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Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	NDP
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	NDP
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	Liberal
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	NDP
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DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	PC
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
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PENNER, Jack	Emerson	PC
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	NDP
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
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WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	NDP

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 9, 1994

The House met at 8 p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(continued)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(Concurrent Sections)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Good evening. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. The committee will be resuming consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 1.(c)(1) on page 36.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I wanted to go over somewhat briefly, I guess—under Activity Identification, it makes reference to the critiquing of divisional plans to ensure concurrence with departmental strategic priorities.

If I can just get a bit of a further explanation in terms of what it is that they actually do. Are we talking about submission of all the school division budgets that are given to the department through here, or what more specifically is this?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it is as it says. This is where our main policy and thought-developing section is within the department. It is done different ways. Education is pretty large, but within the context of greater centralization we have always sensed that all of our renewed thinking or review should be passed through a group of people who are learned in many respects, not the least of which is reading literature, seeing what is happening elsewhere, reporting on what is happening elsewhere, and to try and give greater insight into policy development or day-to-day decisions. Of course, this group is involved very closely with

Administration and Finance, Program Development and the BEF sections, if that is the question.

* (2005)

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, it does help clarify it somewhat. I would ask then in terms of the government adopts priorities or strategy, how does it ensure that those priorities that it has established are in fact being brought down? Again, it is just more sort of as an explanation of trying to get a better understanding.

Mr. Manness: Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, there is movement both ways. There is not down or up so much as there is—and again, this depends on personalities, this depends on the make-up of, I guess to start at a place, ministers. Some ministers are more proactive as to wanting changes and/or certain thrusts, certain emphasis, as compared to others. Others, of course, like to stay within the existing routine and make decisions from day to day.

Then of course it depends on the deputy. Deputies have an awful lot of influence. Then, within the department, you have your ADMs who also are given an awful lot of responsibility, beyond day to day though, beyond to look into the future, look into the past and come forward with recommendations.

The great clearing house of all of this and these different forces at work, of course, is housed within the unit of policy and development, and whoever has greater—whoever is more dominant in these discussions ultimately will come to a point where directions are given to staff to research and/or prepare towards certain goals. So it is a society in a sense. There is nothing particularly novel about it.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in my opening remarks, I made reference to the government now being in for six years, a number

of Education ministers, and I look at it in terms of strategic priorities.

I am somewhat curious in terms of why it is at this point in time that we have been hearing about the whole need for education reform. Is it because it is this particular minister that is currently in place, or is this something that the department within itself—because the department as I say is the one that develops the strategies for the ministers to prioritize, I guess. I wonder if the minister could comment on that.

Mr. Manness: Again, my response will be somewhat similar to the one I made. Our government has been responsible for fostering a number of reviews in a number of areas. I think of the STAC report, and I think of the High School Review inherited from the other government, but we have done a number of reviews, the initiatives of which, of course, were to focus in on areas of change.

Where the strategic direction came from those reviews, I imagine some of them did start within the department. I imagine others have started within the policy arm of government, the Premier's policy arm, and some are initiatives of ministers. They can start almost anywhere, but before they go very far, I mean they have to go through cabinet, and ultimately, the cabinet decides whether or not the Department of Education should maintain along a course. So to the extent that the minister of the day starts them depends on who that minister may or may not be, and you know the personalities play a large role here.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I am not too sure if this is maybe the most opportune or the best time to bring this particular issue up, but it was made reference to earlier. It is the amount of restructuring that was taking place. I was faxed a copy with respect to the program development and support services, a number of different flow charts or organizational structures. If this is not the most appropriate time to discuss it, I would be interested in knowing if in fact the minister could either provide for the actual differences. Because this is my first year as critic, all I have is what the reform

package entails. To see first-hand in terms of what the actual changes were, it would be somewhat beneficial to have the last year's structures or organizational structures. It all came to me through the program development and support services where I understand that a vast majority of the reorganization took place.

* (2010)

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I could do it now. I prefer very much to do it a little further on when we get right into that division. It is a major division, a major change. The questions are certainly worthwhile putting and hopefully responding, and the response will be worthwhile. I would ask the member maybe to defer till then if he would not mind.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not have any problem with that. I would ask the minister, if he does have the previous charts that it would be somewhat beneficial for myself just to be able to crosscheck, again, so I can just get a better understanding so that when it does come up, I am better able to ask questions on it.

I know that the member for the New Democratic Party was ending off while we adjourned, so I am quite content to let him have the floor again.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I think that more or less was covered in last year's supplementary, but if it is not, we will try and provide those leaflets for the member.

