in service, cuts in direct service staff and increases in management positions, not responsive to the aboriginal needs in the North, insensitive to consumers, inadequate consultation, high unemployment rate among consumers, severe treatment of employees for bad service delivery. I do not understand the last one. I am wondering if the minister can tell us: What progress has been made with United Way and with CNIB on correcting many of these very serious concerns that have been raised with the minister?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, you know, it is very easy to, again, from opposition and as a critic take government to task on what they have done or what they have not done in a certain area. I mean, if I had the ability to ask the questions and hold my honourable friend accountable for his answers, I might ask the question on what he would be prepared to do if he were in my shoes. Is he saying that he would immediately

withdraw funding from CNIB, shut CNIB down, or would he want to ensure that he had all of the facts and all of the information from all parties and all sides together and see whether we could not work out a positive resolution or solution?

I am not prepared to go any further than to say that we are concerned about the issues that have been raised and that we will continue to listen to those concerns that have been brought forward to us. We will try to facilitate a resolution, but I am not prepared today to say that we will remove funding from CNIB. So I am not sure if that is what my honourable friend is recommending. I would like him to put that on the record if he is.

I guess the biggest issue for me is to try to ensure that the people that require the service are being served. If there are some that have some disagreement in the manner in which the money is flowing for that service, I think we need to sit down with all parties around the table and try to find a solution or a resolution so that the money is being spent in the proper manner and the people that are being served are being served, but I am not prepared to go any further than that today on the record. I would prefer to resolve the problems, if we can, with everyone together.

* (1740)

Mr. Martindale: So is the minister working with the coalition for service accountability and the United Way and CNIB to make some changes at CNIB and see that the issues that were raised are being addressed?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I would want to see the issues resolved in a way that the people that need the service are getting the service and the dollars are being spent in the appropriate manner to make that happen. I will endeavour to keep my honourable friend informed as we move through the process, too.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Is it agreed that we take a five-minute recess? The committee will resume in five minutes.

The committee recessed at 5:40 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 5:54 p.m.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Okay, we will call the committee back to order and continue with the honourable member for Burrows.

Mr. Martindale: Well, now I have forgotten where I was, but I think I am finished with CNIB for the time being. Certainly, if nothing changes, the minister will be hearing from me again either in Question Period or via correspondence, and I am sure she will be hearing from the coalition of service providers.

I have a general question about the financial statements of organizations that receive money from the Department of Family Services and also receive money from the United Way of Winnipeg. I discovered this when I was going through the annual report for Osborne House. Now I do not want to be critical of Osborne House; I am just using them as an example. I am sorry I do not have a photocopy of this for the minister, but I can certainly provide it to her in a minute. In fact, maybe we will get the page to photocopy it.

In their financial statement for the year ending March 31, 1996, under Revenue, it says—and this is amazing to me—administration, facility, crisis line, shelter, children's counselling, follow-up program, community relations. Now I have never read a financial statement like that before, so I did some inquiring and I found out, I was told, and I did not have time to verify this with the United Way, but what I was told is that this is called functional budgeting so that under Revenue, they showed how the money was spent on different functions of their organization.

One concern that I have is that, first of all, there is no indication of the source of any of the funding. For example, I would not have known that there is any money from this minister's department had there not been Note 3 to the financial statement's accounts receivable, and it says, Province of Manitoba per diems \$15,957 and miscellaneous \$1,524, I presume both from the Province of Manitoba. I will get those two pages photocopied for the minister and her staff, and now I have some questions.

I am wondering if the minister is willing to check into this because it seems to me that if the province is putting out money, and they are to many of these organizations, it should show up under the revenue of the organization. So I checked with some other financial statements. Just by way of comparison, SMD shows Revenue, Province of Manitoba—I have the 1995 financial statement—\$5,649,000. I have another annual report for SMD which also shows funding from the Province of Manitoba.

I have an annual report for Rossbrook House which has a note to the financial statement which lists all the sources of funding, including the Province of Manitoba. I am wondering if the minister is willing to talk to the United Way about the kinds of financial reporting that they require for their agencies, many of which also receive money from the Province of Manitoba, and many of them receive money from the Department of Family Services. I guess the reason for this request is that I think it is only appropriate that, if the province is giving grants to these organizations, it should show up on the financial statement. I am wondering if the minister agrees with me and if she is willing to do some checking into this.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think I do agree with my honourable friend that there should be some standard process, and we will certainly look into that and see whether there is something that needs to be done to correct that.

Mr. Martindale: Well, first of all, I would like to thank the minister for that answer. Also, I would like to add an additional reason for doing it, and that is that every year I get the grants to external agencies and, just to use this year as an example, Osborne House is getting \$646,000. What I would like to be able to do is to look at the annual report for Osborne House and see if the amount of money that they are given by the province, according to the information that I am given in Estimates, corresponds with the amount in their financial statement a year later, so that, first of all, there is consistency; secondly, if the amount of money is not the same, I could come into Estimates and say, you know, why is it more or why is it less, and if it is underexpended, why is it underexpended? I think that is a very good reason for requiring these agencies to show the entire amount in their revenue statement of

their financial reports, and I hope that the minister would agree with me.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Absolutely, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Martindale: I also have discussed it with the Provincial Auditor's office, and he agrees with me. So we will follow up on that next year.

Could the minister tell me if there are significant changes in the grants to agencies? I have not had a chance to compare all of them, but it looks like many of them are the same, although there are some significant changes, for example, the grant to Winnipeg Child and Family Services has a significant increase. I wonder if the minister can indicate if most of the grants were identical and what some of the increases or decreases may have been.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We will get that information very shortly and share it.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Tweed): Item 9.3 .Community Living (b) Adult Services (3) Financial Assistance and External Agencies \$63,706,900—pass.

9.3.(c) Manitoba Development Centre (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$22,201,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$2,924,200—pass.

9.3.(d) Residential Care Licensing (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$259,200. Shall the item pass?

The hour now being six o'clock, committee rise.

HEALTH

Mr. Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Health. When the committee last sat it had been considering item 21.1.(b)(1) on page 68 of the Estimates book. Shall the item pass?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Chairperson, I did want to—possibly a couple of further questions, depending on when the member for Kildonan (Mr.

Chomiak) gets back in. The first one is just to follow up with respect to the minister's remarks yesterday. We started to talk about the regional health boards, elections versus appointments and so forth, and I would just as soon leave that, but in the minister's response to me what he had indicated seemed to be kind of an either/or, and, yes, we will disagree on the taxation aspect or the accountability as the minister refers to it, but I think there are other ways in which one might be able to look at it in which maybe not the entire board is in fact elected, looking at other jurisdictions. Having said that, I am very familiar with what the minister's remarks are, so he does not need to initially go back into that, but I just point that out as a viable option.

The second part of the question that I had asked the minister yesterday, and time did not allow him to give a complete response, was that with respect to the current boards that are in place, the current 180 boards. What sort of a role does he envision them playing over the next number of years? Does he have, for example, and you will have to excuse me if he has issued it out in a press release because I have not seen it myself, but does he have a list of responsibilities that they will be carrying out, the list of responsibilities that the regional health boards would be carrying out, a list of responsibilities which the Ministry of Health would ultimately be responsible for?

I pose the question in that sense based on what I thought was, whether I agreed with it or disagreed with it, a fairly good idea in terms of where the Minister of Education listed off very clearly what he believed parent advisory councils' responsibilities were, even went further to talk about what principals' responsibilities were. Does the ministry have something of that nature?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Mr. Chair, first of all, on the first part of the member's statement or question with respect to other viable options for including elected board membership, I think it is very important to look at dynamics of how boards work, and if you look at issues like, for example, the Senate, which has very limited moral authority because they are not elected, versus the House of Commons, you know, you get some sense of what kind of split constituency base can do. If you look at what happened in Saskatchewan where their boards were elected with

no direct financial responsibility to the taxpayer, they were elected under the model that the member proposes. Go and elect the boards, and then they will run the health system, and if they overspend, et cetera, you cannot fire the boards because they are elected. The province picks it up or you fight with them.

What happened in most of rural Saskatchewan, a good deal of it, where those regional authorities had to do a lot of work on consolidation of programming, rationalization of service to be able to make the system survive for the people of rural Saskatchewan, and their issues are somewhat different from Manitoba because they are a far more rural province. They have many, many smaller communities. I think their government converted 52 hospitals or closed 52 facilities, converted them to other things, so their problems are somewhat different, but in the process of getting some common-sense approach to getting a delivery mechanism for health care in rural Saskatchewan by electing the boards—the stories I have heard from people involved in it is campaigns boiled down to, you vote for me and I will save our hospital in town No. X even if our hospital only has a 40 percent bed occupancy and hardly anyone uses it. They go to Regina. You vote for me and I will save it and rally around it, and I will not let us consolidate in the neighbour town, or I will not let this change. Those are very, very strong rallying cries.

It is the politics of negativism. I mean, we are in a federal election now where we see several parties campaigning exactly on that. Yep, you vote for me, I am against all these other things, and I will be great to argue against them, but do I have to build anything? Oh, no, no, no. So that was part of what happened in Saskatchewan.

* (1440)

Then you also had, when you had difficult budgetary decisions to be made—and we do not live in a void; we have a limited amount of resources with which to spend—everything becomes a priority and a debate, and when there is no responsibility by those elected people to go back to the taxpayers to raise the dollars that are required to meet what their expenditures are, boy, it is easy to say, yep, we agree with this. We will vote for this. Yes, we need this program. Boy, it was a nasty

government in Regina who said we could not have it. We will spend all the money we do not have to provide everything anyone asked for, but we do not have to go back to the taxpayer. If we run a deficit or we cannot give you what you want, it is because the government in Regina is responsible. Well, that is not a way to run a system.

You have to have accountability that leads to responsibility, and for most of our current governance in rural Manitoba those boards are appointed by their municipalities. If they do run a deficit, they are accountable to the people who appointed them who would then have to go and levy the tax against their ratepayers and that has led to, I think, very, very responsible boards over the years. Their problem, of course, is that we need to operate on larger areas in small communities today. We need the benefits of large numbers and regions in order to ensure the delivery and expansion and betterment, I think, of health care in rural Manitoba.

So when you do look at the Saskatchewan model and you do see some of the things that happened—and in fairness to my colleagues from Saskatchewan, I do not want to get into the private conversations I had—but in the general comments that I have received by many who have worked in that system, their advice is, what was missing from their election system was the accountability to the taxpayer that leads to responsibility and decision making. If they had to do it all over again, they may not say this publicly, but I would suspect—and it is only my suspicion—that they would ensure an accountability to the taxpayer in that system. So one must learn from the road that others take and it reinforces, in my mind at least, that you have to have that accountability.

Our municipal governments act very responsible because they are accountable, and when even boards that we appoint are accountable to us, they are responsible, but when people are elected and have no financial accountability or are not accountable to the people who have that accountability—in other words, you can remove them if they are not doing the job—you do not have the responsibility and that is, I think, very much a basis of human nature. If you are going to build a democratic system in any way, you have to always

take into account human nature and how it works, and I think that is what we are trying to do.

So could you have mixed boards? My fear would be that you would get into these great debates though between who was appointed and who was elected and what mandate they have, and I know we see that now on occasion. From time to time, municipal people say they are more accountable because they are closer to the people than the provincial MLAs, although one can point out, I am usually elected in an election that draws 75 or 80 percent of the electorate whereas municipal turnouts are usually around 30 percent. But besides those kinds of debates, you get into who is more accountable, and I would not want to see that happen on the boards and become those kinds of issues. These boards in these first few years have a huge responsibility in getting to set up a new structure. Once that is completed and if we want to look at the future, us or another government may want to look at moving toward an elected board model. I would argue very strongly that it has to have the financial accountability to the electorate that will, ultimately, give it the responsibility to the electorate that it requires.

So that is my view. I think I have gone over it, and we will maybe agree to disagree and sometime we can debate it in the future, but I must tell the member that the demands for elected boards that I have received in meetings I have attended, with municipalities I have met with, with communities I visited and the reports I have from regional health authorities, are that this issue really is not one that there is a huge demand for at this time. I think people do appreciate that these boards need an opportunity to get functioning and functional and go through a transition period. The day may come, in a year or two, when this becomes an issue again, and again my position would be very much that you have to have financial accountability.

On the roles of the board, on the second part of the member's issue, the roles for other boards of 180—[interjection] Okay. Well, I will finish this and get it on the record.

With respect to the 180 boards across the province, as of today the vast majority of these boards have either evolved already or are in the process of evolving into the regional health authorities and have in fact

dissolved their corporate entity or are in the process of doing this. There are some, primarily personal care homes, that wish, and I fully support their decision, to remain as corporate entities and continue. In the case of many of those personal care homes, I think the system easily accommodates them simply because their functions—they are usually fully occupied—are fairly well defined. All that shall change really is that their relationship will certainly be more on an operating day-to-day basis with the regional health authority than with the Ministry of Health and to some degree their funding is a matter of flowthrough.

The areas where they may see some change is that the regional health authorities obviously are looking for some ways of finding savings by joint purchasing and sharing of support services and those types of things, laundry, purchasing, commissary, and I am sure, surely, no one would object to finding those kinds of reasonable savings. It certainly does not interfere with matters of faith or culture or language that are a part of that. I have to be a little careful because certainly dietary and food issues are part of that and have to be taken into account in any consolidation of kitchens.

The fact of the matter is, in most rural communities, facilities often share kitchens today if they are in the same community. If they are in different and far-flung communities, it is just impractical to share anyway, so we have to recognize that; so their roles will continue.

For those boards in Winnipeg, it is a somewhat different situation because of the sheer nature and size of the facilities and certainly the faith-based facilities. We have an agreement with them that outlines the principles of that relationship. Of course, I am expecting very fully in the next few months that the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, as it gears up, will enter into discussions with those facilities, the faith-based ones in particular and others who may wish to maintain some corporate role as to how they will under the faith-based agreement or under general operating principles conduct their business and relate to one another and the common objectives they wish to receive.

Certainly on the faith-based side, I know, I had discussions today with Concordia Hospital. I had an opportunity to visit with their board, and I think they, like many others, will find that things will work out, I

think, reasonably well. We will get the benefits of regional planning and regional delivery in many programs and at the same time maintain many of the local community-faith components of the system that I think have a great benefit to it. I also think, once we get through working out some of these operating arrangements and functional arrangements that have to take place and people become comfortable with them, many of these facilities, particularly the faith-based, will find that there are needs that are unfilled that they may wish to take on in their own facility or communities or across the system and find that their role may in fact, I would hope, be busier in the future than it is today in that they will find a very strong purpose for being and for doing their work within the system. So we are hoping to see that achieved.

Does the ministry put out guidelines and operations? In rural Manitoba those really have not been necessary, given the realities of what has happened with evolution. In Winnipeg, quite frankly, you are talking about major facilities, their roles and how they operate will continue, as I have said, under the principles of that faith-based agreement and our operating agreements that we work out. As things move along, I think there are new niches to be found. I do not want to speculate on them today because we want to make sure there is a flexibility in it. Where there is unmet need, if these boards feel able in their facilities to take that on we would certainly welcome that. I do not think there is a need for that kind of list the member talks about at this particular time, so one has not been quite prepared.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Just by way of initial administrative background. In discussions with the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), I am anticipating that today we will stay on this line item and parts of the next occasion when we sit, and then we will probably move on fairly quickly through the specific program areas. For the information of the minister and staff, I think if any questions that I ask during the course of this discussion the minister feels are inappropriate and should be asked under line item, he can just advise me and I will simply re-adjust my card system to do that so that we can move on as expeditiously as possible.

Can the minister indicate with respect to the boards that do not evolve how they will be funded? Will they

continue to receive the same funding levels appropriate and commensurate with volume and with usage?

Mr. Praznik: Are you talking about the facilities or the board?

Mr. Chomiak: The facilities and the respective boards of course that choose not to evolve.

* (1450)

Mr. Praznik: Firstly, I would like to table a copy of information requested by the member for Kildonan on the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, the initial appointments that were made. On the first page, and behind it, are the plans as to where members would be appointed and from where nominations would be sought. So I think it gives him, I hope, the information for which he was looking.

With respect to the funding question on boards and how they will be funded, the reason I asked from my chair whether he meant the boards or the facilities is because this is in fact, I would not say an issue but certainly a matter that had to be dealt with in rural Manitoba about whether or not a regional health authority would fund the operations of a board on a facility that did not evolve, where they of course did not have that cost any longer for those facilities that did. The answer there was no. If an organization or municipality wished to maintain a governance board that was felt to be their responsibility to cover that. The reality of it of course is in most cases those costs are just so minimal they are really not an issue. In most rural communities the boards are all volunteer boards. They do not receive per diems, they do not receive travelling allowances. What you are really talking about in many cases are the costs of providing some meals and the paper flowing out information, so they are not really significant and in reality probably find their way in just general administrative dollars.

With respect to Winnipeg and the facilities, one of the challenges of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority and the ministry in this transition year, and I would suspect into the next fiscal year it is going to take us to get it set up, is to fundamentally change the way in which we budget and account for dollars. What I do not want to see the system end up with is our current model of

facility funding from the ministry directly to facilities, and if we just passed on that same system to the Winnipeg Hospital Authority—I guess in essence we are doing that initially without working out the problems that are inherent in it—then I do not think we have done the new authority or those facilities a great deal of justice.

When I visited with Concordia Hospital today, they have a deficit that they are quite concerned about. They raised the point that so often these deficits come up because of changes in volume and the work going through. Obviously the best way to measure a system is by units of service purchased or delivered depending on how one is doing any particular service. I would expect the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, with the ministry, we have a lot of work to do on how we put together the mechanisms and plans with facilities to get, I think, a more accurate degree of budgeting that reflects what we are purchasing or providing and is transparent for all to see that is equally applied across the system, that has some flexibility in its own category for some differences we may inherit or facilities may have in the way they are laid out or particular nuances in their building that legitimately incur additional cost.

But we are looking for best practices, ultimately, and we are looking for ways of ensuring that there is more flexibility within the financing to deal with volume increases or decreases over time. So the details are yet to be worked out and those who are far better than I on financing will be at the various tables to put this together in their computers, I guess, over the next while. It will be a significant change from how we are now funding.

Mr. Chomiak: But let us suppose that X, Y or Z board—and the minister has indicated that not all boards or institutions have evolved—determined they will not be part of a regional structure, which I presume under the legislation is their right. How will they be funded?

Mr. Praznik: The two questions sort of come together and I think in fairness to us both, this gets so complicated in how you envision models. We may often be talking about the same thing and not necessarily articulating well and I certainly would be guilty of that. It will be, ultimately, I think a very mixed system to some degree because—and these are

details that I really want to leave to the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, its financial people. The ministry will be involved in it because we obviously have a big role in funding, but I would like to have them and the current facilities who do not evolve and people from the ones who do through the Winnipeg Hospital Authority at the table because I, again, come back to my initial approach of common sense.

We discussed a little bit at Concordia today this same matter. It may just be practically better for some programs to be funded centrally and operated out of a facility. It may be better to have that program—the part that is delivered in the facility—funded through the facility. I do not want to prejudice those things with my comments today or decisions that we make. I want to leave enough flexibility in the system that it is going to evolve and develop into a way that makes good sense for what is being done. I do not feel in a position today to be able to comment on that, quite frankly, but the message I give to the member is as it evolves there will have to be flexibility. Hospitals like Concordia, for example, are obviously going to have a facilities budget of some part for certain parts they deliver. They may have specific funding for programs that they deliver. They may provide the space and be funded for that for centrally funded programs. That is a mix that has to evolve between them and the regional health authority.

Mr. Chomiak: I am going to resist the temptation to get into the specifics of this issue because it is complicated and time is limited, but I want to ask the minister if within Winnipeg whether or not the government is offering inducements, as was done in rural Manitoba, with respect to deficit reduction upon evolution.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, a fundamental difference in structure between rural and Winnipeg, although there are many similarities, there are also many differences. In rural Manitoba, the vast majority of facilities with which we were dealing had a municipal constituency with a taxation method or power to make up their deficits on a local tax base and that local tax base, through its elected people, appointed the boards who ran the facilities. In Winnipeg, our facilities are run by either community-based boards or charitable organizations or religious orders who are the owners in essence of those facilities. The last municipally based

facility, I guess Riverview, as the member well knows probably better than I, evolved into its own board and out of city jurisdiction some time ago, so there is not a tax base with which to go back. That is part of it.

Secondly, because of the size of the facilities in Winnipeg, their relationships with their own boards are somewhat different than in rural Manitoba. Under the faith-based agreement, those boards will continue in their functions. There will be changes in those types of things and principles as the faith-based agreement outlines. There will be operating things that will develop over time, and I want that to happen, and one of those, of course, is how we fund. Those details have to be worked out.

The real crux of the matter that the member raises is the deficits that Winnipeg hospitals currently have. Obviously we have to give some consideration to how those will be handled and fit within the Winnipeg Hospital Authority as they move to a funding agency. We obviously want those deficits dealt with as much as possible within the facilities now, and Winnipeg Hospital Authority is going to have to look at that. We have not worked out those details, but we are not expecting the evolutionary role. The issue is somewhat different here. In rural Manitoba the plan always was and it was critical to have that evolution and we had municipal authorities who had a responsibility to those facilities, who had a tax base. It is not the case in Winnipeg. There is much more flexibility in governance in Winnipeg, given the size of facilities and the history here and how to work it out and the sheer numbers. The deficit issue will have to be dealt with with a lot of negotiation, but it is not going to be, in my vision, a way where we would say to the facilities, particularly the faith-based: If you do not sign an agreement to evolve into the WHA, we will not pick up your deficit. That is the point the member was trying to get at. I say that clearly today.

* (1500)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, last year we were told in Estimates the cost of the establishment of the regional health boards would be \$3 million, and I am wondering if the minister can just confirm whether that is the figure and what the figure is for this year.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, my staff think we are either on budget or a little bit under, but, for Tuesday when we return to this place, we will have more detail for the member to provide him the exact dollars, and there are still a few issues, I know, that have been brought to my attention. Some of the RHAs, I just flag this with him, had many facilities that they were taking over that had administrative budgets so their ability to find the savings to pay for their costs was there. Some regions had very few facilities and so they had less ability to do that, so that is one of the issues we are still working out with them to give some fairness.

There was also one other point I flag with him because he probably has heard about it already is that we seconded provincial staff out of various RHAs as our liaison people. Some came out of regions with greater numbers and that affects, sort of, their budgets. We have had to try to figure out a way to equalize that as well, and I hope we are able to do that.

Mr. Chomiak: Will we be able to, during the course of these Estimates, get specific financial information with respect to the budgeting numbers that are going to be applied to the individual RHAs?

Mr. Praznik: Under the terms that we put in place with the RHAs prior to April 1, we had a target reduction which we expected would account for some of the streamlining, but it was to take effect, I believe, in October of this year and was viewed as an in-year goal that would give them in the first part of the year a chance to take over their operations, get a feel for them and be able to find in detail the areas where they can make savings. So we are currently working on those budgets; they are operating on a status quo basis now. By the way, the public health home care community health, those things meant that we transferred from the province to the RHA on April 1. They went in on a status quo basis as well with no expectation of finding saving there, so we are working on those budgets now. They are not quite finalized, but I do not have a difficulty with sharing those kind of global numbers once they are in fact finalized.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that commitment, and I think we will find it useful. The throne speech three years ago talked about the establishment of a prostrate centre in Winnipeg. I

wonder if the minister might update as to what the status of that is.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am told that that particular project is on hold today. I know that the need for one is probably more recognized today than it was even three years ago and growing somewhat. I know in discussions with several of the facilities and with the Winnipeg Health Authority, this is one of the projects that some are advocating within this and finding the right place in which to operate it as a centre of excellence or a place within facilities. So I would suspect once we get things in operation, it is likely to proceed at a faster speed than it is today, but today it is not moving yet.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response. I did ask previous, I had mentioned, will it be possible to get a list of those hospitals with the vacancy rates below 50 percent that the minister has referred to on occasion?

The previous minister had given conditional approval of the proposal from the Manitoba Medical Services Council for the elimination of the free annual five-year exam. I wonder if the minister might outline what the status of that proposal is?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, we have not accepted that recommendation of the council so the status quo prevails.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response then. I think it is a good decision. Can the minister please give an update as to the status of the negotiations and the situation vis-a-vis the Manitoba Medical Services Council and the government?

Mr. Praznik: I hope that our friend Alice Krueger was listening to the last question and answers, given our exchange today in the House on that other particular; it would be nice to see a start. At least, we are not accepting a recommendation to reduce a service. I hope, Alice, if you are out there somewhere and listening, you have caught my comment.

With respect to the Manitoba Medical Association and the Medical Services Council, I think that there has been frustration to some degree on both sides in this

process. As a new minister coming in and you get a handle on where things are, and as the member knows, I have asked Roberta Ellis, my associate deputy, to—this is now in her bailiwick of responsibilities. She has spent a great deal of time on it. I had an opportunity to spend a whole Saturday morning earlier in the year with a group of our department people and representatives of the MMA just to talk about process and procedure and history and where we go on this.