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Deputy Chairperson, is the minister working from a five-year strategic plan, or is there such a thing right now in the department?

Mr. Manness: Oh, there are always strategic plans in departments. The member knows that. Am I working from one? Well, I am sure I am part of one. Do I go to it and look at it every night before I turn in? The answer is no, but everything we are doing is part of a strategy.

Mr. Plohman: I am sure it is part of a strategy. It might be a six-month plan right now, I do not know, or maybe three.

I just wondered if the minister has the plan, and maybe it has been revised, whether he could table

a strategic plan, the current one, for the members of the committee.

Mr. Manness: Well, the deputy informs me that a strategic plan began in '91, and it was to last till 1996, but obviously it is being radically altered over the course of the last few months. The member was not here when I made comment in response to a question put by the member for Inkster. Ministers have certain responsibility, and within the strategic plan, of course, I sense it is my responsibility, not so much of a political point of view, but certainly from an educational point of view, to make some rapid decisions which, for the most part, are within that strategic plan, but to the extent there may have to be some differences, well, then so be it.

Mr. Plohman: So the minister is saying he is altering the plan to fit the current situation, perhaps accelerating some things or is it to fit his own priorities as minister?

Mr. Manness: Well, certainly the latter—I mean, I have always prided myself in being a minister who likes to move on and do things. I do not think what I am doing is in any respect contrary to the plan, but even if it were, is a plan, because it was developed in '91, sacred until '96? Of course, it is not. Nothing is particularly sacred, but the general thrust and indeed much of the work that was done in 1990 and '91 and '92 is going to come to ultimate fruition once the reform package comes down.

Mr. Plohman: Yes, well, you know we have a copy of the original plan. I just wondered if the minister had updated it as a result of the current actions and whether he would be willing to table a revised strategic plan, because as the minister said, it does change and nothing is sacred. So it is a guideline, but these things change. They are revised. So in keeping with that, I just wanted to know if the minister had a revised plan and whether that could be made available.

* (2015)

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not have a plan, I mean, not that I can share with the member—I put that qualifier in.

When I look at in '91 what we referred to, we referred to labour market development, we talked about rural development strategy, college governance, adult literacy, basic education for adults, northern education strategy, and I could go on and on and on. Those are still key planks of the '91 plan, of the '91-96 plan.

Mr. Plohman: Okay, so the minister can just be very clear in his answer. He does not have a revised plan that he could share with the committee. This is still working from the '91-96 plan. It is not revised to become a '92-97 plan, a '93-98 plan, a '94-99 and so on.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I have never been somebody who has been deeply in love with socialist five-year plans. I understand strategic planning. If the member says we have not looked at the plan or we have not done anything in concert with it—he can try and put words in my mouth if he so chooses, but the reality is we know what areas in education we need to address, and we are working the best we can to address them.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I was not trying to put words in the minister's mouth. He was not being very clear about what he actually is working from at the present time, and I was just endeavouring to have that clear.

It is not a socialist five-year plan. It can be many kinds of five-year plans, corporate five-year plans. I understand the Lotteries Corporation has a running five-year plan. The Liberals are fully aware that they have not been able to get anything past the '91 plan.

I do not know whether in fact there is a '92-97 plan or whether it is just something that is imagined. On that basis, it would seem that these plans are revised and another year is tacked on. It is done for capital purposes many times, for many different purposes, and that is why I am asking the minister if he has such a revision.

If he has not completed it, it is fine to say he does not have a revised plan on a five-year basis in front of him at the present time. He is working from a different timetable right now, and that is fair ball.

Mr. Manness: The member for Dauphin makes a good point. Certainly the strategic plan at this point

in time is being rewritten. We are attempting to update it indicating aspects that we sense have been completed since '91 and, as importantly of course, to redefine, given new thrusts, but which still in themselves are not terribly far removed from some of the significant planks that were put into place in '91. Yes, there is greater definition around some of the reform issues that we are talking about, but they still more or less fit into what we attempted to define with some certainty in 1991 for five years out.

Mr. Plohman: Yes, and some of them might have been accomplished already. For example, the minister talked about college governance. I do not know if there is another model contemplated, but obviously there was a change made there, so that should now be written out of this plan and of course new issues included in the plan. That is really what we are talking about here.

I wanted to ask the minister about the SAIP program. That is the national test. It was raised earlier. Last year it was math, and the results came down, and there was some controversy over how Manitoba did and some conclusions drawn I think from that, perhaps unfairly, about Manitoba's public schools in general. I just wanted to get the minister's view of the value of that particular test and how he perceived the results of that test insofar as Manitoba's performance was concerned.