One of the frustrations, and I am trying to be, I think, objective in my comments for the purposes of these discussions, is that the dynamics of change are very, very difficult. If the member may just give me a moment here. The dynamics of change are always very difficult. It is always easy when you are reforming a system or re-evaluating to put things into it. It is much more difficult to take out or reduce. If you look at the fee-for-service system that we have in the province and had over many, many years, and when one is trying to live within some global budgets, you have to look at that system and say, are the relative values—and the member knows the whole area of fee schedule reform, I think, very well in the debates that have taken place on it, but that is one area that requires a great deal of work and discussion. It is hard. It is hard for the MMA as a representative body to say, yes, we want to increase these areas. That is easy to do, but it is hard to say no, these areas and relative values should decline. The dynamics within the MMA must be very difficult for them to manage and that creates a dynamic at the table that is more difficult.

As well, many of the recommendations or discussions that come forward from the MMA's perspective deal with the elimination of service. Things like that five-year exam are not things that I believe the public recognize and accept. There is a public education part to this too, so the dynamic is a very, very difficult one at these particular meetings.

We have attempted, and I have had a chance to meet with the MMA co-chair, and we have appointed Roberta Ellis as our co-chair to this, and we have discussed some of these issues. One area we think we can probably make more headway and appreciate the work and advice of the council was on looking at some new models of remunerating physicians that I think are probably ready at this stage of life to proceed with. So

we are trying to jointly look at the council as a vehicle to explore some of these over the remaining months of its mandate under this agreement.

Mr. Chomiak: Of course, the minister is in the latter part of an agreement wherein any savings under the MMA cannot come out of physician fee schedules at this point. Can the minister outline if there are, and he can advise us what proposals are on the table right now with respect to reductions?

* (1510)

Mr. Praznik: My understanding is the exam issue which we have discussed, I think working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons or the College of Family Practitioners, they have put in place an ankle protocol, the Ottawa ankle protocol, which deals with X-rays for ankles which should have some reduction in unnecessary X-rays. That has been now implemented across the system, and I think there was some advice the council has offered with respect to deinsuring circumcisions for nonmedical purposes that has been recommended by that particular council. There is really not much else on the agenda that I am aware of.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister give us an update or table any documentations with respect to the specific outlines of the Assiniboine Clinic project?

Mr. Praznik: When my predecessor in the department entered into the Assiniboine Clinic pilot project, what they were attempting to do, and I think certainly in the right direction, is look at a new model to fee for service. The member I think well knows this, probably even more up on it in some ways than I am from his background as a critic, but to look for a new model for delivering primary care, multidisciplinary approach, deliverables on a contract basis. That pilot is underway. We are attempting to assess it as we move along. We are probably going to learn things from it, what works, what does not work. Because of the way it was set up and the proprietary nature of that until it is completed, we have not been able to—in fact we do not have all the data because we are still in the middle of that pilot project, and we will probably be able to share what we have learned at the end.

It did create in some ways, and I recognize this as a minister very clearly, and Roberta Ellis has found that

out in her travels as an associate deputy on many of these physician issues, particularly in emergency, that because of the way it was structured, and it is a one-time private arrangement, that it has created somewhat of a stir because there are many people who have heard a lot of rumours as to what is in it and what people are being paid and what the success is. We have picked that up and we appreciate that.

I am not in a position to say to make everything transparent about it, but I have recognized very fully whatever we do in physician remuneration, it is fundamentally critical that it be transparent, it be based on some very sound logic and reasoning, that it be built with building blocks such that it can be applied equally throughout the province with different blocks, perhaps, to take into account different situations, but if you meet the same situation or criteria, you are treated the same way wherever you are.

In the discussions we are having now in our 90-day process on emergency with the MMA and the college and the RHAs, it is that approach that we are using in looking at to deal with emergency initially, this building-block approach that is transparent and universal and produces the same results for same work done, in essence, and I think we are having more success and alleviating some of those fears. We also recognize that if we are going to move to a contractual remuneration tool or model that we can use as a tool and apply in different places or throughout the province, that it has to be transparent and it has to have those common building blocks. We are working away on that in our 90-day committee, but I think that will just lay some foundation or principle. We have to deal with the emergency first on an interim basis, but whatever model we move onto it will have to meet those criteria.

The Assiniboine Clinic model I view now is giving us some useful information about what works and what does not work which, when we have completed this effort, we will make that available to the stakeholders in putting together that transparent model. That has somewhat calmed some of that fear that has been out there.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I appreciate the minister's comments about the propriety of information

when the nurse-managed clinic project was brought forward, but we did have some written documentation about parameters, funding, and the like. Would it be possible to have that kind of information, in a general sense, so we could understand some of the scope, the breadth, as well as some of the basic fundamentals of how that process works?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, is the member asking for that for the Assiniboine Clinic?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, we will provide that package to him early next week. We will have to get that for him, but, yes, those general parameters.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the minister made reference in his opening comments to the population health approach, and it is obviously on the needs-based assessment, et cetera. It is obviously fundamental to the process that is going on.

I wonder if the minister could outline for me who is doing the base analysis, and what that information is, and whether that in fact can be shared with us in the Legislature.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I understand that we had retained a Dr. David Gregory from the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Manitoba who, with the department, had prepared the methodology behind the needs assessment and his responsibility was to train designated staff from each regional health authority, so that the work of doing the needs assessment would be done by that regional health authority with their own people. Obviously, that is a much more efficient and I think meaningful way of doing it rather than bringing in outside consultants to each regional health authority. We also wanted to make sure that the methodology and the way of collecting data was uniform across the province so that we will be able to compile that once completed on a province-wide basis. So when that is completed, I do not think we will have a problem sharing it, but today we do not have that. The staff are being trained to get into the field to begin to do that.

What we can table with him is the Community Health Needs Assessment Guidelines, dated February 1997.

So if Mr. Chair's staff could make the appropriate copies to distribute, I have no problem tabling that here today. It is currently at print, so I do not have a lot of copies. We will actually have to ask for that one back.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that information and certainly it will be useful. Can the minister table any studies, recently or otherwise, that have been forwarded to the RHAs and/or to the Winnipeg Health Authority with respect to population and needs data that are being utilized by these organizations at this point?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, could the member perhaps be a little more specific. We are trying to get a handle on what he is looking for.

Mr. Chomiak: Clearly, the RHAs are having to deal with a database and are having to deal with some statistics. What I am trying to get a handle on is whose statistics and where they come from, and on what basis they are proceeding at this point.

Mr. Praznik: Specifically the data that they are collecting will be data that is generated in their own facilities and by staff that have been transferred to them within the regions. That is obviously one source. From within various places within the ministry, the Centre for Health Policy Evaluation as well, so in essence they have access to the generic large lot data through our Manitoba billing number system that is critical to them assessing their needs.

* (1520)

There is also the epidemiology department unit that is making data available to them. So we are trying from all the sources where we have data available. As a government or through other agencies, we are working with them to make sure they have that on which to base their needs assessment.

Mr. Chomiak: So the minister is indicating there is no specific report or reports that have been forwarded to the RHAs that quantify—other than what he has suggested—the data and the information for their use in terms of making their determination as to how they should proceed.

Mr. Praznik: What I am told we did was have staff from our own department compile the information for them, which I believe was incorporated into their initial business plans on which those were based. We will continue to do that in terms of compiling information on which they can work, so whether you say that is a report or not, you know we are into definition of the words but they are profiles. They are trying to take the data and put them into useable forms for the RHAs, rather than just providing often straight raw data.

If the member would like the profiles for those regions, we can provide those to him as well. I would be delighted to do it.

Mr. Chomiak: I would appreciate that as well. One of the areas that I could not obtain information previous was to get the business plans for the various RHAs. Is it possible to have access to the business plans for the RHAs?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, those business plans, I am advised, are currently working documents for the RHAs so they are not public at this particular stage of the game. It would be up to each regional health authority to release that because they are in essence their working documents even though they have been approved by us.

Mr. Chomiak: Are the Department of Health or the RHAs, to the knowledge of the minister, employing any outside consultants with respect to this work?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, the ministry paid for Dr. David Gregory's work in setting this up and doing it centrally. Ms. Hicks advises me that some of the RHAs may be considering obtaining some outside expertise to help them with developing their needs assessment, certainly not the business plan, but the needs assessments. To date we are not aware of anyone who has in fact been hired but, again, they do not report to us on all these matters on a daily basis. But not to our knowledge, today, have they been retaining outside consultants. Some have talked about doing it.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the minister indicated there is a one-year agreement with the MGEU with respect to employee transition. Can we get a copy of that agreement?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I would be delighted to table it, and we will have it for the member for Tuesday. The only other correction I would like to make is, Ms. Hicks pointed out to me that one of the regional health authorities did hire an outside consultant or accountant, whatever, to put together their business plan. I think it was southwest Man. At that stage they had not yet retained a CEO.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, could we also get copies of the list of all of the board members, CEOs and chairpersons, chairs, et cetera, for all of the RHAs?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I would like to table copies of the membership of the boards. I do not know if the CEO is listed on these boards. [interjection] No, there are just the boards. We will have to get the member a list of the CEOs. Do we have a list of the CEOs? I look to my staff. Wait a minute, I am going to ask if the member can give me that one back and I will be able to give him a greater, more updated list, actually, which has all the information that he requests, including the CEOs. Do you have a second copy? Oh, I have a second copy. We are trying to be co-operative and convenient, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the other day in the newspaper the minister indicated he was proceeding to Treasury Board or he had proceeded to Treasury Board with recommendations concerning the issue of waiting lists for surgery, and not only surgery, but the minister implied by virtue of discussing the bone density scanner, the reduction of lists with respect to diagnostic services. I wonder if the minister, and I recognize the confidentiality of Treasury Board's submissions and the like, could outline what the minister has requested and what he hopes to achieve by that. I want to indicate to the minister that in May of 1995, the previous minister announced a proposal for a \$500,000 reduction plan and designated four specific areas of high need waiting lists to be reduced, and I wonder if the minister might have that kind of information for us today.

Mr. Praznik: I very much appreciate the member's comments respecting the confidentiality of working matters through Treasury Board, and I know he would not want to see me put in a position of breaking that process in here unless it is leaked to the member, and

that happens on occasion. That is part of the process as well.

We have identified a number of areas; I think we have talked about some of them. Certainly bone scans, some areas of cardiac surgery that from time to time get longer waiting lists than we would like, MRI; I think there is some ultrasound on that issue; there may be some radiation therapy that we have on that list. Our Treasury Board in this year's budget recognize that we have some of these issues to deal with and identified a certain amount of money for that purpose. What we are attempting to do now is see how best we can use it and spend it to alleviate some problems in these areas.

The other day I had the opportunity to share some of this—I think I did—with him in one of our exchanges, but it is interesting what you learn in the current system as a new minister coming in. The bone scan area is a perfect example. I think we have a very significant waiting list of 18 months or 15 months. It is very, very large. We have one bone scan piece of equipment at St. Boniface. There is another in a private clinic here in Winnipeg. Our initial request was how we could address this, and I think St. Boniface Hospital came back and had a proposal for four with half a million dollars, which would have significantly used up a good portion of whatever dollars I am going to have available.

We started asking a lot of questions about this, and some of my staff who have had some experience in this area pointed out that this is a relatively quick test that requires a technician to do and it should not require that huge amount of expenditures. What we also discovered is, I think there is only .2 of a staff year assigned to the current piece of equipment. So we have the equipment. We do not have enough staff to deliver. If you do a quick analysis, even if it takes 15 minutes a test, you know, in an eight-hour day you should be able to produce 32, certainly at least 30 tests a day. You know, so if we went up to full we would be able to alleviate that waiting list fairly quickly.

So we went back to St. Boniface. Their proposal now came for funding more staff time for this and they do 15 a day. So I am still asking the question, by our rough calculations, why can we not do 30. When we get this information together, I think, for some tens of

thousands of dollars, certainly well under \$100,000, maybe closer to \$50,000, we will be able to put in place the staff to be able, with the current equipment, to get that issue down and those numbers down relatively quickly.

But it underlines, as the member well knows, in a system where you have a whole host of different players and different interests, all those things, if you just accept what is given sometimes you end up paying far more for service than you need and everything is deserving of being questioned to get down to the basics.

So in that area we think when we get some of my questions answered from St. Boniface we are going to be able to add that to our list, and we are doing the same kind of thing now in those other areas that I have identified to put the tough questions about what we really need to reduce those waiting lists, and when we have those answers together in a package together, I intend to be back to Treasury Board to be able to resolve these things.

* (1530)

Mr. Chomiak: I have been resisting the temptation to preach but I will go off on a little bit of a tangent here. Just to make a point, we knew that the bone density scanner issue required increased staff utilization, because we have phoned and found that out. I might add, I am not sure. From people I have talked to, it probably would be preferable to have, at least, a second bone density scanner for utilization, but that is a separate issue.

What I assumed when we raised the issue and when the issue came up—and the minister might recall it actually was initially raised, I raised it a while ago in terms of a letter to the minister and then it subsequently came up in the House—was, in the department there are lab imaging and diagnostic committees that, I was assuming, were monitoring this and ensuring that the best ratios and the best practices are utilized.

I am glad to see the minister talk about the MRI and talked about some of the other issues. The minister did not mention CAT scan, and there still is a major problem with respect to CAT scans around the province, not just in Winnipeg. I assumed that within

the department the diagnostic and imaging committees that have been established and set up are partly for the purposes of monitoring and ensuring that we have proper—that the system worked. We are doing that, but clearly in a number of areas that is not the case, and that is what I have some difficulty understanding.

Mr. Praznik: First of all, I have no problem with the member preaching a little bit, because his comments are some of the questions that I have put and ask as a new minister coming in, and I am sure my new deputy is asking some of those same questions of other staff.

In the case of the bone imaging, the committees that we have working on this, obviously they are all not full time and that sometimes leads to some difficulties, but one of the things we have to be cognizant of, and I do not think the member has any problems with it—bone density is a good example of this—one of the warnings that has been flagged with me is that there are good reasons to have bone density scans. There are times when they are not of great value. What we need, and the member knows, is a kind of protocol that says this is when you get one; this is when you do not.

So the committee was spending, I think, a good deal of its time developing that kind of protocol that we are going to need probably by July 1 or early in July when we get this other issue resolved and we see a lot more scanning going on over the summer, because what we do not want to have happen is the machine used for scans that really have limited value to the people who are being scanned. So that is where their work was going on.

But what is sort of interesting about it, in my experience, again as a new minister, when I put the question to the department it came back that when they had asked about how do we make this thing work at St. Boniface, what is likely to be a \$50,000 expenditure was a \$500,000 expenditure.

Maybe that is human nature in the system, but I guess the question I would have if I was sitting on the outside, and I certainly have this question on the inside—and maybe it is representative of human nature—if there is a thought that there are more dollars available, what do we need to do to grab all the dollars available as

opposed to what do we really need to make this thing work to get the job done at a minimum value.

That is part of, I think, the corporate culture in health care and many other systems too. So how we change that is the bigger task, but it does illustrate the frustration and the point, because surely to goodness if it was a \$500,000 bill it becomes much harder to find that money than a \$50,000, and then you are looking at putting that kind of dollars up against heart surgery or other areas where you could use that money. A \$50,000 bill is much less and much easier to solve. In fact, some would argue in our budget pretty insignificant.

So the value to me of information is so very important. I think the member makes the point that any Health minister should heed is to make sure they have in place good people to provide sound and accurate information on a timely basis for decisions to be made, and I would concur wholeheartedly in that with the member.

Mr. Chomiak: In the list the minister indicated areas, and the minister indicated most of the diagnostic areas where I have been advised there are major waiting lists and some of the surgical areas. But I wonder if the minister might advise, there are problems with CAT scans—the minister did not mention CAT scans, and I am wondering if that is part of the package.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, it is one area that we are looking at as well. I am sorry I missed that.

Mr. Chomiak: Tomorrow the minister is going to be speaking to the MARN convention—tomorrow morning—and there is a great deal of upheaval and uncertainty with respect to the nursing profession. I asked the minister in the House several days ago what the departmental position was in a variety of areas, because I know, and the minister knows, there are a number of proposals floating around right now about nursing in Manitoba and what it is going to be comprised of.

The minister has had enough meetings with enough organizations to know that. So my question to the minister is specifically to outline, insofar as by the year 2000 a baccalaureate is going to be the entry

requirement for nurses, and insofar as the minister has indicated publicly and in the House that the role of LPNs, if there is a role, is going to change significantly in the next several years, and in light of the fact that nurse's aides are being trained extensively in the province, and insofar as we are going to have R.N.s who do not have baccalaureate degrees, what is the departmental plan with respect to nursing in Manitoba in the near and short term?

Mr. Praznik: First of all, the member's comments are quite right in that there are a variety of views as to where nursing should be going. I mean, I remember this debate when I was back in university and knew many people who were in nursing, and this debate was part of their education at the university about what the professionalism of nursing and moving to all B.N.s, and it has been going on for a long time. Some might describe it as a turf war; some may not. I have had different groups who have come in to tell me that they feel that they have been done in by other parts of the nursing profession because they are represented here and they are not. I am sure the member has had many of the same representations to him in his career as a health critic.

What we are trying to do within the system, I think, rather than pick and choose favourites or professions, because the professions regulate their own education and training and the like and make many of the decisions, what I am trying to do and I think this government has been trying to and most governments have been trying to do is to get the appropriate level of training to deliver service at a reasonable cost.

I do not mean to have to take the member through this because I know he is very well aware of it. If you are going to train someone in a four-year baccalaureate program to deliver a certain degree of care, there is a salary expectation that goes along with that, and you are going to expect that the work you provide for that person or that person does is at that level of training for which they are trained and for which you are paying them.

You do not want to see them spending much of their day providing a different level of care that does not require the degree of training, particularly with the salary that they are getting for being much better

trained. So in the mix of care providers, whether one calls them B.N.s, R.N.s, LPNs, nurse's aides, et cetera, getting the appropriate level of training, not overtraining, not undertraining, but the appropriate level of training for the work and the mix of work that a person has to do and having the salary scales obviously that are negotiated to be commensurate with the training and the work that people are doing, are going to be probably the most critical factors into how people fit into the mix.

*(1540)

Because administrators in the system are going to look at maximizing the workload that they can from a certain staff mix at the best price that they are paying for it, and I do not think anyone expects really them to do otherwise. So it is going to be incumbent upon the professional bodies to take that into account as they are structuring themselves and those who work for them. Now this may sound as if I am avoiding the question. I am not trying to; I am trying to set a framework for it.

When I met with the LPN association earlier in the year, and we spent a long evening together talking about their future; where they are going from and what are the needs within the system. There was a recognition professionally that, as the R.N.s move to a complete BN program, and as there are voids to be filled—as a professional organization, I have challenged them and certainly the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses in their role to be looking at how we organize our system of caregivers right from entry level aides, in our institutions sometimes, right up to our university educated nurses. They have an incumbent role on sorting some of this out, and how they organize themselves. So there are some fundamental issues that they have to address within that mix. We have some ideas that we have to work through and discuss, and that is part of the planning and the nursing strategy that goes on. But the end goal, ultimately, the only goal, I think, that guarantees people roles in the future is to have the right level of training for the mix of services you provide at a very competitive price in doing it. I do not think I have seen any people who have disagreed with that.

You know, the argument has been raised from time to time about the relationship of R.N.s and LPNs and their

costs versus services they can provide, and I have heard the arguments on both sides of it. One feels sometimes really between a vise, but the fact of the matter is that those kinds of factors do drive decisions. The member raised the cause of LPNs a number of times in the House, and as I said, in my meetings with them, we have discussed just some ways that they might want to take on, or redefine, their role in the practical nursing side. One of my objectives, as Health minister, and I think an objective of this government, is to get more hands into the wards, more hands into the institutions providing some of that basic human care that is part of a hospital or an institutional stay. Obviously, we will never be able to afford to have that provided by university educated bachelor of nurses. They are trained to do far more than that. So we have to find the right mix, and that is not going to be an easy task. I did detect on the part of the LPN association a willingness to walk down some of that road to look at that.

I have to have some discussions with MARN at some point, about how we look at this. Yes, it is in a bit of state of flux; it is today because I think the current plan and the current—I would not say plan—the current realities are ultimately seeing the elimination, facility by facility, of LPNs. That is not going to stop by some ministerial edict; it has to stop because it does not make sense to pursue it any more because there have been changes. I am trying to broker, I think, between those professions, a way of finding a resolution that is long term and long lasting. It is not an easy thing to do, but I have no problem keeping the member up to date on a regular basis on that endeavour.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, generally, to this point, the various institutions that have changed the mix—and the mix has been basically to go to eliminate, as the minister indicated, the LPN function, and to move more to a unit manager-aide scenario—have gone to the minister for the minister's approval. So implicitly that implies that this is meeting with the government approval, and certainly it is indicative of an overall policy approach within the department where the minister has a nursing advisor and the nursing has as well access to various policy decisions; it certainly implies that there is a pattern or an acceptable policy from the government with respect to nursing.

I wonder if the minister can indicate that or perhaps indicate that I am not, in fact, correct.

Mr. Praznik: You know, what is driving this, I say this again, is not because my predecessors or cabinet or caucus or planners in the Ministry of Health have sat down specifically to say, we are going to see the elimination of LPNs, we do not like them, or we do not want to see them in place. What has been driving this very much is administrators within the system trying to get the right mix of services for what they need at the right price. That is a basic administrative decision that happens.

Given the fact that we are asking facilities to operate as efficiently as possible because, quite frankly, if they do not, if we spend money in the system that we do not have to spend, it is dollars less that we have for the things we really do need to spend it on. So those administrators look at the numbers of what they pay, look at what those staff are able to do, look at how they can get more hands on their ward to give basic care to patients and human needs that have to be met in an institutional stay, and they make those decisions.

The regrettable part for LPNs is that in most of those decisions they have found themselves in a position of having either to move up to become or move on to become R.N.s or find themselves doing lesser remunerated roles as nurse's aides, and that is a very tough position to be in. They have made the case from time to time that there are more things that they are able to do that they are not allowed to do that would improve their competitiveness in the marketplace. Is that true or not? There is probably some degree of truth to that that has to be worked out through the system. We have taken it upon ourselves to ask these questions. There are professional bodies involved in what people are able to do and, as the member knows, we are in to some degree big turf battles by a lot of providers for turf and very much in the middle of it.

Ensuring that there is some fairness is obviously important. But the larger challenge for LPNs, and this is what I have put to them, is, as the registered nurses move to a B.N. training program, as they upgrade their skills, as we look at more places in the system where we will need those advanced skills, and I will be very blunt with the member, they give us the advantage to do more things that we now rely on doctors to do. Not everything, surely, but there are things that we pay doctors to do that we think in the long run that nurses

can do more cost effectively. So we are using that, in essence, to give us more leverage or more room to be able to be efficient on that side of the ledger.

Conversely, there is a void developing in the system, because we are not going to use, ultimately, four-year, university educated nurses to do a whole host of functions in our institutions in basic care and a certain degree of, I would call it, practical nursing, for lack of a better term, and that void is growing somewhat. Knowing that if you have four-year programs, the expectation on salary, as you expect people to be more skilled, to do more skilled jobs, the salary expectations will go there.

By the way, we will probably need a lot less in the system, because they will be doing more highly skilled things and be trained for that. I envision a growing void, and the challenge for the LPN association, and I spent a long evening with them—not that it was long because it was not enjoyable—but we spent many hours together playing around with these ideas and thinking about them, is to fill that particular void and get their thinking around that.

If you look at the history of LPNs, in some ways they were developed, I believe, in Ontario as a bit of a counterbalance to R.N.s at one time and licensed practical nurses, and in many ways that role is still there.

* (1550)

So how we do that is a challenge for them and me to work out together; obviously with the nursing profession as a whole. I am prepared to do that. We do not know exactly where we are going to end up in it yet, but I am prepared to embark on that process. I must admit to the member very candidly that the arrival of the flood waters in our province put me back somewhat a number of weeks, getting things done as we dealt with that emergency, but as this sorts itself through and we get through the session, that is an issue

To get back specifically to the member's question, it is not a policy that has been written. I think it is something that is happening, and, given our mandate to encourage efficiencies in hospitals, we are not, certainly, going to disagree with it. But I envision, and

I think my staff envision, a void beginning to develop for which the practical nursing and the patient aide side will need to be filled, and there is a role for that organization to fill it. If they choose not to, if they want to continue on the current path, I would suspect, without meeting some of that change—and they recognize this, as a profession they are probably not going to find a role in the future. So they were willing to look at that, and, hopefully, once we are finished with this place for this session, I will be able to work with them more closely to get on doing that on some hurried basis.

By the way, one last point is I am advised by them that there are not—I do not know how many LPNs are looking for jobs. Many of them who have been in those positions have either gone on to other things or been picked up in other facilities. One administrator at a personal care home informed me that he has a hard time even finding LPNs on the marketplace today. So, yes, there must be a role. How do we do that in hospitals? I have got to spend some time addressing that.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, related to that, of course, is the issue of training, and the question is, who and what will be training in Manitoba? What nurses will we be training in the next few years to address the anticipated need in Manitoba? Now we know we are going to be training baccalaureates. What are we doing with the diploma programs? What are we doing with the LPN programs, and what are we doing with the nurse's aide programs? Clearly, to me, that will indicate the direction the province is seeing nursing go.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, in trying to redefine that role, and one term we have played around with, I guess, a little bit is that of practical nursing and patient care. Maybe we are coining a new phrase here for the future. But practical nursing and patient care, which would be a continuum of institutional service in essence from what today would be an entry level patient aide up to a certain level of bedside nursing skill. If we can get agreement on how this will fit into the system and be organized, obviously with that there will have to come a training component incorporating maybe some of the programs that are still there. I know there is still an LPN training program or an upgrade program out of St. Boniface. We would have to look at that. But that is part of the package if we can figure out where we want

to go; that would be the training part that would be part of a package. I do know that one of the criticisms that we get from the member and from others about patient aides is what level of training that they have, and, obviously, one area that I would like to address is to make sure we have a uniform standard and appropriate training program with them that involves a host of things that they need to know and to do their job and do it appropriately. There is that continuum.

One other aspect I share with him that was expressed to me in our discussions with the LPNs is that there has to be an ability in whatever we do to have a continuum of training, probably by unit, is the best way to talk about it. One of the concerns that—and, again, we come into how we organize the system. One of the difficulties LPNs have pointed out to me that they encounter is, we say to facilities in the way we set standards from time to time is, you need so many R.N.s, so many LPNs, so many nurse's aides. Maybe, and this came out of the discussions I had in that evening meeting with LPNs, maybe we need to be describing the standard as saying, you need these skills, these skills and these skills in order to operate your facility. Then those who do training or provide training or set up these professional bodies, you are not then picking how many of a certain staff you need. You are saying you need these skill sets. How you acquire them is your business as a facility. We have not done that in the past. A fundamental problem there. We have said, you need so many of this profession because, within the training of that profession, this was supposed to be taught.

The LPNs pointed out to me in many cases some of the things that make them unusable because they are not in the training could be easily dealt with by picking up a course. From my perspective, in any kind of education model, you are far better to go to—particularly when you are talking about a continuum of the similar kind of service providers is to identify the units of training that they need, and when they have qualified in those units, they are able to do that work. Whether they be an LPN or an R.N., if they are trained to do this function, then you have met the standard of that facility.

That would be a pretty revolutionary change in the way we set standards for our facilities in the past. It would be a huge revolution. It is not going to happen

overnight, but as we sat there in that evening and talked about these problems and ideas, it became very evident that probably the best way to address it is this, and that also fits into my thinking.

(Mr. Denis Rocan, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister give us statistics in terms of the number of the various present professionals that we are going to be training now and in the near future—LPNs, aides?

Mr. Praznik: We will get that for Tuesday of next week, the exact numbers for the member.

Mr. Chomiak: We have had some discussion about the USSC and the developments there, and I wonder if the minister might specifically update us as to what the present status is.

Mr. Praznik: First of all, I would like to acknowledge the member for Kildonan. I think it was at his invitation that CUPE held that breakfast in the Legislature. They wanted to be here, and I think he was the MLA host for it. I was very glad to see the invitation because it certainly brought home in a very busy day with lots of issues, it did bring that one to the forefront.

USSC, as the member knows, Urban Shared Services Corporation, is a creation of the nine facilities in Winnipeg to do joint delivery of services to get the efficiencies that come with that. I have not heard even with my meetings with CUPE there is not a disagreement that that does not offer great benefit. It is how of course one does it.

With the creation of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, the facilities and the Winnipeg Hospital Authority have to get down to some discussions, negotiations as to how they will relate to one another. One option that has advanced is USSC possibly could become or will become an agency within the Winnipeg Hospital Authority. There is some very good logic behind that, but I will leave that to those people to work out.

With respect to some specific issues that they faced, one being the food services contract to put a contract

out for professional management service to manage the food services under USSC, I did manage to have meetings with I think CUPE who represents the largest group of employees in that area, and there was not expressed to me a disagreement with doing things better; it was again how one does it.

Just for example in that case, under the current structure to take out—I do not know whether there are 900 or 1,000 people working in food services areas in all those institutions. To amalgamate now into a central service which might need—I do not remember the exact numbers, but 750 sort of comes to mind. It may be wrong, so please, I hope neither you nor the media hold me to those exact numbers. But if it is 900 to 1,000 now and they need 650, 700, 750 to do the job, under the current structure of the system in moving them, they literally have to probably lay most people off, re-post positions, move them into other positions—extremely disruptive. Everybody is worried. Nobody knows. No one can plan for their families.

These are not wealthy people with great deals of means who work in there. I recognize that. If we organize ourselves right in moving to that kind of reorganized system, most of the people in that current system can find they move, collective agreements can be consolidated—we have Labour Board processes for that, et cetera—so that people will find their work location may change, some of their job functions may change, but it is a transition, relatively smooth, with no change in their personal circumstance, I would hope, with respect to salary and remuneration. I do not think most people object to that or have a problem with it. A little bit disruptive, but it is not the end of one's working career or you are out on the street.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

* (1600)

There obviously are some job reductions; that is part of the savings. One of the suggestions that was put by CUPE to me was that within the overall Winnipeg hospital system, surely to goodness, in the space of the two years or so it would take to get a common kitchen and those things put in place, there is not enough turnover of staff—I mean there may be some who want early retirement in that group or want a buyout to go on

to other things anyway, but of those who do not, surely to goodness there is not enough turnover in our housekeeping and other functions and staffs without those facilities that we could not absorb most of those people. So at the end of the day we could, and this was the suggestion made to me by CUPE, that surely to goodness we could not accomplish our goal, get the savings and at the same time minimize if not eliminate anybody really losing their job who did not really want to depart with a package.

I think if the system, with the Winnipeg Hospital Authority co-ordinating this, can become that flexible, then we will have accomplished our goals of, I think, better management of human resources, and I think groups like CUPE represent those workers and the workers there would have a much greater comfort in dealing with change.

So today I have asked the USSC, as I indicated in the House, not to proceed with this particular change until they had consulted with the Winnipeg Hospital Authority. I know Mr. Webster had met with them and obviously wanted to see plans developed that would allow for a smooth transition of staff that is minimal disruption. That I understand is being worked on now, that they are looking at how they would do that, and I hope that this can be resolved within the next number of months such that I think everybody can be happy with the result. That is what I am trying to achieve.

Mr. Chomiak: That is a laudable goal, and I agree with the direction, but I am not sure if the implementation is as simple as that. The USSC was established prior to the governing structure being put in place, and I am not even sure that at the time USSC was established the governing structure that we presently are anticipating for Winnipeg was anything more than rumour, firstly. Secondly, they are on the verge or were on the verge and approved in principle a contract. Thirdly, it seemed to me that they did not—actually, if one looks at the CUPE proposal, which was I thought very well put together—consider other alternatives. Fourth, I understand that the USSC concept calls for the establishment and a capitalization to the establishment of a central facility. And then fifth, we have the situation of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority not actually being established and up and running until April 1, 1999.

So I certainly agree with the direction that the minister is talking about. Certainly that was the objective of people in the system, but the question is, how can that in fact be accomplished, and then how can those ends be achieved when you do have the independent board with a somewhat different idea as to what happened and nonestablished Winnipeg Health Authority, a minister who is trying to broker, et cetera?

Mr. Praznik: An excellent question. It requires a little more detail, I guess. Obviously the member is right that there is a capital requirement here. By the way, there are some trade-offs in this capital requirement because some of our facilities are looking at major refurbishments and sometimes moving something out gives us a chance to more cheaply refurbish space for other things, so there are some trade-offs.

The fact of the matter is USSC is counting on the province agreeing under that initial plan to continue funding at the same level we have had so that the savings will be used to pay their capital costs, et cetera, over time, and they will be able to stay there. That is a method of accounting that may not reach our agreement. Everything was dependent on that being agreed to, so it is not as close to a foregone conclusion, I think, as some thought it was. That obviously would have to meet the approvals of the funder to have those commitments in place, and they were not at that stage forthcoming; they were still a matter of discussion.

With respect to the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, their effective date of being a legal authority will be the 1st of April, 1998, not '99, but—I think it was just an oversight by the member—in this year of transition, we of course want them to be very much a part of these decisions on a growing basis so that it is a year of transition, it is a smooth one, and they can just roll into that authority on that date next year with having been part of lots of what is going on. So next year in essence those budgetary decisions will be theirs and not the ministry's directly, so that is why I wanted to make sure they were involved and comfortable with whatever happens, because the facilities, whether you have facility-based budgeting or program budgeting or however you do it, those particular issues will be the Winnipeg Hospital Authority's legally on April 1 of next year. So I wanted to have them involved in it, and they have identified a number of things that have to be

worked out, et cetera, and obviously others want to have a fair chance to make their proposals.

So I think that this is going to find itself to a happier conclusion than it looked a few months ago, and I am hoping that the people that work that system have a little more comfort today. Obviously they still do not know where they are going to go exactly, but they have a little more comfort that the system and those working in it are taking into account their employment opportunities so that they are not left out on the street. That is what I want to do and that we have an efficient delivery system.

There are also some other questions that I had as minister and the Winnipeg Hospital Authority will have of the system to ensure that in a blizzard you are still able to deliver food and what emergency accommodations are there. Those are very fundamental as well, so they have to be worked through. A lot of good work went into the proposal. I think it had some issues that had to be resolved, and as minister I am very cognizant of the human resource issues. The more we can give people in the system a comfort level that, although their job may change, although change is going to be there, but they will at least have a role to play in the system and not be looking as to how they are going to pay their mortgage, I think the more successful we will be. That is my belief and philosophy, and I am trying to build that in very strongly into the decision-making processes that we are now setting up.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response, and I think it is appreciated. What are the next steps? If one of those workers or a group of them were sitting in this committee today, what would the minister say to them with respect to renewing their mortgages?

Mr. Praznik: I would say renew your mortgage and live your life, because this is going to take some time to do and put together. Even when one gets an agreement that if in fact the Winnipeg Hospital Authority says this is an efficient way to deliver it, there are savings to be had, there is a couple of years of capital to put that together, so life is not going to change next week, and there is plenty of time to do, I think, a very, very good transition in whatever plan develops.

My deputy just passes me a note, and he said, and we should make sure that nobody builds in a flood area after if they have to build a new building.

But in all seriousness to the people who work there, I think the Winnipeg Hospital Authority is very cognizant of making sure we do transitions. I cannot guarantee everybody if there is an amalgamation that there is a job for everybody in the system, but certainly I think the system has an obligation to try its hardest to absorb as many people in other areas.

We have done that provincially in reducing the provincial civil service by well over 2,000 positions that we have had a minimal amount of layoffs, because we have developed those kind of mechanisms. That has to be part of it, too. I mean, there is a turnover in staff in support services in our facilities. Why would we not give a preference to those people that we are moving out?

* (1610)

If we can get with our operating agreements, under the faith-based agreement, if we can get some flexibility, and in looking at collective agreements with our various labour unions—if we can get the flexibility I envision that the system can have, if we can get it, then surely to goodness someone who might work in a kitchen today at the Health Sciences Centre, if we do have amalgamation, if they are low on the seniority list, may find themselves in another opportunity in building maintenance or whatever in another facility in another part of the city, but at least they would be having a job and an opportunity to work in a minimal amount of disruption.

That is not going to happen to many. The reality is the vast majority are going to find themselves still in food services, maybe in their current facility or maybe in a central facility if they move ahead with this deal, but the end of the day, most of the people still wanting to be working I would hope are going to be accommodated.

Mr. Chomiak: I wonder if the minister could table for us an updated list of who is on USSC at present.

Mr. Praznik: We will obtain that list, but I would just put the caveat onto it that USSC is a creation, as the member knows, of the existing governors or owners of the facilities in Manitoba. It is their corporation and their board. We have the list as a matter of courtesy

provided to us, and we with courtesy will provide it to him, but again I am not taking responsibility for that board because it is not a creation of Manitoba Health.

Mr. Chomiak: Along the same lines, would it be possible to have a copy of the specific proposal for food services that USSC put together?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, it is not mine to give; that is the problem with it. But I certainly think as this develops I have no problem with Winnipeg Hospital Authority, as they work through it, if they wish to share information with the member for Kildonan, I have no problem with him speaking to them about it as they work it through. It is just not mine to give, and that is the problem.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to take five minutes for a break? [agreed]

The committee recessed at 4:11 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:21 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for Kildonan, to continue his questioning.

Mr. Chomiak: Just again to return to administrative matters, I am anticipating that we will go the rest of the day as I said on this line and perhaps part of the next day in general. I will have a series of questions to deal with the labour issues with respect to the minister's new associate deputy minister probably on Tuesday. I anticipate we will be in Health the rest of the week. By the way, I do appreciate the way the minister is responding. I find it very useful to get information, and we are proceeding quite expeditiously, and I do appreciate that. Maybe from my perspective, not having 60 or 70 hours is perhaps a check on me as well to keep to highlighted areas.

As we go down the road next week, the major areas that I anticipate spending considerable time on is of course the issue of the health information system and the SmartHealth project and initiative. I am looking for

that probably Wednesday or around that time. I have not discussed this with the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), but along those lines. I then anticipate a fair amount of questioning of course on the home care issue, the issue of hospital budgets and the related and the following-up in the latter part of the week, Pharmacare, and extensive questioning on the personal care home issues on the line items. Then hopefully, towards the latter part of next week and early next week—I do not know if the minister is prepared at this point to deal with the whole issue of capital and some of the capital.

One of the problems we always fall into every year in Estimates is the capital comes at the end, and we invariably rush through a review of capital. I had hoped in discussions as well with the member for Inkster that we could get some idea of the capital and do questioning on capital. So that is basically how I see things developing over the next few days.

Mr. Praznik: Just to respond on the capital issue for the member. In his planning for Estimates he will probably appreciate this information. The five projects that were outlined in the budget process, the major renovations at Health Sciences Centre, Brandon, the Boundary Trails Hospital amalgamation and the Betel and Lions lodge personal care homes were the ones that are in place today.

I have a \$10 million budget, capital allotment for conversions for rural health facilities. By and large, where they want to convert to unused space to another purpose and have to knock down some walls and make some changes, I have this fund available. We expect to get the first proposals for that fund later in the summer, by the 1st of September, so I have no list to table with him in the usual way. In fact that list probably we will be making ongoing decisions on that \$10-million fund as we have the health plans of the regions and the requests.

The third part of this year's capital budget is a rather significant tranche of capital which we will want to approve later in the fall. We have asked the regional health authorities to give us their plans and proposals for capital needs probably early in the fall for our evaluation with them.

I share this with the member because there are five identified projects, and if he has questions on those we could get into the detail of them. I do not know if any of them are of huge interest to him, maybe Health Sciences Centre. We are still working out detail there. The \$10-million conversion fund I have no proposals in to date. The other tranche of capital, which by and large is there to deal with the programs, projects that were caught in the freeze, and now are being re-evaluated within regional needs. Until the regions get back to us in the fall, I have no list for him there either. When we have that, I have no problem us perhaps arranging an opportunity to review those in the fall with him when I do have a decision or proposals there, but today that would be really the capital budget. So that information should allow him to judge his time a little bit better.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that information. That will affect the timing. I anticipate we should probably deal with the associate deputy minister of human and labour relations. There is really no line item I can see where we do this, so that is why I think probably we should try to get into that Tuesday or Wednesday or before we get out of this item, so that we can deal with questions in that area.

Now, this next question, again, the minister may want to deal with it at the line item, or he may want to deal with it now. We have had discussions publicly and otherwise with respect to the whole issue of palliative care, and to my mind there are numerous reports that the ministry has with respect to the palliative care program. The minister has recognized publicly that there is a need for it. We are moving into a new governance system in Winnipeg, but despite that, the need exists, and it was recommended several years ago. I wonder if the minister might outline, both urban and rural, what the plans are with respect to palliative care.

Mr. Praznik: Again, my apologies to the member for Kildonan. One item of capital I missed was the safety and security of the regular kind of upgrade and maintenance. I think there is \$10 million in the program for safety and security and \$10 million for programming change which, again, will all usually arise out of this whole review that is going on. So I do not have a list today to table with him.

With respect to palliative care, as the member is probably aware, we have one of these interdisciplinary committees working on a provincial basis to develop, I guess, sort of a plan or a proposal or set of rules and guidelines for palliative care on a province-wide basis. I imagine that group will be giving us kind of a sketch of the plan in terms of what we need and what one would need to meet that need, because within regional planning I am expecting as the needs assessments are done, we are going to have proposals to convert space into palliative care units in various communities. It certainly fits in with much of the work being done on the geriatric clinical side. I would also suggest that the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, in looking at the facilities, how we best want to utilize space within our existing facilities, is going to have some proposals coming forward for the creation of palliative care space.

I also raise with him that in discussions I will be having with various faith-based groups, I envision that as an area in which they may find a need that they are able to fill in terms of perhaps getting into and managing and delivering some of that kind of programming.

So a lot of work has to be done in the next number of months to make decisions, and, like him, I would like to see some decisions made soon and get on with implementing and delivering the service.

Mr. Chomiak: I guess my question to the minister is, it sounds as if the minister is aware of the issue and is aware of the need, but it also sounds as if we may not see significant movement in this area until next year. What I am looking for and I think, generally, is anticipated is some significant moves as soon as possible. Will that happen this budgetary year?

* (1630)

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, obviously, palliative care has a home component to it and an institutional component to it in terms of choice that people make. I am expecting that our rural health authorities, as they do their work over the next number of months, will identify this as a need that has to be filled. I think it is a self-evident need. The plan is getting developed to give them the tools for everyone to make decisions on

how you deliver. Because those rural health authorities are going to have, in many cases, excess space that they are going to have to make decisions about, and because there is this \$10-million fund there today for conversion of space and it does not have attached to it a community contribution component, my guess is that once the planning is done, we are going to see a great push by some of our regional health authorities to develop these programs, have the space, whether it is for office or outreach space or for actual bed space in facilities, and will want to make use of that \$10-million fund to set up and get these things operating and be relevant to their communities.

So all of the carrots, in essence, are going to be in place, coming together, I would say, early in the fall, and given the fact that any space conversions are likely to be able to be done internal construction as opposed to external, and some of them may be very, very simple, I would hope that by the end of the calendar year, if not the fiscal year, we have program delivery up in place in several places in the province.

Mr. Chomiak: Is the \$10-million conversion fund only applied to outside of Winnipeg?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair. Currently, yes, it is a fund this year for outside of Winnipeg, rural and northern, and the reason, of course, is because the Winnipeg and Brandon authorities are not operative yet. Next year, if there is a need to accommodate some of that in facilities, it may in fact be the case. So at this time it is there. We will see how it works this year, and next year we will have to give it consideration as well.

Mr. Chomiak: Last year in the budgetary Estimates, there was a \$37-million fund for the transition. Can the minister table any information with respect to how that \$37 million was funded?

Mr. Praznik: I am advised by my staff who have worked with this fund that because it has taken longer to achieve the goals that were there, and I think the initial \$37 million was a transition fund for one year, because all of those savings have not yet been achieved, that particular tranche of dollars has been incorporated this year into the hospital line within our budget. But I add one comment, an observation again, as a new minister: We all know that there are savings to be had

in better utilizing facilities, equipment, personnel service delivery, and I know even one of the administrators who spoke with me who was very proud of the USSC and some of the other things that have gone on, admitted very candidly that under the current structure, it has been very hard to achieve many of those benefits of operating in a larger group.

That argument, in many ways, makes the case for a regional health authority, that it provides a better mechanism to facilitate those kind of integrations and the things that you get from working regionally. So grudgingly, it was admitted to me that it does give a better pool in the expectation of nine independently governed facilities being able to reach consensus on their own without kind of a middle-person referee to be able to co-ordinate and have the power to make those things happen.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate just two things: How much of the \$37,000 was spent last fiscal year and how much was placed in the hospital line budget this year?

Mr. Praznik: Oh, what a difficulty it is sometimes to understand all the machinations of accounting. Mr. Chair, the \$37 million was all spent last year, in essence, in delivering services. This year, we expected them to achieve another \$10 million on the savings side so, in essence, the transition fund would be about \$27 million of funding that has been incorporated in the budget.

If I may ask the member's indulgence, I need about one minute to speak to my colleague, if I may, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, can the minister outline for me what the status is of the urban health advisory groups?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, these particular groups have not met for some months, and the reason makes logical sense. Given the appointment of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, their CEO is getting himself into place, and it is the intention that they will be meeting with that CEO, because the advice that they have to offer is much better placed with him, who will be developing the administrative proposals to take to the Winnipeg

Hospital Authority board. So once Mr. Webster is up and running in full force, those meetings will begin again with him in attendance.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the minister indicated earlier that under Dr. Wade previously and continuing, I would assume, under the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, there has been a structure established with respect to a clinical model for the city of Winnipeg under various disciplines. Can the minister outline for us what that model is and what the breakdowns are and, perhaps, who is a member of the various units?

* (1640)

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, as we discussed yesterday, Dr. Wade, who was in essence the interim CEO, made those appointments because there were decisions that required co-ordination to be made, and it was felt that it was an appropriate way to be able to start to build that process. They were interim appointments. The new CEO of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, obviously it is in his purview to change those or to reorganize them, if he so wishes. The plan, in essence, was to have as appropriate a team, really a central team, clinical team, of a physician, I guess, a nurse, and a manager in a variety of relationships depending on the program. They in essence would develop the program for the city of Winnipeg, which, of course, would be delivered in multiple sites. Under the faith-based agreement that has been recognized as one of the purviews of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, et cetera, and it makes a lot of common sense—enable to do that. You know, obstetrics is one example; emergency is another. I do not have the whole list; we will have that for the member on Tuesday. It gives us the ability to develop one program for the city, delivered at a number of sites. Some will only be delivered, perhaps, in one or two sites, but depending on the program—heart surgery is one that actually comes to mind in that area.

But it allows for, I think, better centralized use of resources, better integration and being able to deliver programs in a more effective way. I would think also, too, that with a common program head it is also one other tool in reducing waiting lists because it allows for spreading resources around the system and maximizing their use, et cetera, as opposed to the facility-based model now. So we will get that list of names and,

again, Mr. Webster has informed me that he is in the process of recruiting a vice-president of clinical services who ultimately will be the person to whom these report.

Mr. Chomiak: I look forward to receiving that list which will garner, I am certain, further questions. One of the reasons I asked about the Urban Health Advisory group was that the troika system is very similar to that under the clinical model, and I was trying to determine whether or not, in fact, the Urban Health Advisory group had simply evolved into the new clinic model or not, but I guess that is not the case and it is two separate functions.

Mr. Praznik: No, I am advised that, one, planning groups were for planning and getting that kind of consensus of doing that programming, and the other is actually managing—two different kind of skills sets, really. I cannot stress enough that one of the mandates of the Winnipeg Hospital Authority is to make sure those clinical program heads, those troikas who will be managing them are, in fact, very good managers who know how to move resources around a system and maximize their use. That becomes a very, very key part to making this thing work. So it is different skills sets and, consequently, different roles.

Mr. Chomiak: Now we are well familiar with the recommendations of the urban advisory groups, some of which were not accepted and some which were accepted. Is there any information with respect to what is the planning model, and what were the recommendations that were accepted to ultimately be passed on to the management group in order to implement?

Mr. Praznik: As someone new to this process, I am glad the member is very familiar with all the detail that went on because I am still very much getting myself to speed on many of these details, but I understand that what was accepted, in fact, has formed the basis of the Pathways document, and outlined in where the system wants to go in terms of what was accepted from those recommendations.

Mr. Chomiak: Is there a secondary services report prepared by KPMG available?

Mr. Praznik: I am advised that, specifically to that question, it is no, but the member may want to provide a little bit more information as to what kind of report he is talking about in case there is one that we have missed.

Mr. Chomiak: Following the primary services report, KPMG was engaged in order to undertake a secondary services report, which was a review of all of the services. I was certainly led to believe, in the initial stages, that there was going to be a report per se, and I assumed, and I agree, that is where the Pathways or the second blue book released last August concluded from. But I was under the impression that a report actually had been prepared.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am advised that there was a plan to produce a secondary report, but it in fact was incorporated into the Pathways document that was created.

Mr. Chomiak: It might be an appropriate time to review some of the items in the Pathways document, but I do not feel so bad either, because the staff may not have theirs here either. So perhaps we can pursue that line of questioning when we next—well, the staff are more efficient than me. They do have a copy out there. I do not have mine. It would take me a few minutes. So I will continue on.