* (2020)

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, as I said casually when the results came out, but I will say for the record with more force right now, I was not very happy with the results. I looked into the methodologies. I heard the criticism around the methodologies. I heard about some indications that a certain skill set of learning was not in our curriculum. I looked into that and I found out that students though that learned it in another study area, in geography—people that had taken geography seemed to do better than those who supposedly—no, was it the other way around? [interjection] That is right. If they studied it in geography they did it in math. I looked into methodologies, I looked into all the criticism of how it was that Alberta had set it up, because they

were involved in the piloting or something and from my perspective we just did not do very well on the test.

Now, some people said—I went and talked to principals and they said, well, the reason we did not do well on the test was because it had no value, my students would not study. I looked across the land and nowhere, no province gave it value, so I have to believe that our students are more or less homogeneous with other Canadian students and, therefore, I would have to factor out that role.

I looked at it I thought in as dispassionate, as objective a fashion as I could. I am sorry, I have to come to the conclusion that we did not do particularly well, given though when we looked at our students studying français in immersion and someone says, well, the immersion students tend to be students whose parents are a little bit more active and a little more involved, but even separating that out and going onto the français side and using the same Manitoba curriculum, which more or less was translated, I am led to believe, that still within the French milieu the results were significantly better.

I guess this is what troubled me more than anything, that when it came to doing basic mathematical functions like, to use an example, $A \text{ plus } B \text{ divided by } C \text{ multiplied by } D$, when you lay it out as a function, our students did relatively well, average. But you put the problem or you take those same computations in the context of a problem where you have to comprehend, you have to read, and we have talked and we have given a lot of focus today to this thing called problem solving, and you put it in the context of a worded question where you have to be able to read and write and comprehend, well, that is where we fell off the scale.

Is it a math problem? I do not know. Is it a curriculum problem? I do not think so. Is it a comprehension or is it a literature problem or a language arts problem? I am beginning to think so and I am troubled by that greatly.

Mr. Plohman: Well, the minister covered off a lot of the areas that were criticized from various quarters with regard to that test. So far as the

curriculum covering actual concepts in mathematics that were tested—the minister said, well, some of them were studied in other subjects like geography. I am not certain, I do not have the specific examples, but I do know that teachers and students did approach me that there were concepts that were part of our Grade 12 curriculum and this test was being administered to Grade 11 students right across the country, our 17- and 16-year olds, and therefore they would not be in Grade 12. They would not have taken those concepts and therefore they could not possibly have been taught those concepts, and what sense does it make to test them on them?

The minister may say, well, that shows that we are behind or our curriculum is wrong. The point is, and that is what I wanted to ask the minister, why would you participate in a national test if you do not have a national standard, a national curriculum for that particular test other than to tell you that you do not have a national curriculum? I mean, what does it really tell you? It is absolutely ridiculous to test kids on concepts that are not part of the curriculum or that they are not being taught at a particular level. It does not serve any particular purpose. It just frustrates everyone, demoralizes people, students and teachers alike.

I just asked the minister, if he recognizes that certain concepts were not being taught in that particular grade level, then why did Manitoba participate at that stage in this test?

* (2025)

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, quite easy, because Manitoba, under this government, is a team player. I mean, it is so easy to say, well, I am not going to play unless I have got everything my way. Saskatchewan did not play. The only province in Canada, but Saskatchewan is going to play science, I can tell you that—in '95-96. At least they have led us to believe that they are in. So everybody is in, and everybody was in the last one except Saskatchewan.

I did not talk to a Minister of Education who did not indicate to me, well, you know, that test, there was one part of it that we do not think our students covered either. That was the call across the land. I

know one thing. We will never get to the point where we want to go, if we are talking about some uniformity standards across this country. We will never get there unless we start. Was it a perfect start? No.

The member talks about the teachers and students being frustrated. I have not had any students report to me as to their frustration. Yes, I have had some teachers, and I have had some trustees. I am not going to blame and I never will blame anybody. I mean, to me it is not an issue of blame. To me, it is an issue of learning from the result, trying to work more closely with the other provinces, trying to determine whether or not we can work towards some common curriculum by subject area, and ultimately being honest to our students and letting them know where they stand vis-à-vis other students across the land, nothing more. I am not looking for alibis. Alibis are for losers.

Our students, in my view, gave it their best shot. I have to think that they did the best they could. I am not down on the students. All I am saying, though, is, let us try and find some uniformity and be honest with them; let them know where we stand vis-à-vis others; and, more importantly, let us in this nation try to work towards some common areas of standards so that our students know where they stand.