The minister has indicated there is a process in place with dealing in regard to dealing with the emergency, the ongoing and never ending emergency situation, particularly as it affects Winnipeg. I wonder if the minister might update me specifically as to what is happening and what tangible recommendations have been put in place at this time. [interjection] Emergency services—what is happening specifically and what recommendations have been put in place.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, obviously the member, following the press, knows that we have had some difficulty in emergency services in rural Manitoba in a number of communities, including my home community of Beausejour, where docs today are not providing that service. He may have read the article in the Brandon Sun. Some months ago we committed to a 90-day process to resolve that on the rural side and, on the urban side, I know that we are without a contract

in a number of our facilities today for emergency physicians. So, yes, we have a problem out there. I acknowledge that fully, and we are trying to develop a means of solving it that is, again, transparent, has building blocks that are equally treated across the province, and that everybody, of course, can be comfortable with in achieving the goals of both sides, good emergency services in a cost effective manner.

When I say cost effective manner, just to put some meat around that statement, I guess in many of our rural facilities the number of actual emergency, emergent or urgent calls that they get often are less than one per day on average over a year. You still have to provide a service there. You do not want to waste doctor's time in being on call and not have work to do. So part of our discussions, and I would suggest if we could get into these when Roberta Ellis is with us on Tuesday, because this is her bailiwick, but just to give a sense of my statement, what we are trying to do is if we are going to have the service there and we want to have doctors busy, how can we increase the workload appropriately that does not cost us dollars in any significant way but ensures the physician is busy, has enough workload, earns enough income during that period of time that then they can be away from their practice for additional time during the week and have the time off that they are looking for? We call that the clinic model, and I will be glad to get into that discussion and update on Monday.

I know the member has been waiting for this and we have this here. He has asked for the list of facilities that I referred to that have had less than 50 percent occupancy rates. I want to provide that now. I think we should also get for him a list of the occupancy rates in rural facilities right across the board because there are many in that 50 to 60 range as well, but it gives you an idea, so I table that now for his information, should he want to ask any questions in that area.

*(1650)

I would also point out that there are a number of facilities that are in that 50 to 60 that have from time to time fallen behind that. As well, one other caveat I would put on our numbers is that our staff tell me our estimates are of acute care beds in rural hospitals. The average across the province has been around 58

percent, 59 percent occupancy rate, of which two-thirds have been nonacute care purposes. So even in these numbers of less than 50 percent occupancy rate, on average, two-thirds of these cases will be nonacute care. So it even more exasperates the problem and even facilities that might have a 70 or 80 percent occupancy rate in their acute care beds, on average, two-thirds of those—and it varies, obviously, some of the larger regional hospitals like Bethesda would have a different range—but two-thirds of them, on average, across the province are nonacute care purposes.

I am not advocating in any way you eliminate the beds. All I am saying is that we have many beds that are used for purposes for which they are not intended, programmed or funded, and that this really is saying to RHAs that they should be looking at adjusting their programming to accommodate the need that their beds are being used for. One RHA comes to mind, I think it is Marquette. We looked at a first cut of their numbers and they are very, very—you know, they are guidelines more than anything else, I mean, guiding information for us. But they have well over, just from basic need, over 100 acute care beds that they do not require, and they are short about 75 long-term care beds in their system.

So, you know, just common sense would dictate they have enough beds, they are using them now, but they are not funded, established, set up or programmed for what they are actually doing. So their challenge in Marquette is to be able to convert units into and be able to reconfigure their system to reduce acute care beds and convert to long-term care beds with the appropriate programming that goes with it. So it varies from region to region, but that is part of that mix.

So, again, on these numbers, these are facilities with less than 50 percent occupied. On average across the province, two-thirds of those occupations are for nonacute care purposes. So it really puts these numbers into just how little we use acute care beds for acute care purposes in rural Manitoba. There will be exceptions; obviously, Thompson and northern hospitals are somewhat different to that because of the nature of their communities and functions.

In areas with more aging populations, smaller facilities like Marquette, southwest Man, et cetera, the

number of beds being used for nonacute care purposes is probably higher as opposed to lower in northern areas—but just to give him a sense of the kind of problem that we are facing in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: When the minister uses the two-thirds nonacute care occupancy figure, is he referring across the province, that is, outside of Winnipeg, to all of the rural hospitals outside of Winnipeg?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, the numbers I have, my understanding of them is we are talking about occupancy in facilities in rural and northern Manitoba. I guess that would include Brandon? It includes Brandon that on average it is 58 percent occupancy of which—it varies a little bit from time to time, but under 60 percent of which two-thirds of those acute care beds would be used for nonacute care purposes. Basically, long-term care purposes are waiting for a personal care home bed.

Mr. Chomiak: And that, therefore, would mean the figures that the minister is providing me with respect of those below 50 percent, would it be a correct interpretation to say that in addition to these numbers that two-thirds of these beds are utilized for nonacute care use on an average occupancy level?

Mr. Praznik: Again, you can probably pull any of one of these facilities—or not anyone, but you might be able to pull some and find that there is an exception to it, but across the province approximately two-thirds of our acute care beds in any occupancy rate, and it varies you know, place to place, but on average will be used for nonacute care purpose. So just as a rule of thumb, if you took any one of these hospitals, Shoal Lake Hospital with a 40.9 percent occupancy rate is on average, over time, it is likely that two-thirds of those occupancy rates in acute care beds which we fund today for acute care, would not be for an acute care purpose.

Mr. Chomiak: I know the minister referenced it earlier, but would it be possible to have corresponding figures for all facilities in Manitoba?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, and in making the commitment, I am instructing my staff that I would like a list of all those facilities, which I will provide to you,

with their latest occupancy rates as well as the number of beds in the facility, so that it puts it in perspective. I know there is one hospital that is listed on here as having—I think it drops in the summer to like 20 percent. I know it is a 10-bed facility, I think. So it gives you a sense that there are not a lot of people in those facilities, and that is really a difficulty in maintaining a viable, usable, well-practised facility. It is a significant problem for many of these operations.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I have heard the minister speak about this issue, and I think he has referenced the use-it-or-lose-it. Am I correct? I do not want to misrepresent the minister.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I really appreciate the member giving me the chance to clarify that. I guess my warning is not use it or lose it in the sense that the government is going to shut this thing down because you have a 33 percent occupancy rate, or there is some number you are going to fall behind. The greater danger is the fact that people in these communities are, yes, we want to have this hospital in our community, but when you look at its usage, you find that people are choosing to get their services somewhere else. So, even though people would want the facility, they are not using it. There are sometimes very good reasons. You do not have a doctor or you are short of doctors. Maybe the service is not provided there.

If we do not do something collectively to make these facilities relevant and busy in their communities, then inevitably over time the reason for having them will diminish, and you are already seeing this. So these numbers are not saying that there is some grand scheme. I am not using them to say there is some grand master plan by myself or the government to say: we are going to go in and close; here is a list of hospitals that we are going to close because they are under 50 percent occupancy rate. What we are saying to them is that, just inevitably over time, if you are continuing to decline in your usage, at what point is nobody in this facility?

One of these hospitals on this list, which is a 10-bed hospital, which has under 50 percent occupancy rate—in the summer, I am told, it gets down to 20 percent—so at any given time they have got three or four people—let us say, four people in their facility. In the summer, they

are down to two. We are funding them at a minimal standard. So is that a good use of resources to have nursing staff and other staff there with nobody to look after, where in the facility up the road, they are bulging at the seams perhaps? Is that a good use of resources? No. Is the community being well served by that array of services? Obviously not, because they are not there. So you have to look at it and say, what is the future of a facility like that? Well, the future inevitably over time, if the trend continues and is allowed to continue, and doing nothing will allow it to continue, the people in that community will just walk by, drive by that facility, and eventually you can close it because no one is in it. You can turn off the lights and no one will even notice because there is no one in it but the people that work there.

That is not our intention. We are not here to close facilities; we want to make them relevant. The challenge for the regional health authorities is to take some of these facilities, take space in them, and make them relevant. Obviously, we have identified, as I have pointed out to the member, in one region, in the Marquette region, for example, they have 100 acute care beds more than our statistics indicate they need to service their population. They are short 75 long-term care beds. Their beds are pretty busy today because they have long-term care people in it. What we are expecting that they will do is look at their facilities to reconfigure their programming to be able to offer 75 more beds or 80 more beds of long-term care in their existing facilities or in their mix of services.

The one hospital that I have referenced that has 10 beds and down to under 50 percent occupancy, around 20 percent in the summer, that facility has already indicated that they are looking at, because there is a distinct language and cultural component there, converting their facility into really a health centre for them and two or three other like communities in the region where they would see their doctors based out of. They might have some respite beds, they might have, well, obviously, a Francophone public health nurse, Francophone home care services delivered in that particular facility so that it is relevant to their community and well utilized. That is the challenge that we really are putting out.

* (1700)

Another piece that fits into this in my capital side, and I know the member will appreciate this, some of these facilities are looking at completely new hospitals in the capital program. I admit, our government approved them, before the freeze in some cases. But when the regional health authority sits down and looks at it, do you need a new hospital in this facility when the current one is not being utilized? What do you really need to meet the health needs of the people in your region? That is where we really want to see the dollars spent, so that they are relevant. So this is not an exercise. In fact, I would even suggest to him, and I have argued publicly that this is not so much an exercise in budgets as in relevance.

You know, if you just carry on funding, you can do that, we can do that, and carry on with the status quo. For many of these facilities, the status quo will mean likely over time a declining usage to the point where literally you can shut off the lights and no one but the staff will notice, because there are very few patients in that facility, if any. I do not want to get there and I know he does not want to get there either.

A couple of the exceptions on this list that I would flag are, there are some smaller hospitals located in very isolated communities and, you know, you look at the list, obviously, Gillam, Lynn Lake, Leaf Rapids. They have health centres and hospitals, and we recognize that there are going to be circumstances where a very small, underutilized facility is going to have to be maintained even if it is at a much higher cost and a minimum program level because of the isolation of the community which it is in. So one size does not fit all, but some of these facilities are half an hour from major hospitals or other hospitals that are much larger and better utilized.

So when you look at the College of Physicians and Surgeons recommendation for ambulance and distance, you know, you start fitting it in, and you are saying, well, what do we do here? So this is where we are coming from on this information. I would not say, let us pick a number, and if you are 1 percent below it, this is what happens to you. These numbers are used to show trends in facilities, and that is the way we are trying to use that data. We want to arrest a trend that is very, very problematic for these facilities.

Mr. Chomiak: When the minister referenced the funding to the regional boards, he indicated that he had adjusted the funding component to the regions outside of Winnipeg. Can the minister give me those figures as well as confirm that there was a differentiation between institutional funding and those other than institutional fundings, or am I inaccurate in that?

Mr. Praznik: I think what the member is asking about is in transferring to the rural health authorities, we had some expectation of savings, I think it is 2.25 percent across the—oh, pardon me—is it \$2.5 million? Yes, it is \$2.25 million for this year to be found effective October across the system, not percent, \$2.25 million. It is long in the day. So that is what we expected. That was a considerable change from, I think, around the \$6 million that we were initially looking at in savings across the hospital institutional system. The public health, community health, mental health areas that were transferred over from the department, the regional health authorities, they were to accept it on the same basis as we would fund it for this year if we were in fact still managing it, and that was the transfer. So we did not expect them to find savings in us turning that system over to them. The \$2.25 million, it was felt, even in working with them, there was sort of a sense that it was achievable in finding it in some of the savings in amalgamation, reducing administration, reducing some of those costs, and we have given them the first six months in which to find that.

Mr. Chomiak: So my assumption that it was based on institutional versus community, that the savings had to be found institutionally versus community is not correct?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, it is correct. Although, you know, they may find some savings I guess at the end of the day on administration of that because they are going to have a common payroll, et cetera, and those things, and of course that would be their saving. It would not be one we have anticipated or pulled back from them. But on the institutional side we thought across the system we could find \$2.25 million beginning in October, and on the other side of it, the noninstitutional side, they take it on the same basis as we would fund it for ourselves this year, with no expectation of them finding savings. If they do, that is to their benefit.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, while I am at it, what was the equivalent in terms of the urban funding?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, as the member will appreciate, we are a year behind on the urban side from where we are rurally, but today we still run all of the community care except for that done by the City of Winnipeg and noninstitutional care here. So that has not transferred yet. That will next year. On the urban hospital side the expectation was, I think, \$10 million to be found this year, and some of them have deficit situations with which they have to deal, and we are working with them on those under the appeal process, I guess, now.

Mr. Chomiak: So the minister is saying \$10 million on the institutional side, the acute care side?

Mr. Praznik: Yes.

Mr. Chomiak: Have the RHAs been given any kind of a figure, a number, for subsequent years?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, 2.25, because it is an in-year find in essence represents \$4.5 million over an annualized basis. The hard thing in this mix as we move through this thing, and obviously as the finances of the province improve over the next number of years, health is a priority and which certainly can draw on, hopefully, some additional resources.

(Mr. Edward Helwer, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

The difficulty is as you are moving to less institutional and more noninstitutional care, et cetera, some of these numbers to compare become very different. If you look at the list of facilities that have just less than 50 percent occupancy, when you look at some of them, some of them are likely to have a very significant change in function. Certainly, it is much less costly to staff long-term care beds than it is acute care beds. There are changes in if you are converting underutilized but fully funded acute care beds into community health centres or into hospitals, you are changing the whole mix of funding. So it is going to be very difficult in some places to do apples-to-apples comparison which one has to recognize. So we can debate it and we probably will, but it is going to be a

difficulty if we move through this. But at the end of the day the plan of course is to ensure that there are adequate dollars to provide the services that they need to provide. We are looking at changing our funding model which is more needs-, population-, I would say, usage-based as opposed to strictly funding on sort of the same basis all across the province that needs funding, that whole new funding methodology that will take into account population, needs, usage, et cetera. It is, of course, going to have to be transparent and equally applicable across the province, but it will result in different funding levels on a per capita basis, because obviously some areas, particularly in the North, for example, have much greater needs that have to be addressed than other parts of the province. So we are in this whole transition stage right now.

Mr. Chomiak: When do we anticipate the needs-base analysis data proceeding to the boards, and then subsequently the plans proceeding to the minister with respect to the budgetary considerations?

Mr. Praznik: I do not know how to do this because we do not want to send the photocopiers off crazily. I think what I am going to do is just provide this copy to the member for Kildonan as opposed to table it; and should other members of the committee wish to obtain copies of it, we certainly will provide it to them. But these are the health profiles of the various regions as of, I guess, 1996 as a base year, so I provide this to the member for Kildonan. Should other members wish this material, they can easily obtain it by contacting Ms. Sue Hicks, associate deputy minister responsible for external operations at 786-7216 and she will be glad to arrange for them to get it.

* (1710)

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for this information. I will inform my colleagues of the opportunity to avail themselves of this information, and I will read it all and hopefully before the Estimates period. I probably will have some questions on it.

I take it that the matter of the Beausejour situation and the whole emergency situation we should discuss when we next meet with Roberta Ellis when she is in attendance. I also take it that matters referring to physicians and physician's remuneration and the

allocation of it, we should also deal with on Monday, if I read the—Tuesday when we next meet—chart right.

Can the minister indicate whether or not KPMG is engaged in any ongoing projects with the Department of Health?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, their role currently is on an as-needed basis with our implementation team so the member will appreciate they were involved in the development of many of these plans. They provided some useful help in getting on with implementation by way of background so we have them on an as-needed basis. That role is diminishing somewhat as we get other people up and going within the department and taking on tasks.

By my nature, I am a great believer in using the people in resources that we have and giving them the skills and background experience to do the job. We are trying to do that, but KPMG has been very helpful in assessments and help in getting this going. As we get our own people up to speed, they will be playing even a greater and greater role in implementation and KPMG a lesser and lesser role.

Mr. Chomiak: When the regional health authorities put together their business plans and now they are functioning this year, are we going to see this year, this budgetary year for the RHAs, the reports forwarded to the ministers, the public meetings being held by the RHAs across the province? Are we going to see all of that take place in this budgetary year outside of Winnipeg?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I understand, I would suspect, the member is talking about the annual meeting requirements for the regional health authorities. I think there are two or three that we exempted from their meetings from last year simply because of organization taking over, and they will have to have them early in this year; but next year, I do not plan exempting any so they will have to have their meetings.

I know several have had them. I have been the guest speaker at a number of them. I think we had almost 300 people at the one for the Central Manitoba Health Authority and that should be and must be a part of their process. There were a couple of problems, I think,

related to their administrators coming in sort of late in the process, and it just did not work for obvious reasons, so we exempted them on the condition, or with the suggestion, that they hold one very soon, as soon as they are ready. Their administrators were comfortable with where they were going to hold such a meeting.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I might have missed it, but did the minister indicate whether this year the minister will be seeing the budgetary plans for each region go across his desk?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, yes, I guess the budgetary plans for each year require ministerial approval and staff in the department work very closely on the development of those plans and ultimately approving them. Their business plans that were initial business plans that were presented were all viewed by Manitoba Health, and I imagine I have signed off on virtually all of them to date. I think the last couple of ones had a few issues that had to be worked out, and those were signed very recently.

Mr. Chomiak: So if I understand correctly, in 1997-98, plans for each region have gone across the desk of the minister and been approved.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, to the best of my knowledge, and I look to my staff who administer these agreements, and they are nodding that they believe they have, so with a caveat that perhaps or something we may have overlooked, my understanding is they all have been through the approval process.

Just to clarify some more, whether or not every approval letter has been signed, or there may be one still sitting in the signing book that I have to get to in the next few days, may be the only question, but they have all been approved.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, does the ministry maintain any kind of central list of waiting lists for various procedures and services?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, my deputy advises me that what is most critical is not the waiting lists, but the waiting times, and that is, in fact, one of the responsibilities of program heads in these areas in which these will fall. I guess even if we were to

maintain a list centrally, our ability to do anything about it in practical terms is probably somewhat limited because we cannot direct surgeons necessarily, but it would give us an idea if we are short of space. Often we cannot even direct surgeons to other space that is available because of the practicing privileges that they maintain in various institutions. So moving to this one-program-head system and one-program multiple site should give greater tools to those program managers to get those waiting lists down where they can. I appreciate where the member is coming from, and some of these issues we have had exchanges in the House in Question Period.

There are a lot of factors, as I think we both agree, that go into waiting lists. If we can eliminate factors like organization and factors like utilization of resources, et cetera, we will never eliminate the popular physician who has a long waiting list and is working full out, and there are some that happen to from time to time. But, where we can eliminate those other things and we get down to simply the lack of sufficient resources to the job, then I have the argument as minister with that authority to go to Treasury Board and find the additional dollars we need to improve that. So that is what I am trying to get: a way to sort out those issues and causes and get down to fixing each individual problem to get waiting lists tackled in a reasonable way.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, there has been a long history of the issue of the central bed registry in the department in Winnipeg, and it has been announced on several occasions. I am not even sure what the breadth and scope the central bed registry are. Certainly, it was one of the key recommendations of the Lerner report with respect to emergency services. Can the minister give us an update as to what the status is and the extent of the department's view of the central bed registry concept?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, when I took over this portfolio in January and we had a real push on emergency rooms as a result of flu epidemic, you really come to appreciate how important a central registry and a central dispatching on emergency services are. The question that I put to my department is, why do we not have this? One of the problems, of course—we do, to some degree. We had staff in the department who

talked to the facilities on a regular, sometimes daily, basis with their pin board and move things around, in fact, and we get reports regularly. In fact, that was one of the means by which we used to relieve pressure on some of our facilities by identifying space in personal care homes for quick turnaround to move people out of acute care beds who needed to be in long-term care beds.

* (1720)

We also found—but, again, it is the question of why we do not have it. I guess it comes back to the structure of the facilities and the governance structure we now have, which will significantly be overcome with the Winnipeg Hospital Authority. I am not trying to sound I am pushing issues off to them, but it is strictly jurisdictionally and organizationally much easier to do. Interestingly enough, when we hit this flood and we had potentially almost 1,600 beds we had to move people around the city of Winnipeg, we only, I think, moved 90 out at the end of the day from St. Norbert.

It was amazing that in a crisis how the rules and barriers and turf protectors that exist in the system, that operate most of the rest of the time, came down, and things moved with an ease that was unbelievable. Out of all of this the Misericordia with a bed registry system that had reports several times a day and co-ordinated and made things available, we moved staff from—we moved whole programs and equipment from St. Boniface over to Health Sciences Centre. We had St. Boniface staff working next to Health Sciences Centre staff. All of those things happening in a tremendously co-ordinated fashion, and those of us like the critic, my colleague, who sit here and look at what should be in a system, many of those features should be built into the system. Quite frankly, there are all kinds of things that prevent that other than in a crisis, and, to be blunt, the Winnipeg Hospital Authority is there to break those down and make the thing work on a regular basis as we performed during the flood, the bed registry being one of them, co-ordination of emergency, central dispatch being another.

If I may just touch on that for a moment, it might be of interest for the member that the City of Winnipeg is embarking on some work about consolidating their ambulance and fire programs. I have a meeting, I think,

scheduled with Councillor O'Shaughnessy or one of their councillors who is in charge of this. We are going to ask that before they move on that the Winnipeg Hospital Authority and the city have a chance to discuss the future role of ambulance and how it fits in the system, and where the best place is to house it in. Our legislation that I expect to be introducing very shortly provides for a lot of options in it as to what role one will have, and that will be negotiated over the next while. All of these things—and my colleague as a critic has a perfect right to be critical of the system and of, I guess, the minister for not seeing these things done in the past. The only defence one can offer is there are so many impediments built institutionally into the system and attitudinally and labour relation-wise in the system that it bogs down for everybody trying to do it, and it does not happen easily. I think there is now a recognition that it has to happen, and I say this to my staff as much as to the member, it had better happen in the next while.

Mr. Chomiak: I was under the impression that, in fact, the department had communicated to the City of Winnipeg the information the minister just indicated about taking another look or holding off the amalgamation issue until there has been opportunity for discussion. Is that not the case?

Mr. Praznik: I think we have asked them informally in discussions that my Associate Deputy Minister Sue Hicks has had. I know I have a meeting planned with them to brief them on the regional health authority amendments, and we are going to raise that.

All we are asking them to do is to hold off making their decisions until the Winnipeg Hospital Authority is running, so they can sit down together and develop the best plan to house ambulance service for an efficient delivery. That may be with the fire department in a central dispatch. It may be under the hospital authority. We just do not want to preclude any possibility. I think we all want the best service for citizens of Winnipeg in an efficient manner.

Given so many things are on the go right now, we thought asking them to hold off was a good way of not forgoing opportunities because of a quick decision on their part.

Mr. Chomiak: To that end, what has happened with the proposal from the City of Winnipeg with respect to the 10th ambulance in Winnipeg?

Mr. Praznik: We are still funding that. The member may be aware of an individual Mr. Jim McFarlane who is a senior manager in the Department of Labour. I worked very closely with him when I was Minister of Labour. He was a very effective administrator, a very good sense of how you organize events and structures to make them work.

We have seconded him over to the Department of Health. I wanted him to have a look at the long-term care area, some of the issues around Holiday Haven and complaints, and we will get into that in our discussion. In fact, if the member will just advise us privately of the day, I want to make sure Mr. McFarlane is here for that discussion.

The other area we have asked him to examine is our whole emergency services area and how we deliver that, and he is in the process of doing some work there, and, of course, we are making sure the Winnipeg Hospital Authority is aware of that, and, as he does his work, he will be briefing them as well as us in the ministry.

Mr. Chomiak: Can I conclude that recommendations from the Lerner report of several years ago, discussions concerning the financing and the operation of the ambulance service in Winnipeg and the inter-relationship between the Winnipeg Hospital Authority and the ambulance department, are pending the outcome of work being done now by Jim McFarlane?

Mr. Praznik: Partly. I mean, there is lots of work done, and it is not just a matter of—please do not get me wrong. I do not have Mr. McFarlane in there restudying what Moe Lerner has done and creating another report. Mr. McFarlane is very good at assessing a situation, and, using all the reports, sorting out what has to be done and getting it done. He is very much a doer in the d-o-e-r sense of the word to get things done—I should not say that; their leader is Doer, as opposed to D-e-w-a-r. But Mr. McFarlane is very, very good at that, and when we get into discussing the long-term carrier, I think you will see some of the steps we have taken in the last few weeks, things we have

gotten into place which will go a long way to satisfying some of the concerns, rightly so, that the member has had, and I have had as a minister, the same as in emergency.

So my expectation is he will sort this out, co-ordinate with the Winnipeg Hospital Authority, and, again, they are just getting themselves going, so I do not want to overburden them, but at least so they are aware, and their CEO and board are comfortable with it, because there is really a necessity, in my opinion, to get on with some of that co-ordination of ambulance service in a better way across the city.

Ultimately, there is a program head now in place, Dr. Palatnick, and he is involved in this somewhat as well, but we do not know quite where all of this is going to fit yet, but we have asked Mr. McFarlane to come in, look at all these reports, talk to the people and get a plan of action together with everyone's concurrence that has to concur in it, and get it implemented.

Mr. Chomiak: Is Dr. Moe Lerner still an employee or contract employee of the department and can the minister outline what his status is?

Mr. Praznik: Dr. Lerner was at one time, I believe, a contract employee of the department. He is now a sessional employee. We pay him as needed to perform services for us when we need his service.

Mr. Chomiak: Does the minister have information with respect to the overall cost of the department of the home care strike of last year?

* (1730)

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I know we have an assessment of that somewhere here. I will endeavour to have that for him on Tuesday. I know that I have that available to me in response to another inquiry, so I will be prepared to share that with him.

Mr. Chomiak: The minister has provided the draft organization chart. Does that completely cover the 12 staff positions in Executive Support? I assume there are clerical positions and staff positions outside. Could we have an update on who occupies all of those positions in the minister's office?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, in terms of the staff breakdown in the minister's office, there is the secretary to the minister, Mrs. Velma Davis. There are three other secretarial staff: An administrative secretary, Mrs. Lorraine Leochko; we have two clerical supports, Lorie Finkbeiner and Betty Hammond, so, in essence, four administrative support in my office, in the minister's office. We have Mr. Rob Godin, who is my special assistant, who works out of the Legislative office here, and my executive assistant, Mrs. Lynn Patterson. So I have two Order-in-Council support staff assistants, and I have four secretaries operating out of that particular office.

On the deputy minister's side, we have Mr. Frank DeCock, of course, who is the deputy, an administrative officer in Norma Bonnici. A secretary to the deputy is Miss Janice Kereluk, a clerical support, Wendy Jamison. I imagine Caroline Park, a Provincial Nursing Advisor is not in the deputy's office but answers to him. We also have Mr. Louis Barre who is one of our senior people in the department. He has been seconded to the deputy's and, I guess, minister's office as departmental support to both Frank and me, in ensuring that all of the work and meetings and follow-through get done. But as I said, his departmental staff was here in secondment providing that role, so it would not be in the administrative support side.

Mr. Chomiak: I am back at the organization chart. Where is the Advisory Committee on Mental Health Reform now located?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I think someday the member for Kildonan and I and others can sit around a table and revise our Estimates process. There is so much to be said to allowing assistant deputy ministers and deputies to answer some of these questions, rather than going through a minister, and the enthusiasm of Ms. Hicks for heading for the microphone, I think, is evidence of that.

That particular advisory committee reports to Sue Hicks, director of external operations, and the mental health side reports through her.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I am apologizing for a little bit of a scatter-gun approach at this point. I am trying to anticipate Tuesday. I had indicated to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) that we would not

pass this item, so I am kind of moving things around a bit.

Has the minister received within the last year any reports from his advisory committee on Continuing Care?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, I believe we have just received a report. I have also had the chance to meet, at least on one occasion with the committee formally and at least on another informally, with the chair of the committee since my appointment.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the minister indicated that there is some change going on with respect to appeal panels and appeal committees with respect to the ministry, and I am actually intending to follow up this line more extensively under long-term care issues, where it is probably, but if the minister wants to perhaps outline at this point what he envisions?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I just want to preface my comments on sort of what I see happening. It is not that I am identifying huge problems, or anything else today that needs addressing, and making changes is not a matter that is high on my priority list. We have got enough other things to do in the next while, but it has occurred to me in taking over this portfolio, we have a number of areas of appeal in health care, matters of fee issues and long-term care; service delivery issues and long term care; service delivery issues in home care. I would even suggest that from time to time there are going to be disputes arising with RHAs, with facilities, et cetera, upon whether standards are met, levels of care.

Having a good, independent, arms-length appeal body, appeal function, I think is a very important matter for dispute resolution. It gives a group of people who are not involved in the day-to-day administration, not involved in the delivery or creation of policy but are there to say, here is the policy, how does it apply, is this something that should be given consideration—I guess whatever terms of reference you set for it—gives the public a sense that they are not subject to arbitrary rulings by officials, bureaucrats, and even politicians. So I am very high on these appeal functions.

I know when I was Workers Comp minister, we revamped our appeal function there. The member may

recall that it was one in which there were two members or three members of the board of directors who also sat as appeal judges. In fact, initially the Workers Comp board, the Comp board administered the board and heard the appeals, and it is just not acceptable, I think, in a modern world of setting up that kind of function.

So when I come in, I understand I have a statutory Manitoba Health board that hears certain kinds of appeals, I have my policy, the long-term care or the home care appeal panel, et cetera, so what I envision, talking with staff, is that maybe what we should look at is consolidating some of these into a Manitoba, call it what you may, health services appeal board, for lack of a better name, that would have a sufficiently large panel, group of members who would sit in panels of three to hear a variety of appeals. Some would have expertise in one area, some in others, and they would, just like the Municipal Board or other bodies, hear appeals based on their expertise but have one administrative function and have one common set of appeal forms, et cetera, so that Manitobans, whatever their particular service issue, whether it be with a facility or whether it be with a ministry or whoever, would have an ability to have an appeal, you know, where appropriate to an independent body.

You know, I envision, and we have seen it, whether it be in personal care homes in many of these areas, often disputes can get resolved locally, just like a grievance procedure, but sometimes they cannot be or sometimes there is a need for anonymity and a place to settle some of these issues. So I am working on this in my own mind as to how we could maybe improve that a little bit, and this might be the next step in the evolution of appeals. It institutionalizes a little bit better and formalizes it a little bit better than just being a creation of ministerial policy.

So that is what I am thinking of. We have not done anything on it. I know some of the appointments are coming due, and that is always a good opportunity to sort out and constitute a board. I would just think that if we are developing a level of expertise in dealing with health appeals, if you do not need a specific, unique, specific type of person to hear the appeals on personal care home rates as opposed to service, many of the same people have the same skills and interests who sit on those boards, so it is a way of consolidating.

Another real practical concern for me as French Language Services minister is to make sure we have a sufficient number of Francophone members to have a Francophone panel, should that become important, and having a lot of boards makes it a little harder to achieve that. So just for administrative efficiency, maybe improved service and maybe ultimately, who knows, a year from now, I might be back to the Legislature and a bill formalizing this appeal board legislatively, which may not be a bad idea to give people that sense that there is a legal way to have an appeal to many of these issues so they are not arbitrary.

The member and I well know that many, many of the service entitlement issues that Manitobans encounter in health care are you are dealing with factual situations that sometimes are very hard to apply whether someone should get or not. The decisions sometimes can be very arbitrary among people who are making them in the field, so having a good solid appeal function is, I think, an important part of a good service delivery model.

* (1740)

So that is what I am thinking of, and I am sharing that with him today in a very public forum. We have not taken any action. I have not advanced it internally in my systems, but it is just one of those obvious kinds of administrative changes that have some merit to consider, and certainly with appointments coming up, it gives me a chance to look at that. I hope that gives him a sense of where I am coming from. He may have some suggestions he may want to offer to me along those lines.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for that information and, in point of fact, I would like to go down this line of questioning with regard to appeal panels and citing, and I do not normally cite specific cases. It is not generally our practice to do that, but I am going to lay out an example of where I see there is a problem and, in fact, I will follow up with a written communication to the minister on the specific details.

One of the areas of difficulty that I see now, we have obviously advocated and been in favour of panels and various appeal panels throughout the process and there is a long history there, but in some areas matters go to appeal, I think, that are not necessary. A specific

example—and they are not necessarily because the policy change ought to be in place. It is obviously a change in policy.

I will give the classic example, and I was going to raise this with the minister later on, but it is appropriate now. The instance when the government changed the funding provisions and the payment provisions for individuals who were resident in nursing homes, there were a number of areas that were identified as difficult areas, and one of the areas was if it is an instance of a younger disabled person who is then forced to go into a personal care home, and there is a spouse or partner who remains in the family home.

Now, I was under the impression from questioning the minister at the time and subsequently that, in fact, that issue was accommodated, but in dealing with a recent problem and following up on it, in a situation where I had an individual who was relatively young, completely disabled, now moving into a personal care home, in fact, the payments in the personal care home were such—and the only working individual was the spouse at home—that the spouse, in fact, could not afford the home.

Now, I assumed that that matter was taken care of, but I am advised by officials at the long-term care facility where the individual is located that this was the third or fourth instance in the last little while where that has happened and that, in fact, it has gone to the appeal panel and has been approved, but in point of essence, it is really not necessary. It should not have to go to the appeal panel for that kind of an exception, and I was going to raise this during the course of the Estimates regardless, and I will forward to the minister the circumstances.

I was under the assumption that that issue had been dealt with, but when I was attempting to help my constituent, staff advised me—I was working with them to put together the data to go to the appeal panel, and they had indicated that that had happened on three or four occasions in the last little while, very similar circumstances. So I am wondering if the minister might comment on that.

Mr. Praznik: I am very glad the member brought this to my attention because I know from my days in the

Workers Compensation Board, that was one of the frustrations we had as well. I guess it is something that happens between administrations and appeal tribunals, and perhaps he and I, both being lawyers, appreciate this maybe more than many who work in the system, but precedent is important.

I know when I was Workers Comp minister there were times when on very like circumstances the appeal commission would rule a particular way in favour of a claimant, and it would seem like a month later there would be another person with almost identical circumstances who would be turned down and have to go through the same process, and you wondered, do you guys not ever read the appeal panel's decisions as they set precedent and interpret the rules? If the board does not like the interpretation, they can always change the rules, but the board did not change the rules, you know, so they accept the interpretation, administer it. It is very, very frustrating.

This sounds like almost the same problem, that staff who are interpreting the rules are not necessarily noting the appeal decisions that are made. Ms. Hicks, who looks at this today, I think, notes the problem. We are going to have to do some work with staff. I do not know necessarily how we distribute that, but it may be worthwhile. That is another reason for looking at consolidating these functions in a more formal health services appeal board, is that that board, bringing it together with one administrative staff, will probably give it enough work to be able to put out a list of decisions on fax, not necessarily with names but here is the fax, here is what we decided, and make sure those are aware to people, and, hopefully, they are reading them and comparing cases, because I would agree with him, there is nothing more frustrating than seeing someone win a case on a particular set of circumstances, and a week later or month later or year later you go back with virtually the same circumstances, you know what the decision is, and you are told, well, now, appeal and go through it again.

I agree with him. I do not find that acceptable. My staff have noted that. I know you will provide up in communication. We will check that.

But I think more importantly in the long run, the member is making, I guess convincing me even more,

that going to a health services appeal board function that would have the capacity to ensure that at least there is some sense of those precedents going out to the people who need to see them, and with our encouragement that if this is the way this is being interpreted on appeal, that it should be followed. Again, it just makes eminently good sense in our system. If the member could just provide the particular information—if he does not have the time to put it in a formal letter—even if he just provides it in writing to my staff to speed things up, we will check on it. Maybe we can prevent that appeal from taking place unnecessarily. I thank you. I actually appreciate his comments, as well, if he sees merit in moving down this path to a health services appeal board function and the way I am talking, but I would appreciate his comments on it.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response. It is not entirely clear to me on this issue and that leads me to my question: Can perhaps the minister provide me with the guidelines presently in existence for the various appeal panels that are in existence?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, we will endeavour to provide him with that. We had the Home Care Appeal Panel and when we get into discussing long-term care, we needed to have an appeal function. You see, this gets back to why I am looking at this health services appeal board because every time we have a new function or need for an appeal, I do not want to have to recreate an appeal function. Today, I needed on an interim basis at least some body to hear appeals on issues on long-term care facilities. We did not have it. The member was rightly criticizing us, and I accept that criticism. It was deserved.

So we, today, said, okay, let us do this. We wanted to set up a process, and when we get into this a little later I am going to share with him what we have put out in the material and the process, similar to a grievance one, but the appeal body will be that home care appeal panel today. So I am looking at this and saying what I probably need is one place, I can always expand the panel, I can always add to the expertise on it, but it gives me one place that Manitobans know they can go to appeal any services where there is a dispute without having to recreate another panel.

So the guidelines that he has asked for now we have on home care that they function under. We have also prepared some, I understand, for personal care homes and we will share those with him next week. But the longer issue for me is do I consolidate all of these in one and then have one there that makes, I think, eminently good sense or do I keep having to ad hoc this thing all the way around? If I did look at amalgamating or putting together, in essence, I would be taking those boards now and amalgamating the membership into one, not doing away with a home care panel but amalgamating members into one larger group.

* (1750)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if the minister might give direction with respect to questions concerning the lab policies and who and when we should direct that.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chairman, I believe the member is referring to the Winnipeg labs and the consolidation. The head of our negotiating team is Mr. Don Potter, my associate deputy for internal operations. If he wants to get on to this on Tuesday, we will have Mr. Potter here, as well, for him to be able to discuss any of those issues.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister. I will advise him in terms of that. I should speak with my colleague with respect—[interjection]—Yes, I do not want to plug up the schedule in case he wishes to go on different lines of questioning. Foreign doctors and rural doctors, we will also have to deal with Roberta Ellis which I will try to do.

The minister in his opening statement indicated that he saw that the federal contribution to health care in Manitoba has been now reduced from 30 percent to 16 percent. Perhaps, I wrote them down wrong, but that was an interesting figure. I would certainly like to see what that was comprised of.

Mr. Praznik: My staff is looking through—which speech was this in? Since they prepared my Estimates speech, I am relying on them to be accurate, Mr. Chair. It is my opening remarks for Estimates. I think what we will do is, I know the House is not sitting tomorrow, but as the member may find that information useful over

the weekend, I will ask my staff to please fax it over to his office in the morning on the basis on which that came, the more details about it.

Mr. Chomiak: I can indicate I have used my own figures that I have extrapolated for speech purposes on many occasions, but up-to-date information would be useful. The Children and Youth Secretariat is always confusing as to when and how we deal with it. I wonder if the minister might give direction on that.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I believe it reports to the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) directly. We make a contribution of staff, wonderful ideas and some money, but it formally, in the process, reports to her, and they have their own Estimates review, I understand, specifically for their operations.

Mr. Chomiak: Although I would suggest that when we get to the line item, certainly under Community and Mental Health and related programs, that branch, it would be appropriate to ask because I am assuming that Associate Deputy Minister Hicks, that is under her jurisdiction.

Can the minister indicate whether or not he has had any indication of when the inquest will take place with respect to Holiday Haven?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I look to all my staff. I do not think they have that date, but perhaps Mr. MacFarlane, when he joins us, will probably be more aware. We will find out for the member if we know.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister indicate where the supportive housing component of this year's budgetary Estimates is now located; in fact, even in terms of the appropriation line?

Mr. Praznik: It is under the Home Care and Long Term Care areas. I think the member has asked for which specific line in the budget. Mr. Chair, I am going to ask if the member, after we conclude today's session, if he speaks to Ms. Murphy who is here, she will point it out for him in the document, but in a reporting relationship it reports through, again, Associate Deputy Minister Hicks.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response. Can the minister indicate whether or not he anticipates the privatization act to be introduced or tabled within the next week?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, it was this minister's intention to have that act tabled in the Legislature at the beginning of May. I put equal pressure, as he puts on me, I put on our staff. I guess one of the difficulties is just drafting time to get everything done.

My intention is to have that act introduced for first reading next week, on Wednesday, and I believe it is on the Order Paper today. I have already approved it for printing and distribution, so for printing it should be provided to him very, very quickly.

I would also offer to him, as well, should he and my other critic wish next week, I would be pleased to put together a briefing for them with the task force that drafted the bill, and if they would like to in the morning, let us say Thursday morning or something, spend an hour or so or whatever is necessary privately with that staff to go through the detail as to why, I think it would make for a more pointed debate because it is a complex piece of legislation.

There is a lot of background to it, of things that came across the country. Obviously, I personally did not draft it. This group did and they have logical reasoning behind many of the things they did. There may be points on which we disagree. There are obviously some issues that have a number of sides to them, but at least it would narrow and focus our discussions and debate on that issue. So I make that offer to him if he is interested, he and Mr. Lamoureux, please just contact Mr. Godin in my office, and we will arrange for that. It will give good grounding before we get into debate on the bill.

An Honourable Member: Let us call it six o'clock.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Helwer): Six o'clock, committee rise.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Would the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This

section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time.

We are on Resolution 16.1 Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$606,500 on page 33 of the Estimates book.

Would the minister care to introduce her staff present at this time?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Yes, I would like to introduce the staff members who are with me at this time. I have John Carlyle, Deputy Minister of Education; Tom Thompson, Director of Finance and Administration; John Didyk, who is the Director of Planning and Policy Co-ordination; and Caroline Loeppky who is Assistant Deputy Minister of Schools Program Division. Those are the staff that are assembled here at this time.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Chairman, I wanted to begin this section of the department by asking the minister about the pattern of the last few years, based upon the fourth quarter returns from the Department of Finance. I think in the last few years and certainly in the last year there has been a considerable variance in the spending of the Department of Education. For example, in 1995-96, there was a \$7-million variance between what was estimated and what was actually spent. In 1994-95, it appears to be \$10 million that the department underspent by. In 1993-94, \$7 million is noted here as an underspending or a variance. In 1992, it seems to be \$7.9 million; \$2.1 million in '91-92. In 1991-92, there was a difference the other way, that there was a variance of \$1 million over what was actually estimated.

I wonder if the minister could give me a sense of what the pattern is there and why that is happening, and then perhaps we could look at some of the individual years.

Mrs. McIntosh: With apologies, we just had a little trouble with the earphones. I think I have the gist of the question. If I have not, then I do have an earphone

now, and we could maybe clarify if I am not giving the correct answer.

The member is referencing a time span and a variance that we would have to go back a few years to look at those figures. We are not aware of any particular trend. If there is a pattern, it is not a conscious pattern; it would just be the way figures fall. But we would have to go back to look into years past with figures we do not have here now. If we are talking about \$5 million, I am not sure if I heard that figure correctly. In the whole scheme of the budget of a billion dollars, on a percentage basis, it is not that wide a variation with that large a number.

I do not know if I have caught the question correctly or not. Perhaps the member could let me know if I need to fill in more details.

Ms. Friesen: Well, maybe we should just look at last year's. That would be the simplest one, but what I wanted to indicate was that it was not the only one. I do not think there is a pattern of numbers, but there is a pattern of a variance of between \$5 million and \$10 million over the last number of years in the fourth quarter unaudited statement of expenditures, Province of Manitoba.

* (1430)

For example, for the last year, what I am working from is page 6 of the Department of Finance's fourth quarter report, and what it says, as I understand it, is that the Department of Education underspent its budget by \$7 million. There are other departments which have also underspent their budget, but, for example, Family Services, which might be the comparable one, the variance there is \$2.3 million, and I think that same kind of difference is there in each of the other years.

For example, in the previous year, '94-95, the Department of Education and Training underspent its budget by \$10 million, whereas Family Services underspent it by \$1.9 million. In the year before, 1993-94, Education underspent its budget by 7.5, I believe—yes, 7.5 and Family Services, again, by 1.7.

So in the overall way in which departments are treating their budgets, Family Services is having a small

variance. Education seems to me to be having a larger variance, and there are two levels which I am concerned about that. One is the actual budgeting process. We are in the Administration and Finance section here, so I would like to understand a bit more about the Administration and Finance process; and then, obviously, my second concern is at a time when most partners in education are very concerned about the amount of money they are getting, obviously, something like this where it looks as though the department is spending less money than even it had allocated. Those are reasons for concern.

Mrs. McIntosh: There is a two-part answer to the member's question. First of all, the enrollments for school divisions will affect the amount of money that flows because we flow on a per student basis. School divisions will submit their projected enrollments, and we will base preliminary budgetary decisions or allocations based upon what has been projected. There is a history of school divisions erring on the safe side by overprojecting their enrollment rather than underprojecting. So to ensure that they do not suffer any shortfalls, they will estimate on the high side as opposed to the low. So when the final figures come in, the enrollment figures will frequently be lower than anticipated; hence, that part then will not require the flowing of so many dollars.

The other variation that affects this particular issue is the number of people retiring. We will do a preliminary prediction for budgetary purposes on how many teachers we think will be retiring. It is not always the actual number that do retire so our TRAF, teachers' retirement fund, will swell or shrink depending upon the number that actually do take up the opportunity to retire. Those two projections will sometimes result then in an underspending, because we are not required to flow as much as we had originally thought. On a whole budgetary basis, again, it is considered to be a fairly normal variation. That particular amount is considered to be a fairly normal variation in any particular year.

We can take the issue as notice, and we can come back when we next come to this sitting with a more precise analysis and to go back and check some of those figures. But the general explanation that I have just provided is believed by staff and by myself to be

accurate. The main variances are not generally in department operating budgets, but they are in TRAF and in grants to schools which, as I indicated at the beginning of my remarks, are based upon projections and estimates of the amount that we will need.

We do try to, as school divisions do, budget on the most expensive scenario so that we are not caught short, and then if the projections are slightly under that, then we have not run short of what we have allocated. So we can come back with more precise figures if the member would like, Mr. Chairman, with an analysis on that question.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, yes, I would like to see some detailed explanations of some of the examples, and I understand what the minister is saying, that it is, essentially, a very conservative small "c" approach to budgeting in Estimates. But I wonder why the difference. For example, in '91-92 and in '90-91, the variances—in one case it is above and in another case it is 2.1 million below—so it is a very different kind of ballpark than you are looking at when you are getting closer to the present day when it becomes \$7 million, \$10 million, \$7 million. So, if the explanation is (a) behavioural that school divisions overestimate for all the right reasons and the department wants to overestimate for all the right reasons, then why has that changed over the period of the last five years? Then I guess the second part of that is, has there been a rapid increase in the retirement numbers of teachers or, I guess, the unpredictability of the retirement of teachers in those two groups of years before 1990 and after 1990?

* (1440)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I thank the member for her comments. The staff has just been advising me that they do not see any trend particularly, but they will definitely go back and look at those figures to pull out what the fluctuations were, that, in any given year, will have the fluctuations. It will be more in one year than another, over or under, depending upon the circumstances. We have people being eligible for retirement who sometimes will retire in greater numbers than we anticipated or not retire in the numbers that we did anticipate. While we are quite certain that the two major factors for the variances

would be projected enrollments and projected retirements, there may as well be some other small factors in there—French immersion—I do not know, some of those grants that we will take a look at and provide information back to the member. We will try to bring that if we can for our next sitting or as soon thereafter as possible.

Ms. Friesen: I thank the minister for that. In looking at that, I am trying to understand the process by which the department reaches these Estimates, because presumably you would have a sense of the anticipated population of Manitoba. You would know from Statistics Canada. So these children are going to be in one school or another. They may not be in this division; they may not be in the public system. But do you actually, when you are budgeting—I guess what I am saying is, does the department when it budgets, does it work from Statistics Canada or the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics numbers on the basis of an anticipated cohort coming through, or does it base it simply on the estimates of each division which then may be altered, or is there a comparison between the two?

It seems to me that Manitoba, unlike British Columbia, say, or unlike Alberta or perhaps Newfoundland, has a very predictable population. We are relatively stable, some movement in, some movement out; it goes up and down according to various factors, but not a great deal. For the purposes of school population, I would have thought there would have been some stability there. So how are the numbers arrived at, and what is checked against what?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, there are a number of factors that are taken into consideration, and I will provide a response here but also indicate that, when we get under the Support to Schools section, I will have other staff here that we could provide more detail on that specifically. But I indicate, first of all, that our numbers are provided in draft budgets from school divisions. They would project numbers. We check those against our own numbers, and there are a number of things that will influence the amount of money that flows in terms of change. While it is true that we do not have very much of an outmigration in Manitoba, we do have a fairly stable population. We still will have some people transferring in and out, particularly with our military bases, and that is maybe not so evident

with the removal of so many military jobs from Manitoba but was certainly evident in the early years referenced by the member, where you would have a similar number of families but perhaps different numbers of children moving in and out of the Air Command base, et cetera.

Also, within the province when students move from division to division, depending upon which division they are, the same student in Duck Mountain would see more money flow to that division because of that student's presence than if that student moved to another division that did not receive as much because of the funding formula. So as people move about within the province, they will attract more or less money than they might have in the previous division. We also have variations that will occur, because we have anticipated a certain number of students graduating. Some of those students may remain in school for an additional year or may leave school a year earlier than anticipated. So those kinds of things will also affect the projections versus the amount that is actually flowed in the final analysis.

But the bottom line in terms of figuring is that when we talk about \$5 million, we are really talking about .5 percent of our budget, and a variance of .5 percent statistically is not that high a variation. While it is money that has been estimated as possibly being needed, a variation of that small size statistically does not really impact as a major change on the overall budget.

But, as I say, when we get to the Support to Schools line, we may have ability to provide more information than this that I have put to the member at the current time, and we can delve more deeply into it at that line if she would like to do that.

* (1450)

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, the minister is using the number five, and I think that was before the earphones got corrected. So, actually, the average or the most common number that shows is seven. Sometimes it is \$7.9 million, so the percentage is a bit higher, I think.

There is one year where things are different, and that is 1994-95 and that is a \$10-million variance, and it is

about 10 percent of the budget, I think. It is a \$10.17 million—[interjection] 1 percent, I am sorry. Yes, out of nine. The actual becomes \$9.80 million in that case and the estimate was \$9.90 million.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I will just say two things to the member. This is '94-95 and we can and we are quite willing to go and get the detail on that for her, but I also wish to stress that 1 percent variation on a budget is not an extreme variation, and I doubt that it has been more than 1 percent. If we look at the examination, we would see the variation being from zero to 1 percent of a total budget which, statistically, is well within the norm, a zero to 1 percent variation on any given budget projects. When you are dealing with uncertainties that cannot be absolutely verified until after the fact, I think, is not an unreasonable variation, but we will check into the '94-95 to get the specifics as to the details on that 1 percent overestimation and provide that detail to her.