Mr. Plohman: Yes, well, the minister talks about being a team player and so on. It is easy to say he is being a team player, but he has to think about the impact of this on the people that are most closely involved and the purpose of it. That is what I am trying to explore with the minister.

Saskatchewan may have decided not to go in it because they felt that, rather than being philosophically opposed to the concept, they were more concerned about the nature of the test or the composition of it or whatever, as opposed to the principle of it. So, at this point in time, the minister is talking about a science test, and they are going to go in there. Well, we understand that is taking place, that this year the test is being developed, so they are going to have a part in developing that test, I would think.

The minister says, he had a part in developing the math test. My point at the time was that, if you had a part in making it, why did you not ensure that the parts that were being applied to students in Manitoba were indeed being taught in that particular grade level? You do not need a test to tell you that your curriculum is not the same. You do not have to go through that process; if indeed they are not the same, then why test, why have a national test? Why not develop as ministers these common areas of standards in curriculum and then test for them? That makes sense; it does not make sense to do the testing before. Anybody knows that you are not going to do well if you never took the stuff. I think that is a valid criticism of it, and I wondered why this government did not identify that as a major problem with this and voice that concern at the time that the test was being undertaken, if they were going to do that, indeed, at least when the results were given.

Otherwise, it undermines the public education system, and then I think that it leads to lack of confidence in the public education system to a greater degree, perhaps, than is necessary, by the public, if the minister is indeed playing into that kind of scenario.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I wonder if the member for Dauphin has delved into this to even know what part of the curriculum we did not teach—

Mr. Plohman: I talked to teachers.

* (2030)

Mr. Manness: Yes, and so they would have told him, what particular area, because I can tell you, we were certainly mindful of the criticism that the area dealing with graphs and charts was the only area that our students did not have presentation, only that part that had not been taught within the formal mathematics, yet its offset is being in geography.

The member may find it interesting, because he will not find this from the teachers, but we have seen the notes, Mr. Deputy Chairperson. Our students did very well in graphs and charts, better than they did on average in the rest of the other, because they learned that in geography. So the

criticism is invalid. The criticism is not valid. Unless the member can tell me that there was another area of study that our students were not provided for within the Manitoba-made curriculum, then I say he is using rhetoric, because we looked at this. We were sensitive to it. So the member is generalizing. He is saying that our kids did not have access to this curriculum, and he is wrong.

Well, then he will prove me wrong if he shakes his head. If he says I am wrong, well, then he will prove me wrong, and he will show me what areas our students did not have presented to them by way of Manitoba-made curriculum.

Again, as I point out to him, our students did reasonably well when it comes to basic math. That was not the problem where we fell down. It was in the problem-solving side and where you can draw a conclusion. It came from pure comprehension. Of course, I pointed that out to the trustees, I pointed it out to others, and I draw a stare. I draw a stare, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, because all of a sudden there is no convenient entity to blame.

Mr. Plohman: Yes, clearly the area of application and knowledge in problem solving was identified as an area that was the problem, and not one teacher said, well, we have not taught that or we are concerned about this test because we have not been able to prepare our students for application of knowledge in a problem-solving situation. It was factual pieces of information that they were concerned was not being taught in, I believe, algebra and geometry, some concepts in those areas, and I cannot tell the minister now. This was a year and a half ago that I talked to them about it, and I had raised this during the Estimates last year as well, but I think it is important that the minister not generalize, as well, at this point without having all of the information as to the subtleties of what might have been on that test and what was precisely taught in that particular grade, and so to refute it and say that is a generalization.

I think the issue of problem solving is one that is of deep concern and, I think, one that I am surprised the minister has not identified when he talks about his basics. If I am wrong, he can

perhaps tell me that is not his view of what constitutes basics, but I think most people are talking about ability to problem solve, critical thinking, those kinds of words to describe a basic for students in education today. Yet the minister talks about going back to the basics, and I just wonder whether in fact he defines basics in a broader way than the traditional basics. If so, what basics is he talking about. As a result of this test, does the minister have a greater feeling for the need to ensure that our students are able to apply knowledge in a problem-solving situation and to critically analyze data and apply the knowledge they have, or is this something that he always did feel was part of the basic curriculum and should be part of the basics in education today?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the member says the minister, meaning myself, talks about back to the basics. This minister has never once used those terms. Never in a public format, never in a private format, have I been quoted as saying, back to the basics. There have been a lot of headlines written, a lot of people want to cast me as being enthralled with back to the basics. I have never ever said that, and I never will, but I mean the member and others will want to, of course, forge me in that mold, but that is fine.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not know what terminology one uses. I know that the traditional partners today in my discussions with them are just scared to death, hate the term and yet everybody is searching around for basically a term that captures pure literacy so that individuals, regardless of the new technology coming in, we can talk about critical thinking, we can talk about communication skills, and we can talk about problem solving.