Mr. Chairman, if I might just add that we have been talking here primarily about the K to Senior 4 side. Of course, the budget also takes into consideration the post-secondary side, and it could well be that in terms of probable or possible causes for any variation, that we did have a change, and we may have had less request for student financial assistance, so we would budget for the amount that we think students would be seeking and then find that it was not all sought.

So there are other possibilities such as that that could be impacting from the post-secondary side as well, but, as I say, we will consider all of those when we go back to the exploration and make certain that that information is made available to the member.

Ms. Friesen: Yes, and that is why I singled out this year and why I wanted to ask it here rather than entirely in School Programs, as the minister was suggesting, because I think that 1994-95 is when the student loan system changed, and it looks to me as though what that meant was if we take \$7-million variance as the norm for whatever reasons, then that extra \$3 million is the savings that was made by transferring the burden of student loans onto individuals and the transfer to the banks at the same time. That is what the minister is going to be looking at and seeing if that is the case?

Mrs. McIntosh: I apologize. I thought it was a comment, but the member has indicated it was a question. We will take a look at that. As I said, I started this off, assuming the member was interested or was talking about what might have happened to the K to S4.

The Student Financial Assistance, I would disagree with referring to it as savings or anything like that because these are demand-driven, and it would be based upon who applies, et cetera. As I say, we will get detail on that, but the Student Financial Assistance Program still provides assistance to students granted with different formula, et cetera, in terms of our dealings with the federal government but still to the same need that was there before, and if there were fewer students applying, then there would be less money handed out, but it would not be because there was a desire to hold back money to save it but rather that that money was not requested in the anticipated amount.

I do not know if that was what you were seeking in terms of your question or not.

Ms. Friesen: Well, I look forward to some more detailed analysis on that, on how those variance for the various reasons—and the minister has offered a lot of reasons—how they are arrived at, why there is a change after 1992 and what the anomaly is in '94-95 and the reasons for that.

Again, still under Administration and Finance, I wanted to ask the minister about the representation of the department in local, provincial, national, international education-related matters. I wanted to begin with the local and to ask the minister what parts of local policy matters is the department involved in, and I am thinking, obviously, of areas like the Youth Secretariat, the urban aboriginal strategy, particularly government functions, but if there are others that the department is involved in, I think we would be interested to hear about them.

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not have all the names of particular staff members, although the deputy is busy writing them down. I will read the groups or the committees or the secretariats, et cetera, that people are

involved in and put as many names to them as possible for the member as I can.

We have committees initiated and led by staff from the department Education Information System Stakeholder Committee; Certificate Review Committee; Principals Advisory Committee; and the Psychologist Advisory Committee; Reading Advisory Committee; Social Work Advisory Committee; and the Collective Agreement Board.

We also have committees where staff from the department are members, and these are the ones where the initiative and the leading would come from elsewhere but staff from the department are members: the Ministers Advisory Committee on Education Finance; the FRAME committee; Certificate Review Committee; Principals Advisory Committee; Psychologist Advisory Committee; Reading Advisory Committee; Social Work Advisory Committee; Provincial Evaluations Committee; Board of Teacher Education Committee; the Collective Agreement Board; the Board of Education and Certification; Provincial Evaluations Committee.

* (1500)

The Bureau de l'éducation française we have again initiated and led by staff in the department we have: Programmes technologiques au secondaire. We have the Rencontre sur la réflexion sur l'enseignement de l'anglais dans les écoles franco-manitobaines. We have the Comité 4-5-6 programmation en français de base. Similarly 7 and 8, similarly Comité 7-8 mise-à-l'essai en Français de base, Comité S1 et S2 programmation en français de base. We have the Comité S3 et S4 programmation en Français de base. Consultation sur les résultats d'apprentissage, Normes provinciales de mathématiques de la 3^e année, Normes provinciales de mathématiques de la 6^e année, Comité de mathématiques Secondaire 1; Comité de comparaisons de documents du consortium de l'ouest et Manitoba, that is the western consortium and we are the province there so there is a lot of involvement on that one, Applied Math 20S, 30S, 40S, Pilot Project: Math 20S 30S, 40S, Vision de l'éducation scientifique, Comité de sciences de la nature 10G, Comité de sciences de la nature 20S, Comité de classes multiprogrammes, Examens de français, secondaire 4, FL1; School

Library Committee (FL1 and FL2 - 1 school), Exam Committee Senior 4 - FL1 - Development, Exam Committee - Senior 4 - FL1 - Correction.

We have the Native Education Directorate, and, again, these are committees initiated and led by staff from the department: the Collection Development Committee, the Divisional Leadership Team, Education Indicators Project, Future Improvement of Native Education for Student Success Committee, Information Technology Renewal Project, Native Education Advisory Committee, Native Languages Project Committee, Race Relations Guidelines Committee, Reading Recovery Provincial Management Committee, School Plans Project Team, Special Education Review Committee, Selection Committee - Distance Education.

Then we have some committees under Native Education initiated and led by others but where staff from the department are members: Aboriginal Education Conference Committee, Aboriginal Educational & Institutional Diversity Committee at Red River Community College, Aboriginal Head Start, Aboriginal Teachers' Circle, Care and Protection of Children Committee, which is inter-governmental, Program for the Education of Native Teachers Advisory Committee at Brandon University, Students At Risk Project Team, Aboriginal Education Conference Committee, Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre, Aboriginal History Committee, Inter-Agency Working Group, Youth Correction Services, Interdepartment Task Force on Aboriginal Self Government.

Then we have committees where staff from the department have been invited to participate as associate members but not as full members, and so our staff members there are as observers more or less: Winnipeg Aboriginal Coalition - Observer Status, Adult Correctional Services, National Wild Life Week Working Group, St. James Aboriginal Awareness Committee.

In the Program Development Branch, we have the following committees initiated and led by staff from the department: Biology Curriculum Committee, Chemistry Curriculum Committee, Physics Curriculum Committee—these are all for 30S and 40S, those three; the K-12 Science Steering Committee; Science 20S Pilot Teachers Phase 2; Interdisciplinary Middle Years

Multimedia Project Development Team, and similarly the Interdisciplinary Middle Years Multimedia Project Pilot Teachers; the Curriculum/Multimedia Integration Project Team; Science and Biology and Chemistry and Physics, 20S Science and 30S, for the other three Multimedia Pilot Projects; Mathematics Steering Committee; Senior 2 - Mathematics 20S, 30S and 40S Revision Committee; Senior 2 - Applied Mathematics 20S, 30S, 40S Curriculum Committee; the K-4 Mathematics Curriculum Implementation Document Team, and a similar team for 5-8; the Senior 1 Mathematics Curriculum Implementation Document Team; Senior 2 Mathematics Pilot Project; Applied Mathematics 20S Pilot Project; Grade 3 Mathematics Standards Project Team, and similar Mathematics Standards Project teams for Grades 6 and Senior 1; Social Studies Steering Committee; the English Language Arts Steering Committee; the Western English Language Arts Project Development Team. We have as well English Language Arts, five different committees, one being K-S4 Alignment Team, the other being Grade 3 Standards Team, the other being the 5-8 Alignment Team, an S1/ S2 Alignment Team, and an S1 Standards; Interorganizational Curriculum Advisory Committee; Handbook for Differentiating Instruction-I have to pause on that one because I want the record to show how delighted I am with the work that has come out of that one and how well received it has been by the field. I just think it has been an outstanding success, and I want to thank, on the record, everyone involved. Not taking away from the others, it is just so we have had so many compliments on that one, I need to single it out.

And Business Education Steering Committee, Development Teams for ISP/TMP, Race Relations Guidelines Committee, "A Thinking Framework" Project.

Again, where staff are members: Applied Technology 40G Curriculum Committee, Technology Education Steering Committee.

Again where staff has been invited to participate as associate members, there are the SAG groups where the staff have been invited to attend as observer-status type people. The SAG groups are from the Manitoba Teachers' Society: Manitoba School Library Association, Social Science Teachers' Association,

Science Teachers Association of Manitoba, Association of Mathematics Teachers, Manitoba Reading Association, Manitoba Association of English Language Arts Consultants and Co-ordinators, Manitoba Association of Teachers of English, Reading Council of Greater Winnipeg.

Again on committees initiated and led by staff from the department, we have the Minister's Advisory Committee on Copyright, an important committee whose work I appreciate, the Provincial Co-ordination of Services Committee, Interdepartmental Committee reviewing Level III applications for EBD students.

Where staff are members: Manitoba Library Consortium, Health of Manitoba's Children Committee, School Library Administrators of Manitoba, Canadian Education Association/Miermedia Ltd. Canadian Education Index Advisory Board, Graduate Studies Committee at the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Three committees with the Children and Youth Secretariat where staff are members is the High Risk Steering Committee, the Juvenile Prostitution Working Group, the Emotionally Behaviourally Disordered Working Group, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Co-ordinating Committee, Co-ordination of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services Advisory Committee, Autism Network Committee, Association d'Arthopedagogue Langue Franco-Manitobaine, Multi-age Committee, River East School Division No. 9 Advisory Committee for Technology Education and Transitions, Committee for Alcohol and Pregnancy which is interdepartmental, the Unified Referral Intake System Committee, Workplace Health and Safety Committee, Computers for Schools Committee, Community Needs Assessment Committee, Project Reference Collection, Mobile Resources Committee, Manitoba Association of Argument Alternative Communicators.

Again, a listing of those where the staff has been asked to participate as associate members or occasional guests, so they are not necessary at every meeting of these following, but they are there periodically: Reading Continuum Committee for French Immersion, Manitoba Association of Resource Teachers Professional Development Committee, Learning

Disabilities Association of Manitoba - Transition to Adulthood, and Council for Exceptional Children.

With the Program Implementation Branch and the Regional Teams Unit, committees initiated and led by staff from the department include Divisional Committees for Middle Years Math Project, the Provincial Senior/Standards Committee in the process of developing an Implementation Committee in each School Division in the Region—the one in Morris MacDonald is already in place—Students at Risk Symposium Committee, Reading Recovery Management Committee—that has become extremely admired across the nation and we are fortunate to have Reading Recovery here as the western institute. That is going to take the country by storm, I predict, because it is attracting more and more attention. So I am very proud that we have that here—Provincial Advisory Committee on Child Abuse, Advisory Councils for School Leadership, Guidelines for School Plans, Future Improvement of Native Education for Student Success Project Committee—and there is another committee with a similar name to that without the project committee at the end of it—Math 5-8 Unit Building Project. There is a Strategic Planning for Curriculum Implementation with Souris Valley, Turtle Mountain, Antler River, Fort la Bosse School Divisions, Parkland Emotional Behavioural Disorder Committee and the Westman Emotional Behavioural Disorder Committee.

* (1510)

Staff are also members on the South East/Interlake Child Abuse Committee, the South East Regional Inter Agency Committee, the Brighter Futures Community Action Program for Children, the Children and Youth Secretariat Adolescence and Pregnancy Steering Committee, Central Region Youth Services (CRYS) Committee, Leadership in Technology Committee, MacDonald Youth Services, Thompson Regional Mental Health Committee, the Special Needs Committee in Mystery Lake School Division, Thompson Speech Language Intervention Consortium, Student Services Administrators Association of Manitoba (Metro), Aboriginal Head Start Provincial Advisory Committee, English Language Enrichment for Native Students called ELENS in the Winnipeg School Division No. 1, (Advisory Committee), Partners in Change Conference Planning Committee, Parkland

Education Council, Western Region Inservice Education Committee, Parkland Administrators Leadership Project, International Hutterian Conference Planning Committee, South Central Technology Committee, the Interdepartmental Committee for Emotionally Behaviourally Disordered Students.

Again, where we have been asked to participate either as observer members, associate members or occasional guests, the Boreal Distance Education and Technology Consortium, the Precambrian Distance Education and Technology Consortium, Student Services Administrators Association of Manitoba, Special Needs Advisory Committee for Frontier School Division, Education Renewal Committee, Niji Mahakwa and Children of the Earth School, Parkland/Westman Student Services Administrators Association of Manitoba, Western Manitoba Superintendents Association, Parkland Superintendent Group, Brandon University Senate, Encounters with Canada, Community Legal Education Association and the South Central Superintendent Group.

We have also at the Canadian level the Canadian Education Statistics Council, the western protocol steering committee, the Pan-Canadian Science development, the Reading Recovery board.

Internationally staff sit on the OECD education statistics project and Students At Risk. Two new committees are being established as well, provincially led by staff, education indicators and planning co-ordination. As I say, I do not have all the names of all of the people filling those positions here, because some of those names will change periodically from time to time, but they are available if need be. I think the important thing is that we do have staff on those. Some of them I could fill in names for but not all of them, because there is quite a lengthy list.

The staff from the department gather a tremendous amount of information that informs policy and know first-hand about the field issues because they are in the field on so many of these things. I think the staff shows leadership in assisting the field and helping the field grow and learn as they grow and learn themselves as members of these various entities around the province. These, of course, are all in addition to their regular full-time duties as departmental staff.

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to ask the minister a number of questions coming from that. The minister wanted to talk I think a little more about, and I am not sure I caught the title of it, one that she wanted to particularly praise, the International Education Committee—did I get the title right? [interjection] No, it was before that.

The minister paused in her discussion of the list of committees to speak of, it was the first one that she singled out, and, that was, I think—

Mrs. McIntosh: Excuse me. Would it have been the Handbook for Differentiating Instruction? I singled out two: The Handbook for Differentiating Instruction and the Reading Recovery Program. Did I single out another? Reading Recovery is an international program.

Ms. Friesen: Partly the problem is not having heard it properly. It came after the five committees in English Language Arts and before the Business Education Steering Committee, somewhere in there. It probably would take a while to figure it out, and maybe we better—

Mrs. McIntosh: I can see the five English Language Arts things here, and if the chairman will forgive us for sort of chitchatting back across the floor, you said it was before the English Language Arts ones.

Ms. Friesen: No, after the English Language Arts, and then there may be a gap in my notes, but then the one that you wanted to talk about and then the Business Education Steering Committee.

Mrs. McIntosh: Well, I will read them again to you. There are five English Language Arts, then there was the Interorganizational Curriculum Advisory Committee, then the Handbook for Differentiating Instruction which I singled out, and then the Business Education Steering Committee.

Ms. Friesen: It must have been the handbook, and I did not catch that. I got something quite different in my notes, and since Hansard takes a while for these, I wanted to check on it.

The handbook for differentiated learning, then, is the one that has already been distributed to schools, the one

that we have seen in a gray cover in a series of things dealing with modified programs.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, that is correct, Mr. Chairman.

* (1520)

Ms. Friesen: I wonder if the minister would like to take a few more minutes to tell us about that. Is it the first in the country? Is there some particular reason that the department has special pride in that?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to give just a few highlights here. When we get to Program Implementation, we would have more information to go into deeper detail if the member wishes, but just to give a quick response outside of that particular Program Implementation area, the differentiated learning handbook that is now in the possession of all teachers in Manitoba.

The concept of differentiated learning and differentiated teaching, rather, is not new, but the guide that the department prepared we believe to be the most comprehensive of its kind in Canada at this point. We had prepared it to assist teachers with differentiated teaching, because we are moving on the premise as Education always has, but we are emphasizing every child has the ability to learn, and that there will be standards we wish every child to meet. They need to reach those standards. So you will need to employ different methods for different children to enable them to reach one size does not fit all in terms of teaching. You do need to have a variation in your methodology to help them reach their own potential in their own way.

While many teachers have done this automatically, just instinctively tailoring their methods of teaching to suit the learner, this is a very clear and precise way of teaching teachers how to teach to suit the learner. Because we are saying now that we will not be sort of dummifying down standards, so to speak, to accommodate students, we will rather bring the student up to the standard. Rather than lower the standard to the student, bring the student to the standard, then differentiated teaching becomes very critical to the whole learning process. The staff, who worked very hard and put together this particular handbook,

originally sent out a few copies to each school with the expectation that it might be of some assistance. The response was immediate, dramatic and overwhelming in that everywhere we went, every school we visited for a period of time, we were going into the schools and hearing we absolutely love this particular handbook; please, can we get more copies.

So eventually they ran off a copy for every teacher in Manitoba, and each teacher now, 16,000 of them, do now have a copy of this handbook. We are hearing back from them that it is so clear and it is so helpful. Now we are starting to get requests as well from others. So it has been something that has proved to really help in the way the department had hoped it would help, and the impact then we will eventually see with the children. We can, as I say, get into more detail in the Program Implementation part. Because of the positive response to this booklet and also because it was part of the department's original thrust, certainly more knowing that the field wants it so much, the department has dedicated extra effort. So they have dedicated a staff year to the implementation as well as operating, and numerous training sessions have now occurred and will continue over the next year on the whole process of differentiated instruction in Manitoba.

The booklet is actually called *Success for All Learners: A Handbook for Differentiating Instruction*. As I say, it is a critical component of effective programming for all students, but it is particularly critical for students with diverse needs, including special needs, including gifted and at-risk students, and for struggling learners. The differentiating instruction consultant is planning numerous professional development activities in regions across the province to support the implementation of differentiating instruction. A co-ordinator of Provincial Specialists Unit has met with representatives of the Learning Disabilities Association of Manitoba who have expressed strong support for the effectiveness of differentiating instruction for students with learning disabilities.

We have heard this from parents as well. Some parent councils have received the handbook, gone through it, and contacted us, letting us know that this is the answer that some of them were seeking to some of their questions on, helping their students, again

especially those struggling learners, learn without having to be the same as somebody else or having to be taught the same as somebody else. As I say, there are many instructors and teachers who have already been teaching that way, but this gives a consistent framework so that they can all have access to that method of teaching.

We have shared this with other provinces. We have got some copyright clearance issues that others outside of our province will be clearing in order to use the handbook. We have also received congratulations. As I mentioned, we have strong support from the Learning Disabilities Association of Manitoba, but also from the Council for Exceptional Children who feel very much this is a key element that has not been so expressly designated and encouraged in the history of Education in Manitoba, and they feel this will be of tremendous help for their children with exceptional needs.

So what started off here as meant to be some help to teachers has steamrolled into a fairly significant undertaking and I think a significant shift in direction and great comfort for some in the field who had not necessarily had exposure to this in this detail. Elementary school teachers, I think, have an instinct for this and some secondary teachers. The secondary teachers in many instances have, over time, opted for more of the university model of presenting lecture-type classes, so have fallen out of the habit, if it was there, when they entered the high school stream of differentiated instruction. This has been a godsend for them in picking up some of these skills and aptitudes which are easily acquired but, in some instances, need to be clarified for people.

So the way in which this guide was developed was done with such good language and with such clarity that I am particularly proud of the people who put it together and extremely grateful for the positive impact it is having in the field.

Ms. Friesen: I have a number of follow-up questions on that, and what I will do is list them and then the minister could come back with a general answer on it. I wonder if the minister could tell us how it was put together. For example, was it done with a contract, was it done by regular staff, was it put together with the people who are, as the minister says, supporting it, The

Council for Exceptional Children, Learning Disabilities Association, et cetera? So I am interested in one group of questions on how such a book was put together.

Secondly, I would be interested in how it is being linked to teacher training. The issue here, at the moment, the minister seems to be suggesting that the thrust is in professional development and possibly a secondary thrust with families and parent councils. How does it make the link to professional development and the teachers of the future? I do not mean just the booklet, but I mean the whole issue surrounding it which this seems to lead to.

* (1530)

I am interested in the implementation in the staff year. Which part of the department is that in, and what kind of seminars are anticipated this year, although that is possible we could ask that in another area if the minister would tell me which section of the department?

I am interested in the copyright issues and the other provinces and how this fits, for example, into the western consortium. The minister mentioned other provinces, not necessarily western ones. I am also interested in the way in which this links to other curriculum issues. The minister has a number of, well, many, many committees dealing with curriculum. How does this particular educational thrust, how does this particular booklet, link to those? Again, we are in the broader context of finance and administration in the department.

(Mrs. Shirley Render, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Chairman, this is a big-picture question, and the questions the member asks are important ones. I will give what I can here. As I say, this does actually come up under 16.2.(f), but, as I indicated earlier, under the Program Implementation. However, I can give you as much detail here as I can, and if we wish to delve into it more when we get to 16.2.(f), I would be delighted to do that.

Amongst the questions who developed it, this was developed by a project team in the department, and the

lead person was Betty Mueller who was seconded from Pembina Valley School Division, an educator. She was seconded to work on that project team as the lead person. We then had an editor contracted to finalize the project once the ideas and so on were all fleshed out and developed. The development itself was done by the project team with input from the field. We piloted various components of the project with teachers in the classrooms especially at the high school level, so we had the input from the field in a live setting, so to speak, being piloted in the classrooms as the project went ahead.

In terms of linking it to curriculum, it is an integral part, one of the essential elements in curriculum, and you will see as you examine new curricula that we will talk about differentiated learning. It is integrated and threaded throughout curriculum. There will be examples given as you go through a new curriculum saying, you know, differentiated learning in this aspect shall be used here, and then there will be examples given as to how that can be done right in the teachers' manuals. So we say it is an integratable, that we identified it in A Foundation for Excellence. We have several things that we want to permeate learning, and differentiating instruction is one of them, along with certain other things, aboriginal perspectives, et cetera. So it is an integratable that we say must permeate all teaching and learning.

Each of our curriculum implementation support documents contains instructional recommendations that would encompass differentiated instrumental strategies. All of our curriculum documents also present different ways of assessing student growth which is another example of differentiation.

You asked how it was linked to teacher education, and we have been in communication with the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. We have talked to them about the work being done at the Faculties of Education, University of Manitoba being the one I am referencing at this point, but in all our teacher-training institutions, we will be looking at a number of items that relate to quality. We will be looking at, as we have with other issues through the Board of Teacher Education and Certification, BOTECE, and others in terms of the number of credit hours, the quality and quantity and locations and sites, et cetera,

for teacher training, the amount of time spent on practicum and all of those items.

We have talked about differentiated instruction and learning and the various ways in which it can be threaded through the experience at the Faculties of Education. As I say, it is not a new concept, but it is not one that has been emphasized quite the way we are emphasizing it, and it has not been the same need to look at what is essentially developing an individualized education plan for every child. That may be an extreme way to put it, but that is the type of methodology that we are seeking.

* (1540)

It is demanding for teachers, it is challenging, but it is also tremendously exciting because it means that every child, particularly our struggling learners, will have a chance to meet a standard because they are being taught in ways to which they can respond, and they are being taught in ways that they can understand rather than being in a lecture-listener type situation and a regurgitation-type situation. As I say, not taking anything away from high school teachers because they are dealing with a more mature student, but elementary school teachers have a better feel for this type of thing because they have had more exposure to it.

Now, I am not sure—I think you had asked something else—how did it fit with the curriculum? I think I have answered that.

Ms. Friesen: Yes, I had also asked about the staff year and implementation and you had answered that at the beginning.

Mrs. McIntosh: I have neglected to indicate the response to the question about—well, no, I guess I did answer it—how many other groups were involved, like Council for Exceptional Children, et cetera. Basically it was piloted in classrooms. The input that we received was a summation of all that we have heard in so many different presentations over time, not direct necessarily but, for example, I will meet with the Council for Exceptional Children on a regular basis, say once a year.

With many of these groups we have an annual meeting or periodic get-togethers just to touch base and

talk. Of course, we have staff people involved on many of these committees as I indicated in reading the list of committees that we belong to.

So from all of those things we have learned from them over the course of time, this was developed, piloted in classrooms with practising teachers, and then presented them more or less as a final project, but obviously it has met with their high approval. So we have captured what we have learned over time from them in the development.

Ms. Friesen: Again, two or three questions and if the minister could perhaps answer them all together. I am interested in how—and again we are still in this 1.(b) where we are looking at Administration and Finance—that is communicated to the teacher education facilities. The minister said we had conversations and we talked to them, we can work through BOTEK and the issues are credit hours, practicum, et cetera. It would seem to me that that is kind of skimming the surface, that there must be more to it than that. So I am interested in the administrative process of how that happens.

The second thing I would like to know is how long this took. This is something which the department is very proud of. Can the minister give us an idea of how long it took from the idea, or at least the priority emerging from New Directions to the actual, I guess, beginning of the implementation stage?

And finally, a content question I guess. I wondered if the minister is moving in this area to individualized plans for each child. She mentioned it as a possibility but as an extreme possibility, and yet it is the root that many countries, states have gone, is that children with particular kinds of—and I think they tend to do it with disabilities rather than with so-called gifted children—that they do require, sometimes in legislation, an individualized plan for each child. Is that the direction that this might lead?

Mrs. McIntosh: The member had three questions, and she asked how long it took to develop the handbook. Our estimate would be about a year and a half. That year and a half would be from the beginning of the process to the initiation of—from the decision that we should really put together a handbook to help the field with this issue to the handbook actually being in their

hands was about a year and a half. There is still follow-up going on, of course, with that because we are now following up with workshops, et cetera, and with going out into the field consulting with them on the work that is in the handbook to make sure that they are learning from it as we had hoped and as they indicate they are.

You asked about the Faculty of Education. I say, first of all, just for clarification that which the member knows and I know, but we just put it for the record that, of course, there is autonomy at the university. So we do not control it in the sense that I as minister would control the department so to speak; however, we do have responsibility in the K to S courses for ensuring that teachers come out well trained for the field. So we have a number of things happening right now simultaneously.

First of all, going back over some time, the deputy minister at the request of the minister has communication with the deans of faculties formally and informally. Formally, for example, through BOTEC, the Board of Teacher Education and Certification. They all sit as members and they will discuss a variety of issues there, and I will come back to that in a minute. Informally, the deputy, for example, when we bring out a document such as New Directions or Path to Excellence, and we characterize what we feel we need in the schools: What are the characteristics of a good teacher, for example; what are the characteristics of an effective classroom; what are our expectations for standards for outcomes; how is our new curricula going to alter the way in which learning occurs. Those will all be shared. The deputy, for example, will visit with the dean of the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, and say here is information on our new curricula, our assessments, the fact that we have adults in the schools now, the needs we have for using technology as a tool for instruction, and these are things that we are now expecting in the classroom.

* (1550)

There is music floating down from somewhere. Is it just us? Heavenly choirs?

But these are expectations for the classroom. Your teachers will be entering classrooms that have those expectations in them, and then, through BOTEC and

other vehicles, arrangements will be made to bring the faculty along.

Now, in some cases it will happen that, and we are probably in that kind of period right now, where a new curriculum has been developed, assessment tools, et cetera, are coming in, differentiated learning, very much a part of the new curricula shared with the faculty, and then they take care that their program reflects what the needs are going to be once their students graduate.

There are a lot of key players in moving to these changes at the Faculty of Education. There have always been changes that have occurred over time, but we are in an era of fairly hefty changes in terms of things that are happening in the classroom. So there are other key players that will be needed to help us and that are prepared and have offered to assist us with renewal of education at the Faculty of Education.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society, for example, has a great interest in the topic and obviously a great deal of expertise in what is happening in classrooms right now, because they are the people who are in the classrooms right now. So they will have first-hand exposure to any gaps that might be there between what is being taught at the faculty and what is being expected in the classroom because of New Directions.

So all of those people, some are already helping us, some we have just recently invited to help us, and some, more arm's length but, again, having sort of an indirect impact, will be the reports from people such as Dr. Shapiro, et cetera. His report has been distributed widely so that most people that we would contact to gain assistance here are familiar with what he has recommended because it is a high interest of theirs.

So basically right now it is the informal communications from the deputy to the deans and the more formal communications through groups such as BOTEC, et cetera, and the documentation, the documents that have been created that are shared back and forth.

You talked about individualized education plans, and new curriculum documents do a lot of talking about differentiated instruction, as I said. We are moving

towards not seeing students so much as groups but as individuals, and that of course, as I say, has been done. I am not saying that is new or unusual. It is just getting a stronger emphasis.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

I do not think at this point that we will be seeing individualized instruction plans for every student, although that would be a wonderful ideal, but it is quite possible in terms of utilizing the techniques of differentiated instruction to recognize that you may have small groupings you can pull together to instruct. In many cases it may be that teachers would put together a plan for particular students or plans for particular types of students so that you know you have a student with a particular disorder and you know that a certain type of technique has worked with students with that type of disorder. You would then be able to utilize that same technique with several students, still meeting the student's individual need because it is similar to another student's.

I think that would allow teachers in a classroom to be able to target their students' needs more appropriately, more efficiently, and then once they have success, success builds upon itself, as you know. Children can then benefit to a greater degree because we have got that diversity of instruction.

It does not necessarily mean however that there would be each child being taught individually or each child being taught differently but, rather, there would just be a lot more strategy and more strategies available for learning than are currently utilized in the classroom now. The topic of differentiated instruction can take a lot of research, a lot of time. The handbook that we gave teachers gives them a solid handle on a short-term basis to implement the blueprint so that they themselves do not have to do the research; and the time, it has been done for them so that they can very quickly pick up a guide that will lead them through what to do, a how-to booklet that capsulizes things in a very clear and explicit way.

BOTEC, I made reference earlier to changes at the faculty, and I apologize if I am sort of skipping back and forth a bit here, and those kinds of groups, they will refine and they will explore those kinds of concepts

further so that the faculty teachers will ultimately be exposed to some of that research and have more time to delve into the topic which will be a more in-depth presentation than the handbook, which is a here-is-how-you-do-it. We would hope that once the full renewal is completed at the university that the research and the understandings behind it would be well taught in depth as well.

Again, there are many, many teachers who already do know these things. I am not taking that away. It is just it was inconsistent before.

BOTEC will also provide recommendations to the minister on this issue, on other issues from the point of view of what is required at the faculties to provide the type of teacher for today and tomorrow that we are going to need. I think it is probably obvious to the member, but again just for the record, you are looking at students that fall within a normal range of activity and a normal range of performance, plus those that fall outside it in terms of special needs, both at one end of the spectrum and at the other, like the gifted and the strugglers. We have taken to saying struggling learners, informally, and I rather like the phrase because it sort of gives everybody a chance that they are learners and they are struggling for some reason, but they are all learners and they are all learning. You can struggle and achieve your goal.

In many aspects, some of our gifted students are also struggling, as they learn, with a whole host of things that have nothing to do with their ability to acquire knowledge, but have a lot to do with some of the psychological problems some of those kids face. Because they can move along so much faster at a pace that is not like the norm, it makes them stand out, which they often do not wish to be doing—multicultural needs, learning styles. Sometimes students have—and this is I think something that is helpful for teachers. If you talk about learning styles, you know, some people are visual learners. I always have to write everything down; some people have to hear it. If I write it down, somehow it seems to stick in my brain; if I do not, it slips away.

An Honourable Member: I know the feeling.

Mrs. McIntosh: You know the feeling, right. Some people have to hear it, they have to have it repeated, so

they are auditory learners. So it is nothing to do with their ability or their intelligence, it is just their style and their way of learning. Differentiating instruction will also address those types of things.

I think I have answered as best I can. Again, I say, when we get to that 16.2.(f), we can hit that line with a little harder impact should the member wish, but those are sort of capsule responses to those three questions that she asked in her last grouping.

* (1600)

Ms. Friesen: We began with a list of the committees that the department is involved with, and I think it would be actually very interesting to see that in print, because it is not a different take on the department, but it is I think an indication of things that you do not get from announcements of staff years and particular position locations. So it is an interesting view of the department.

I wanted to ask the minister about a couple of the committees and, again, in the context of Administration and Finance, and I know that we will be coming to particular levels of that, but the ministerial advisory— [interjection] Do you want to table it?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, I will just table the committees there so that the member does not have to write big long lists there. That may help the Hansard staff a bit, too.

Ms. Friesen: Yes, I think that would be very helpful and probably helpful for Hansard, too, because some of it went quite quickly.

I wanted to ask the minister about the Ministers Advisory Committee on Copyright, and I know that the minister has been dealing with this in legislative terms within the province, and that is something obviously we will discuss in the context of bills and committees on bills. I am interested in whether or not that committee looked at the federal legislation. Again, this is a section of the department that looks at national education related matters and there has been some very, I do not know what to call it, but certainly divisive, I would say, very divisive issues around copyright in the last moments of the last federal government. I wondered if

the department had made any representations on that? Had it received representations from people within the province, and does—well, maybe we will stop there.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, we did take a look at the federal legislation, and we submitted a mailed-in written submission at the time. I do not have specific details here. Again, that is the 16.2(f) thing, but that committee on copyright did, indeed, explore all of the virtues and pitfalls of federal legislation in this area, and we did send, over my signature, to the feds to see if we could effect change there. I do not have that here.

Ms. Friesen: The minister said that that could be dealt with in detail in 16.2.(f) under School Programs. That committee then was staffed by people from School Programs.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, that is correct, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Friesen: Is the submission that the government made public, was it made in a public sense and, if not, can it be tabled?

Mrs. McIntosh: The presentation was a written submission. I do not see any reason we could not provide it to you. We do not have it with us, but we can look it up, obtain it, and bring it. It was given to a federal committee with the federal government. So it is not something that is being held in confidence or anything like that. So we will peruse our files, as they say, and provide it to you. It is a written submission over my signature. It was not done in an in-person presentation, so we should have a pretty accurate transcript of it since it was done in writing.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, does the minister have a general take on that federal legislation at the moment? Did Manitoba offer a position? Were we offering just comment? Were we offering some discussion of how it would impact on our colleges, universities, high schools, et cetera?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the staff member that assisted on this is not at the table but easily accessible, and if the member wanted to give us a little bit of time we could probably get the information back to her before we finish today. We just need to send a note out and get it brought forward. So if the member is willing,

and we could hold the response to that until we get our staff person to bring that forward, we could give her then a better answer. As soon as it comes in, if she is willing, I will interrupt and just present it at that time.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, that would be fine.

I wanted to ask the minister in this section about—and really this is how we got onto this—was local participation. I am interested in the government's urban aboriginal strategy and the department's participation in that. This is one of the departments of government which has had a long-standing connection with aboriginal issues and not only that, but aboriginal issues in the city. I did not hear in the minister's list a connection with that urban aboriginal strategy. There is a committee which is going out now to meetings to hear things. Is the department involved in that? Will the department be involved at a later stage? How is the government drawing on the expertise and the linkages which have been there in education?

* (1610)

Mrs. McIntosh: On that particular committee, I am the member, so that the minister is the member, but we also have—I say the minister is the member. I am not the only member on that committee. There is representation from the department. Doris Mae Oulton was at our initial meeting, as well as Juliette Sabot. Now, I may not be sure which ones were visiting guests that day and which ones were full members, but Juliette Sabot, Doris Mae Oulton. John Carlyle, the deputy, has spoken with the group or has been invited to speak with the group, pardon me.

As well, I have a staffperson whose name, forgive me, I simply cannot recall at the moment. She is a young staffperson who is working on sustainable development in the department, who is doing some graduate work in sustainable development, who is also part of that committee, but she is on it via the auspices of the Department of Education. She is not a full-time employee, but she is associated with us. She is doing her doctoral thesis on sustainable development and is working to help us integrate sustainable development as one of the integratables in our curricula and is on this urban aboriginal committee. We have so many different names I probably do not have the name

correct, but she is there, as well, because sustainable development is very much a part of what we are doing on that committee.

So we have involvement there at the ministerial level, and it was felt with that one, that because of its significance, its overall look at urban aboriginals and a strategy for them, that we have several ministers involved and the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Newman) being an integral lead minister in that capacity.

There was another part to your question which I have forgotten. I wrote down the first question. I was trying to think of names, so I was writing names instead of the question.

Ms. Friesen: No, I think that covers the gist of it. I was interested in—it was really that I was adding a number of reasons for involvement of the department in this, that it is one of the departments with the longest-standing connections with aboriginal people, as well as with urban aboriginal people.

In the press releases on the urban aboriginal strategy and in the press releases which talk about the locations for meetings and with the people who are on the committee, not just from the provincial government but from elsewhere, I could not see the link to education. It did not seem mentioned; it was not clear. Sustainable development was there, and, obviously, there is an educational component of that, but I could not see that next step either at the K to 12 level or at the post-secondary level.

So that is really what I was looking for some clarification on. The minister's indication that this is being dealt with at the ministerial level is helpful. Is there anything else that perhaps we should know on the departmental involvement?

Mrs. McIntosh: Just that the deputy has given a presentation to them, Deputy Minister Carlyle, K to S4, and also I understand that there are subgroups being formed with that particular initiative.

We have a number of things going on in the department with respect to aboriginal perspectives and aboriginal learnings and awarenesses, and I think we

have mentioned it before, and that is that we want aboriginal perspectives taught not just to aboriginal students but to nonaboriginal students as well, as part of a whole learning experience for cross-cultural awareness and understandings.

So we have several things that I am very impressed with, with Juliette Sabot from our department, whose expertise in this area seems to grow more steadily all the time. She is now being called upon for a lot of help from other areas as well, and she has been working quite closely in recent months with the Department of Native and Northern Affairs, Minister Newman's area.

They always have had the connection of course, but the ongoing contacts are more frequent as of late as we try to co-ordinate a lot of our activities so that we do not have—like we have the Family Services, we have Education, we have Justice, we have Native and Northern Affairs. So many of those departments will impact with aboriginal needs. Health as well, there are some high health needs associated, specifically with aboriginal health problems.

Diabetes, as the member is aware, has become a real enemy of the aboriginal people, and there are a number of things that we need to do in education that are good for all students to learn in terms of diet and lifestyle and so on in terms of the prevention of diabetes. Those are good for all students to learn, but since it has become so severe a problem in the aboriginal population it is particularly important that aboriginal students learn that.

I think you are probably aware last year some of the schools had the great bannock bakeoff—I do not know if you were there; I think you were—where they did a whole huge map of Manitoba made completely of bannock, but the recipe that they used, and all of the recipes they had for the foods that were prepared that day were made from ingredients that were good for people who were at risk for diabetes. So they were able to prepare traditional recipes and traditional foods, but all with the proper recipes and ingredients that would lead to healthier lives for them.

Well, those kinds of things crossed several areas for students: Health, Education. It still had the cultural

component because the foods were foods that were typically used in aboriginal cultures.

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

I am also trying very hard to seek out literature—this is a little off topic but sort of related. I had the opportunity to attend a book opening not long ago with Don Philpot. He is a teacher, and he had written a book called *The Moons of Goose Island*, so I will give his book a little plug because it is a wonderful book. He has taught up north for quite some time, and what he did was he wrote this beautiful story about a little boy whose mother had died.

The whole story was about how this child coped with the grief of losing a mother. Nowhere in the book did they say this is an aboriginal child or this child is using aboriginal spiritual strength sources to sustain him through the period of grief, but all the illustrations, it clearly was an aboriginal child. Clearly the spiritual dimension was of aboriginal, cultural, religious background beliefs, but basically it was a story about a little boy coming to cope with grief. But because it was done as beautifully as it was, it is a wonderful story for any child.

Placed in a school library in the inner city of Winnipeg where we have a lot of urban aboriginal students, they would pull out a book that deals with this story that identifies, without making a special point of identifying, that that child looks like him or her, and the beliefs and values that are in there reflect his or hers, but it is a beautiful story for anybody.

That we need more literature like that is my point, and we are trying to seek out that kind of literature. There is not a lot of it, but there are some really good examples abounding, and that book by Don Philpot is one of them.

So, when we look at what we are doing in aboriginal education and urban aboriginal students' needs, we are also looking for textual material that will be suitable for all students, that will make the aboriginal student feel more included and more part of the mainstream without singling him out. That is just a little tangent off to the side for which I apologize, but I just think it sort of

reflects the kind of direction in which we wish to go, and we are not there yet, but we are trying to get there.

* (1620)

My deputy has just handed to me just a couple of others that will not take long to go through, but in terms of the inclusion and integration that I keep talking about as opposed to taking kids out and saying, okay, today it is three o'clock on such and such a day and we are now going to have our aboriginal education piece, so this should just be sort of through it. Aboriginal perspectives are being integrated in all core subjects as mandatory learning for all Manitoba students.

An aboriginal education curriculum steering committee has been established to oversee this development into the curriculum and, more than that, the curriculum framework for aboriginal languages is being done with the Western Protocol. We have our Western Protocol partners involved in developing that for a framework for aboriginal languages, and we hope to have an annotated bibliography of Manitoba-based ancestral language resources printed and distributed sometime fairly soon in the next few months.

We are partnering with the University of Manitoba and the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 with the teachers from the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 to hold a summer institute on native education. We are also partnering as a department, that is, with the Aboriginal Teachers' Circle, R.B. Russell Vocational School and the Manitoba association for multicultural education to hold an aboriginal education conference right about now. Do we have a date? We do not have the specific date, but that is coming up soon as well.

So we are putting in addition to that, because we know that we have some students at risk, we are giving \$4 million, a little bit over that, for English language enrichment for native students. These would be from our Students at Risk funding, which is available to all school divisions, but it is mostly concentrated in areas like Winnipeg School Division No. 1, Frontier School Division, and divisions such as those where there are high numbers of aboriginal students registered. So that is just a little additional piece of information that might be of interest to the member.

Ms. Friesen: The minister had also mentioned participation in the interdepartmental committee on native self-government—if we could get some information on that, what the mandate of that committee is, how long it has been in existence and what the departmental participation is.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, that is the interdepartmental group on aboriginal self-government. The lead minister for that would be the Minister of Native and Northern Affairs, Mr. David Newman. We do have our staffperson, Juliette Sabot, who really has become our expert in this area and works with a wide variety of groups now on Native Affairs; she is on that committee. That task force committee—I am not sure of the official name—they will be working, and I think they have already begun to work, with aboriginal leaders in terms of talking about aboriginal self-government, how it will come about, what it will look like, and what our role will be then in relationship to the aboriginal people in Manitoba.

There are a variety of groupings within the aboriginal community, as the member knows, and they will each be impacted in differing ways. So as they go through their work, we cannot predict at this point what their end model will look like, but we know it is very important that we maintain good communications with the aboriginal people as they move towards self-government so that we have smooth transitions and that we have harmonious relations as the way in which governance occurs changes.

I know that we probably could get a lot more information from Native and Northern Affairs, or when we get into this area in terms of our own directorate here in Education. We have Juliette actually here to provide a lot of this information.

We know we have to work in close partnership with First Nations representatives. We are pleased that we do seem to have dialogue beginning, and that it is a very positive kind of dialogue in its initial stages with certain aboriginal leaders in the province, and for us there will be some initiatives and perspectives that will impact on education. Right now, of course, the member, with her knowledge of history, is probably more aware of some of the details here than I am even, but the history of education being delivered for

aboriginal peoples, traditionally a federal responsibility, has had a history that has had some very low points as well as some high points. When we talk about the children who are in schools in the city of Winnipeg, who essentially are part of the urban population of Winnipeg, we have a different kind of need emerging and a different kind of expectation that the families have even for education delivery. So we are currently trying to identify ways from education that we can respond appropriately to recommendations that might be coming out of that interdepartmental initiative.

We need to strengthen educational opportunities for aboriginal peoples in any way we can and in as cooperative a way as possible. So that will be our goal as members of the education community in there. It is on the periphery, but it cannot be removed from the whole picture.

Ms. Friesen: Well, I am sure the minister did not mean to say on the periphery. I mean, I know what you mean, but I do not—anyway. Obviously, it is fundamental to the kind of change we are going to have.

But what I had been thinking of when I heard the minister speak of that was the labour force development agreement and the specific proposals in there for aboriginal training. I was wondering if that was the link for the department and how that was to be made, the changes in the nature of training, perhaps, but certainly the delivery of training. The minister suggested that her representative on this is Juliette Sabot, and the discussion centred around, essentially, K-12 programs.

* (1630)

Is there an additional role there for the department, and is this the route that it is going to take, through this committee?

Mrs. McIntosh: When I speak of Juliette Sabot, and I talk about the work she is doing, she is primarily associated with and assigned to kindergarten to Senior 4. That is her area of daily work, and the member is quite right. When I say on the periphery, I am really referring to the fact that the lead jurisdiction, the lead department for it, is Native and Northern Affairs, and

the other departments are brought in, I say in quotations, “on the periphery,” not that their job is on the periphery but that we are being subservient to the lead minister. But we are all in there because each of the areas that we bring to those discussions is critical, as the member points out, and so I am just agreeing with her. I appreciate that clarification.

The member asked a question about the labour market and the agreement we have with the federal government on the devolution of power, et cetera. We have planning underway which is not yet complete. We are going through a transition period for a number of things on that agreement, and so we have a transition committee within the Department of Education.

We have Luci Grechen and Mary Lou Kuxhouse and people such as those who were part of the negotiating team who are now working along with others on the transition. One of the things that we will be seeing put in place, the details of which are still being worked out, is a separate agreement, a separate bilateral understanding as to the aboriginal people's needs in terms of training.

Ottawa has agreed to this. What we are working on right now—as I do not have the detail here that I am sure she would like to have right now, and I may have more when we get to 16.5.(b) once those particular staff people are here, but I also may not have much more than I am reporting here today. It has been about a week and a half since I had my last briefing and at that point they are still working to develop the terms and conditions of an agreement on aboriginal training. But the federal government is committed to that, we are committed to that, and all that is left to do—although it is a big thing but having agreed to the principle is the first key component—is to put in the details, how will this occur, and what are the specific things that we can and will be doing with money provided by Ottawa for training for our aboriginal people.

We maintain—and that is why this is not part of the agreement itself because it is a little unique and different, and that is why we are looking at something aside from the labour force agreement itself—that we have a unique situation in Manitoba, shared perhaps in some similar way with the province of Saskatchewan but with no other. That is, we have in terms of per

capita, 10 percent or so—I am rounding off—per capita population representation of aboriginal peoples. Many of the—well, the member is familiar with the statistics, and they are fairly alarming. Well, they are alarming, they are not fairly alarming. They are downright alarming in terms of the needs in that community, the number of children in care, the suicide rate, the health problems, the number of people in our correctional institutions and all of those things.

The statistics are alarming and we need to turn them around. We have known that for many years. Various things have been done, but this year, and I think it was reflected in the throne speech where we have said we have to really move with vigour to address some of these problems and turn those statistics around so that this particular grouping of people in Manitoba will have healthier statistics in all areas. I do not mean health just in terms of health, but in all areas in terms of successful, productive lives.

Saskatchewan, to a lesser degree, has a similar problem, but the other provinces do not have it to the same degree. So I think we are a bit unique there, and we need to have made-in-Manitoba solutions, and it is going to require a lot of work and a lot of co-operative effort. I do believe it is one area where the government and the opposition do have similar feelings of concern and similar desires for action, perhaps even similar kinds of solutions that would be proposed.

Having said that, if not similar solutions, at least sympathy for the types of solutions that are coming forward as suggestions from either side of the House, because this issue is one that is not unlike the flood in terms of its severe impact and common concern. Everybody can relate to this, and everybody wants to see the right thing happen.

Therefore, we are waiting for negotiations to be concluded on what kind of bilateral understanding we will come to with the federal government, but the commitment is there. The feds have made the commitment. We are grateful for it. We just now need to see what shape it will take, and it will probably take a few months yet, because as we look at all aspects of transition, we are taking over the federal employees—taking over the federal employees, that does

not sound right—but we are accepting the federal employees as well.

* (1640)

We sort of have to almost look at the whole package of transition to see that the impacts are correct and that the harmonization of all of our efforts is a good blending. We know Manitoba has been chosen as the place, the lead province in which the administrative responsibilities for the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs federally will be devolved to First Nations communities, and while that may not be going as quickly or in quite the way that either the federal government or the aboriginal people envisioned, we will be impacted by that as a province. We need to focus our attention, as well, on the need to strengthen ties and opportunities for aboriginal peoples. That would include, as a key component, educational opportunities.

Ms. Friesen: I have, Mr. Chairman, just as a matter of process, a couple more questions for information in this section. Then we could pass it, and if the minister would like to take a five minute break, and staff as well, okay.

The questions I have relate to regional committees. The minister talked about departmental participation in regional teams, and one of them that she mentioned was involved with school divisions in the southwest, Fort Labosse and two other divisions in developing a strategic plan. I am interested not so much in that strategic plan but in how and why the department gets involved in particular regional initiatives like that.

For example—I guess I am interested in that particular one—is this something that the department is looking for as a way of combining school divisions, a way of assisting them in the kinds of joint purchasing or whatever the things were that the minister had hoped for from the boundary commission's plan?

Mrs. McIntosh: I would indicate, first of all, that this is not a substitute for the voluntary amalgamation or joint efforts type things that divisions are doing. We have a number of efforts going on where regional superintendents, recognizing they can do more collectively than individually in some instances,

approach us from time to time. So this effort, while it does tie in nicely with the voluntary amalgamation or joint co-operative venture things, while it ties in nicely with it is really not a part of that.

In this particular example, which is one of several but is one referenced here, the regional superintendents there ask the department if we can assist them in collaborative strategic planning. Whenever we get those kinds of requests, we always say yes. So they will form committees or teams or projects, whatever terminology they use, will find a staff person, and they will work together to assist the region in a consultative way as a member of the team. The regional teams work with divisions. They work with regions. They allocate time and resources on a responsive basis. In other words, we get asked; we respond.

Now, there are some other things we do where we will reach out but in these particular ones, they ask and we respond. In addition, we have collaborative efforts that between and amongst school divisions are undertaken with professional development. They will all get together and rather than have six divisions and each bring in the same speaker one week after the other, which has happened in certain instances in the past, they are much more inclined now to say we are thinking of having such and such a speaker in, do you want to go together with us and we will have a joint professional development? They all save money. They all get the benefit of a topnotch speaker. So they are not duplicating or overlapping, and they are being more cost effective. Those are initiatives they do on their own, but the collaborative strategic planning they will sometimes ask for assistance on, and the department is very happy to be able to do that with them.

The regional managers meet with superintendents regularly, and they on a yearly basis will identify regional priorities. Then the department can align resources to meet the priorities that have been identified. Having said all that, in terms of reference to what we are doing now instead of the mandatory amalgamation, we do have several divisions beginning to take a look at voluntary amalgamation. Two obvious ones that are probably well known are St. Boniface and Norwood. But we also have some others in other parts of Manitoba that are beginning the exploration stage and have asked for departmental staff assistance in

helping them begin initial discussions. I do not want to go into a lot of detail on those because they are in the initial stages, and they are still, at this point, divisional initiatives. I am just indicating to the member that we are ready and able and willing to go out there as facilitators or consultants and help those things happen.

Just before we have our break which would be nice to have, I do have this copyright information. Do you want me to give it to you now or after the break?

Ms. Friesen: The minister I think is going to table it, and, yes, it would be useful if we tabled it beforehand. Thanks.

Mrs. McIntosh: Right now?

Ms. Friesen: Yes, sure.

* (1650)

Mrs. McIntosh: Just for the record so you know what it is I am tabling here, this is the letter that was sent to the federal government regarding copyright legislation, which was Bill C-32, an act to amend the Copyright Act.

For background, the letter, as I indicated, went over the minister's signature. We had staff in my department involved in helping prepare this response. This response that was sent was sent, not just by me as minister, but by me and my colleagues on CMEC. So all of the ministers signed off on it, but the government of Manitoba approved it as well. So it went out as both a government, ministerial, and cross-provincial, pan-Canadian correspondence.

So this letter has a fair bit of approval behind it in terms of the number of people that support the perspective in it. As I say, my staff was instrumental in helping prepare the response, and I think they did a very good job. Maybe I could table that and get the original back in case the member wishes to discuss it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Dyck): Before we recess, you want to pass some items?

Okay, then. 14.1 Administration and Finance (b) Executive Support (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$606,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$128,500—pass.

14.1.(c) Planning and Policy Co-ordination (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$354,300.

There will be a few questions. We will have a five-minute recess.

The committee recessed at 4:52 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 5:06 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: The committee will come to order. Item 16.1. Administration and Finance (c) Planning and Policy Co-ordination.

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to ask the minister on this line, which is Planning and Policy Co-ordination, about the changes in regulations for Regulation 68/1997, the March 24 one. This regulation carries some new definitions I think for principals and new responsibilities for principals. I wonder if the minister wanted to comment on that. I want to deal with principals first, and then the regulation also looks at responsibilities for teachers. It is the only area I could think to discuss this under. The deputy minister is here. It is Planning and Policy, so if that is all right with the department, we will look at it here.

* (1710)

Mrs. McIntosh: Actually, the deputy has some pretty good knowledge of this, as do I. The staff person who is not here would be Mr. Hansen, and that would be back under 16.4.(b), which is called Education Administration Services. We can, if you would like, if you wanted to ask some questions, answer them to the best of our ability here, and then if we need further details beyond what we are able to give you today, we can hold them over until 16.4.(b). But if you want to go ahead, we will give it a shot now.

Ms. Friesen: With reference to the principal, one of the concerns that I have heard is that Section 30 of the

new regulation says that a principal is to participate in the hiring, assignment, and evaluation of teachers and may have regard to parental and community views when making recommendations about those matters to the school board. I think the issue is the evaluation of teachers. This appears to be a new aspect to regulation and the issue of what evaluation is is not defined in this regulation, and as far as I know, not in other regulations either. So what is it that the principals are being required to do there? What will the department be looking for?

Mrs. McIntosh: I indicate, first of all, that the principal is defined as the instructional leader in the school. That is part of our new directions in terms of leadership, et cetera. There is a traditional role for the principal that has been in place for many, many years as the lead teacher or head teacher, master teacher, whatever the terminology is that is customary for people to use, but in that role, which is traditional, the principal has done performance evaluations both for formative purposes to assist teachers in improving, or some other aspect of their work, to become better and better and better performers in the classroom. The role there for performance evaluation has been there for formative purposes. In some school divisions, it has also been there as a summative evaluation under the direction of the school division, because the school board ultimately is the body that has the ultimate accountability for hiring and firing, et cetera.

What we are saying, some divisions have always included principals, in some cases parents as well, on selection committees, et cetera, for hiring of teachers. This says that the principal is to participate in the hiring, assignment, and evaluation of teachers and can take community views, parental views into account. It means simply that with school plans, where there are school advisory councils on school leadership or where parents are involved in the school plans, that the parents may say that they wish to have a teacher who has a particular characteristic, or that they may wish to have an aboriginal, or they may wish to have a woman, or they may wish to have some other kind of characteristic.

Those recommendations, then, the principal can make to the board. The board, of course, will still be the final authority in terms of the hiring. Without

question, the literature and research supports the role of the principal in this area as the instructional leader. It is a key theme in the education of administrators, how to lead the school to higher and higher quality of instruction. Of course, that would include performance evaluations and work with staff to continually improve their abilities in the classroom. But this section does not usurp the board's ultimate responsibility for employment and evaluation. The board retains that right, retains that responsibility. This just allows and encourages more people into the planning process. The principal being present in the school on a regular basis has opportunity to have closer contact with teachers as they go about their assignments than the board of trustees would, for example.

This has not to do with compensation. This has to do with improving the role of performance in the classroom. When we had these regulations ready, we took all of these regulations in the categories the members mentioned, duties of principals, duties of teachers, to the minister's advisory council on the implementation of educational change. That committee, as the member may recall, this was requested by MAST, MASS, and MTS. When New Directions was about to be implemented, they had approached me and said that they were concerned about the rapidity of the changes coming down and the new regulations that would have to be written and asked for the ability to input.

So with each of these things, as regulations were ready, we took them to the implementation committee. Now, we expanded the committee beyond MTS, MAST, and MASS and included the president of the association of parent councils, a parent at large, a couple of educators at large, and a couple of people from the department. We also have on there representatives of MAP, the principals' association. So we have two principals at large and two representatives from MAP, plus two from the Manitoba Teachers' Society.

We went through these regulations line by line over the course of several meetings. The meetings are half-day meetings held about once a month. This particular item took several meetings to go through because it was complex. We analyzed as a group the wording of each aspect of the regulation. The parents, the teachers, the

principals, the trustees, and the superintendents all argued with each other back and forth over what they really thought they should say. We in the end made some modifications to the wording as a department, but we are content that these regulations fit what we were looking for but in a way that is more acceptable to the group that was there. The parents are very supportive of this particular initiative.

We wanted the principals to be involved in the assignment and hiring as a way of reflecting the expectation of a lot of people in society that staffing in the schools and instructional practices in the schools have to be sensitive to local school needs and characteristics, and we felt it builds a better team.

* (1720)

That is a bit of the background on all of those regulations. This one in particular is meant so that the principal can do what in many cases he or she has always done, but this makes it an imperative. We believe that it is a strengthening of leadership functioning in the schools and provides for a greater consistency of approach in the schools, so students moving from Grade 2 to Grade 3 will never have identical teaching methods.

We do not want that because everybody is unique, but they will have some consistency of application of discipline and classroom management and so on.

Ms. Friesen: I understood the minister to say that this had been reviewed by this committee, but I was not sure that the minister said it had been approved. So is that the situation, Mr. Chairman, that the committee approved all of these regulations?

Mrs. McIntosh: It is a hard question to answer because—I will maybe run through the process; that might help explain it. This is an advisory committee to the minister, and what the stakeholders have been requesting was the ability to sit down with me and take whatever time was required to explain their understanding of the impact of whatever it is we are examining at any particular meeting, and they can bring items to the agenda, too, and add items that they wish to see struck. We can then explore those as well. So we will explore any and all agenda items that either we

would like to bring forward or that the stakeholders would like to bring forward.

How we operate, it works this way. We bring forward the regulations on principals and teachers. The committee will then go through them line by line, argue back and forth about what they think the regulation says, and then argue back and forth about how they feel about the regulation. We try to operate by consensus as much as we can. We have tried to be as accommodating as we can.

When concerns come forward, we will take the concerns, and we will go back to legal counsel and see if we can draft—we will note the concern in detail, take it back to legal counsel and see if they can draft the regulation to address the concern, which sometimes legal counsel can and sometimes legal counsel cannot. Where they can change it without destroying the intent, then we are quite happy to do that. Where legal counsel says, well, I cannot change it without destroying the intent, then we take it back, and then we will talk some more about the intent and how we feel about the intent.

There are many, many items that we have gone through where we have come to a clear consensus where all members have said, okay, that is good; I can live with that. But if you look at these regulations, for example—and I do not know who supported what. We do not vote. As I say, we try to go by consensus, but if you take a look at the regulations on principals and teachers, you would find that if there are 10 items, that we probably would have been able to come to consensus on about five of them maybe, where everybody says, okay, I have a comfort level now. Everybody has made a little modification, and we now have a comfort level where, on five of them we can say we can live with this. On the other five, you might have the principals agreeing and the teachers not, or the parents agreeing and the teachers agreeing and the principals not.

So we have always had two or three of the parties at the table saying they have a comfort level. We do not always have total unanimity on every item. What we are trying to do is come as close as possible to overall consensus as we can reach.

I do not think there have been any where there has been a total rejection. We have come to some where there has been total approval. On this one, to be quite honest with the member, I do not recall this particular one being a problem for principals, per se, although they might have had some concerns about how do we have to do this. Our answer was, well, that is not something the regulation will spell out. That is something that divisions and principals can decide sort of division by division. Different models will work for different areas, et cetera. Teachers would have been more concerned I think with this one, because of a concern, well, what does this mean to be evaluated?

Again, it depends on the jurisdiction from which they come. Some divisions have regular full-blown performance evaluation procedures that are designed properly. We talked about what we meant about that when I say designed properly. Good performance evaluations should always be there to assist the person being evaluated, to help them build on their strengths and strengthen their weaknesses. So for people who have been through that on a regular basis, there is a comfort level. There is a trust level between administration and staff, there is a comfort level. Where there is concern is where there is not a good trust level between administration and staff, or the whole concept of a formal performance evaluation is new and frightening, because it is a worry that perhaps it might not be what we desire it to be which would be to help build on strengths and weaknesses, but rather you did this wrong, you did that wrong kind of approach.

We see it in a good performance evaluation that if there are areas that need strengthening, that there should be goals set, and there should be assistance provided by the instructional leader to say, okay, here are some ways you can help fix up that thing that is troubling you. How about we get together now in a few months, we will see how you are doing and if I can help you some more here and here, ultimate goal: improved performance, increased comfort level for the classroom teacher and the administrator.

So we did a lot of talking about what is a performance evaluation, what is its intention, why should we be using it, how are the ones that are in place being used, are they being used properly right now. So

a lot of these things are being talked about in educational circles as constructive, helpful things. Instructional leaders in schools will require the ability to do really positive constructive performance evaluations. I say that, again, if we look at administrator's certificates, we look at what is being taught at the Faculty of Education, we look at people who are training to be administrators are getting their credentials for administration. This would be an area where we feel there needs to be some concentration, some assistance.

The implementation committee has a mandate and this may help in terms of is it full approval. The mandate is to provide recommendations to the minister on implementation strategies related to the actions articulated in The Action Plan. This is with New Directions. Its terms of reference is to examine each of the six major areas of activity related to New Directions, receive information from other departmental committees working on the topics, and write short-, medium-, and long-term implementation recommendations for the minister's review. The field was adamant that this be an advisory committee to the minister, not to the deputy or to senior officials but to the minister herself. So hence the minister chairs the committee, which necessitates the minister being there and fully familiar with the agenda, then I will be part of the discussion. I am mostly a listener to sort of guide the direction. I do not enter into the debate too often myself, although I will from time to time if we get into an area where people say, well, what do you really mean by this and why are you doing it? Then I will enter it, but more by way of clarification.

* (1730)

We have gone through a number of areas. I do not know if you are interested in knowing the types of things we have done so far. It is not an overly long list. I will just bring you up to date on it. We have done the regulations on advisory councils for school leadership. Those I would say we pretty well did have unanimous approval on, probably not in every single instance there, but it was a pretty good consensus on those regulations, as I say, maybe not unanimous, but pretty positive response.

Updates on Renewing Education: New Directions time lines was one thing that they had asked for. They

wanted the time lines for New Directions initiatives shown in a flow chart so they could get a handle on when we are expecting to do certain things. They would ask for slowing down in certain areas. In fact, we have done that, because we recognized, as the field was getting going on some of these things, that they were having trouble keeping up. It was such a lot all at once, so we have slowed down some things on their advice, which we think has helped them and us because, when you get too much all at once, it is hard to get everything going all at once. They needed more time and we have given that.

Program implementation planning initiatives, right now for example we have before the implementation committee our technology plan, our overall provincial technology plan. We presented that to them. It has been presented to them a couple of times actually, and they now have a final plan in front of them, as do other people. We have given that to other people as well to take a look at it. It is a fairly detailed plan.

We have got the English Language Arts exams and the examination process and the assessment, and we have been going through that with them, the regulations on the responsibilities of principals which we are discussing right now with the member opposite.

The Grade 3 standards testing, professional development is a big issue. We have had some good preliminary discussion on that already, and we will undoubtedly be having more as time goes on, the new designs and dates for Senior 4 examinations.

We have talked about some things, and here is where we do not have unanimous approval, and that would be on the dates on exams and so on. Maybe we will get a common understanding as we go through, but it has been complicated by a number of things, the semester system, et cetera, and the need to want to try to get marks back in time for the next semester or for university applications. So the choice to make as to when to have the exams is one we do not have unanimity on. But we are talking about it.

We understand different perspectives that are being brought forward. Unfortunately, the ones, a committee member will bring one perspective forward, and it will not be the same as another committee member, and it

may not be the same as the department's. But we are wrestling with them and we figure the longer we sit and talk and wrestle, the more likely they are to come up with a satisfactory solution.

We are looking at common curriculum framework for English Language Arts and the Western Canadian Protocol. We have had discussions and will be having—well, we have had discussions on the International Baccalaureate Advanced Placement courses. Also, the regulations on responsibility of teachers which ties in with the ones on principals, they have helped us with three sets of regulations right now: The advisory councils on school leadership, duties of teachers, responsibilities of teachers and principals. The regulations have in each instance been altered and modified because of the input of that committee. Whether or not it is to its full satisfaction, I cannot say, but they have definitely caused us to make changes in response to some of the things they have brought forward. Not everything, but a fair bit.

So we have communications protocol which we have put in place, and I hope it is working well now. We were having confusion in the field, because documents were going out and sometimes the documents would go to the school, and the superintendent would not have received it, or vice versa. So they asked for a communications protocol that would stipulate that when you send out this kind of communication, it should be sent simultaneously to the following groups, those kinds of things. Because something would go to the school, and then the superintendent would get a call and they would not know what it was about. So I hope that we have been able to meet the expectations there. I believe that we have. I have not heard any complaints for a while, but we will keep making adjustments as we need to.

The other one that we talked about at some length, I think we did end up with a unanimous approval on provincial transcripts. I believe that we ended up there finally with a consensus. We have talked about schools of choice, and we are talking about teacher education. Those are the topics that we have gone through so far. We have been asked to include the Vision to Action document in future agendas and fair student assessment practices on future agendas, so they are pending on our agenda items.

Usually at the end of each meeting we say, what do you want to talk about next, if we have concluded an item. There is no shortage of topics. There always seems to be something that the field wants to discuss. What I very much appreciate about this committee is that we have the presidents of all the stakeholder groups on it. We did not designate people. We designated positions, so we have the presidents of the stakeholder groups and the members at large.

The members at large consist of one parent representative, and I say that because we have the president of the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils on, but not all schools have parent councils, so we have also chosen a parent at large that does not belong to the association, just a parent. We have two educators at large, both of whom are principals, one rural, one urban, in addition to the MAP representatives and the MTS representatives. Then we have a regular guest in the person of Carolyn Loeppky who is the ADM. She is not a member but she is a regular guest. The two members from—[interjection]

That is how we have it put down as, our regular guest Carolyn Loeppky, but Carolyn is there most meetings, and we really appreciate her input.

But from the department, officially, we have Erika Kreis from the department, and John Carlyle, the Deputy Minister, attends with me. Then, of course, as I say, the presidents.

* (1740)

We have two MAST—oh, just for clarification, we have, from the stakeholder organizations, we have the president and we have the CEO. So from MAST, for example, we will have the president plus the executive director, and from the MTS we have the president plus Carole Basarab who is a senior staffperson. We have the president of MAP, Peter Narth.

Those names will change. Ken Pearce, for example, will soon be stepping down for Diane Beresford. Superintendents, we have Gail Bagnall and John Beaumont right now.

So that is who is on it. They are very direct. They do not hold back. They speak very clearly. They are very

strong-minded people, and I find it fascinating to listen to the debate go back and forth with the differing perspectives that come out, and, yet, I am always amazed at the commonality they do have, even with those different perspectives. I very much appreciate the counsel they provide.

Ms. Friesen: If I might summarize what the minister has said on evaluation, and the minister can tell me if that encapsulates it, that her definition of evaluation is one where the responsibility for defining evaluation remains with the division, that it may include formative and summative versions of evaluation, as it has formerly, and that this regulation is not intended to introduce new duties to the principal.

Mrs. McIntosh: The member is correct. It is new opportunities for involvement, and in many cases, this was being done, but this now says that we expect it to be done. The member is correct on all her interpretations there.

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to ask about another part of that regulation which dealt with professional development. It is under responsibilities of teachers, that teachers have a responsibility for ongoing professional development.

I wonder if the minister could tell me how professional development is defined. How would a teacher know when they have fulfilled that responsibility? Who is to define it? How is it defined, and, in a sense, I guess, who is going to measure it?

Mrs. McIntosh: The member has asked a good question and may be seeing a pattern in my responses here in terms of we are saying these are your responsibilities and duties in a variety of areas, but we are not prescribing rigid criteria.

What we are saying is that teachers have a responsibility to stay current, and teachers will tell you they do this now anyhow. They engage in professional development activities related to, in most cases, what they are teaching. Now we are codifying that. It may be in conjunction with the instructional leader in the school, the principal, or at the request of the school division. If the school division maybe is undertaking a whole integrated technology system through the

division, the school board may set up professional development seminars and ask their teachers to attend them. The teacher would have then a responsibility, formal responsibility to attend and become part of that professional development exercise.

The teacher may define for himself or herself an activity that would be pertinent to their professional development, the acquisition of reading material. That is a professional development exercise. I have often thought if teachers submitted at the end of a year a list of the bibliography they have read during the course of a year, in terms of techniques in the classroom, whatever, they could probably put together quite a library of materials or reference materials. In fact, many reference materials are developed just that way by teachers saying I have read this incredible book, or this pamphlet or this guide or whatever, and they will tell their colleagues in the staffroom about it, and then other people will read it too. Hence it gets shared.

So the teacher can define what kind of professional development the teacher feels would help them, engage in that activity. Perhaps it is a night course at the university or a summer course or whatever. It may be the professional development seminars put on by their division or the SAG Groups. It may be that the principal in the school would say, we want to, in our health curriculum start talking about nutrition and diabetes with our aboriginal students or something, so could you please attend that thing that is coming up next week wherever it is and pick up that knowledge and bring it back?

We are not saying here are the rigid rules for what you must learn and how you must learn it. We are saying the responsibility, which most already undertake—I think we are codifying practice—but we feel it is important enough that it needs to be stated; it needs to be written down, because we made very strong emphasis on instructional leadership and all of those elements that make up instruction.

When we talk about evaluation, we are talking also about the things that people do to enhance their knowledge so that they have things that are worthy of being evaluated, and we will get positive feedback on it. We have the blueprint emphasizing increased participation by teachers into the instructional

decisions. So they are leaders also. We have an instructional leader who is the leader of leaders. Teachers doing their own professional development will also then be making indirect decisions that will impact on their evaluation ultimately.

It may be that eventually there may be some definition around what constitutes a really good professional development exercise. Right now, we are just saying that it is a responsibility. We have the Scurfield committee right now looking at that whole compensation package for teachers. I do not know what they will come out with because I have been standing back with a hands off approach, but they have there the president and CEO of the three organizations, MASS, MAST, and MTS working with Mr. Scurfield. I am not saying they are going to do this, because I do not know, but it is quite possible, if they are looking at compensation that they may come out with some indication of what responsibilities entail in terms of compensation which may put some parameters and definition around performance evaluation. This I do not know. This is not an expectation, it is just something that could come out of that.

So we, right now, are indicating professional development would be the attending of classes, seminars, workshops, courses, the reading of material, the networking, et cetera, that takes place when people are attempting to acquire new knowledge to help in the classroom.

* (1750)

Ms. Friesen: I understand what the minister has done is given us a range of common or acceptable elements of professional development, but I think the issue for people that I have talked to anyway is the issue of, when it is codified, one can also be found wanting, and when there is not a minimum or a maximum, then that I think does create alarm.

The minister has indicated that might be forthcoming. It might not. She is not sure yet, but as it stands now there is not one. So what I understand the minister to be saying is that the responsibility for enforcing that remains with the principal and the school division, not with the minister.

Mrs. McIntosh: I thank the member for that, and the ultimate responsibility, as I say, for hiring, et cetera, is the school board, but right now in the act, under general responsibilities, we have items such as "a teacher is responsible for providing an effective classroom learning environment." That is in the act now. In the act right now it has "a teacher is responsible for ongoing professional development." We have added that on, but we had, prior to that, "providing an effective classroom learning environment." Those are, in terms of the concerns the member mentioned, very similar. What is an effective classroom learning environment? Who determines that classroom learning environment to be effective, and what happens if it is good and what happens if it is not?

Obviously if it is a good learning classroom environment, we presume that would be the normal course of events because that is a teacher's responsibility. But that kind of phraseology in the regulation has not posed undue difficulty along the line the member has mentioned because it is always assumed that the principal of the school would ascertain whether or not there was an effective classroom learning environment, vague though that may be worded, and would help take corrective action if it does not occur. It does not tell the teacher how to provide an effective classroom learning environment. It does tell the teacher though that it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that environment is there.

So I think there are very similar kinds of expectations, and, yes, they do imply that if those things are not provided the teacher has not lived up to the teacher's responsibility. The expectation is there that it must be provided.

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to ask about the question on the suspension of pupils. The minister—or perhaps it was a previous minister; yes, it was—introduced a bill from which these regulations flow. I am not interested in this case so much in discussing the content of the regulations, but I am interested in the amount of information that the department is collecting on this.

Does the department know, has the department a way of collecting the information on the number of students who have been excluded from school, and is the department keeping records on that over a period of

time? I recognize that it is the division's responsibility and that formal motions must be passed, but it seems to me it is an educational issue which the department or the government raised. It is an issue of concern to them.

I know that in other jurisdictions there is an increasing tendency to exclude students. Not all jurisdictions have facilities for those students. So is there a pattern that the government is interested in following here, and can it do so?

Mrs. McIntosh: In answer to the member's question, the department has not taken these suspensions, expulsion statistics in its history. I presume we could do it in an indicators project if we felt that we needed to do that, but we have a decentralized authority system with local autonomy, and I know that divisions have always had expulsions and suspensions.

The rules for suspension are somewhat different now in terms of teachers being able to suspend from the classroom for two days. That still has to be reported to the principal and to the parent, but they have never been reported to the department. We have a general sense of suspensions and expulsions but not specific

data. Right now that is in the purview of the local autonomy and the decentralized authority.

We have a number of items actually that we do not trace within divisions, because they are deemed to be local division control. We will trace those things related to funding and progress for learning, et cetera, which we feel we have a very strong provincial mandate for. But suspensions and expulsions, suspensions normally are short term; expulsions will usually result in the removal to a different school. We get those figures through transfers or the arrangements that are made with Marymount or some of the other schools for receiving students who have been expelled. So truancy problems—

Mr. Chairperson: The hour now being six o'clock, committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): The hour being 6 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until Tuesday next at 1:30, as previously agreed.

Thank you, and have a good weekend.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 29, 1997

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Presenting Petitions

Obstetrics Closure—Grace General Hospital	
Chomiak	4229
Mihychuk	4229

Reading and Receiving Petitions

Obstetrics Closure—Grace General Hospital	
Mihychuk	4229

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

Committee of Supply	
Laurendeau	4229

Introduction of Bills

Bill 37, Highway Traffic Amendment Act	4229
--	------

Bill 38, Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2)	4230
--	------

Oral Questions

Drug Patent Law	
Doer; Cummings; McCrae	4230

Orthotic/Prosthetic Services	
Doer; McCrae; Cummings	4231
Chomiak; Praznik	4237

Prosecutions Division	
Mackintosh; Toews	4232

Government Buildings	
McGifford; Vodrey	4233

Elections Manitoba	
McGifford; Pitura	4234

Education System	
Lamoureux; Stefanson	4234

Manitoba Housing Authority	
Cerilli; Reimer	4235

Tenant Associations	
Cerilli; Reimer	4236

Personal Incomes	
L. Evans; Stefanson	4236

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Committee of Supply (Concurrent Sections)

Family Services	4239
Health	4264
Education and Training	4299