We can use any term we want, but unless you know the meaning of the word, unless you can comprehend words put together in a sentence, you are basically not literate, and you are not going to learn. You are not going to problem solve, and you are not going to be able to do critical analysis, because you have to have a foundation in which to do those things.

So if the member wants to move me back 50 years ago into a back-to-basics person, fine, he can

call me anything he wants. All I care about is literacy, nothing more, so that an individual, when they are in grade—well, whatever grade they are in and, indeed, whether they graduate or whether they do not graduate, whatever they do, but if they have the fire and the energy and they want to be lifelong learners and they want to improve their lot by doing things on their own, as more and more will be called to do in our society over the years to come, at least they have the tools to do that. The basis of all of that is literacy and language arts.

So if the member wants to know where my—and I am a math-science type of person but, as I have said to others, my focus purely is on language arts and the ability to read and write and communicate and comprehend.

Mr. Plohman: I would agree with the minister that literacy is a fundamental basic to all learning. I wonder, though, if the minister is going to attempt in his reform to qualify or to define the term or is he going to generally kind of stay away from this kind of jargon that has been used, perhaps unfairly, to describe either the minister or others who have talked about the basics as if it was what was taught 30 years. And if it unfairly describes that, then I would say, I agree that that is a simplistic way of looking at it.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, what I find so difficult, everybody agrees, but there is a mindset out there that you cannot use the word "basic."

Now, I have heard the word foundation skills used. That is now beginning to become growingly offensive to some. I have heard—we are trying to come up with a new term too so we do not offend anybody. But why is it that people in the education community are the most offended? I guess because it conjures up memory, learning by rote. I guess it just conjures something up so negative to a lot of people, or is it something greater than that?

I have not been able to put my finger on that, quite frankly, but there is just an incredible concern within the traditional education community that the word basic not be used. Fine. I do not care. I am trying to find a better word, trying to reach out, but the reality is, it has to mean

foundation in the sense that you cannot do anything unless you have a foundation. So you better know by the time you are in Grade 3 or 4, you better have a pretty fair understanding as to the principles of mathematics, and you better have—not that you have to be a rocket scientist by the time you are in Grade 9. I mean, that is foolhardy.

I would love to see a system, and I am giving the member some insight where a lot of students by the time they are in Senior 1 or Senior 2, is it really important that they take any math after that? It may not be, as long as they have good grounding in math. But more importantly than math, of course, in my view, is language arts because you have to be able to comprehend.

* (2040)

Today I have questioned whether all the forces within the public school system or even in the independent school system are being, regardless of what your specialization is, whatever it is you are teaching within the setting of the school, whether or not we are giving enough focus to all the dimensions that lead to fuller comprehension, so, yes, that is my bias.

Mr. Plohman: Would the minister have any comments on his view of what the basic—I should not use the word now—[interjection] No, no, I was not going to use it in the form that the minister thinks in terms of basics. I was going to use it in a different way.

The kind of fundamental concern that the private sector has with the public education system, an agenda that they might have, I would like to get some insight into—as a result of putting together this reform plan and discussions the minister may have had, has had on an ongoing basis with the private sector and so on—what their motivation is, what do they want in students? I really do not like to hear people getting on to Peter Warren or other situations and saying that the graduates coming out of school are illiterate, and they hired this one person, the person was illiterate.

First of all, I kind of wonder why they hired the person in the first place with the choice they have nowadays, the number of jobs versus the number of people looking. Did they perhaps hire a student

who was not qualified academically, perhaps in a different stream in high school completely than what was required? I just cannot fathom the idea of illiterates looking for jobs that have a Grade 12 graduate certificate nowadays from the university entrance program, for sure. I would think perhaps not for the 04 program, I do not know. We have given them certificates, but surely the employers know the difference of the kind of people and the kind of courses that people have taken for jobs that they are hiring them. I cannot understand where we get that kind of situation nowadays, employers saying there are illiterates coming looking for jobs and have a Grade 12 diploma.

I do not know what they are really looking for in the criticism of the public school system. It seems to me that it is to their advantage to have critical thinkers, to have analytical minds, to have people who will question and want to look behind something to find the greater knowledge of why things are done a certain way and to question and to propose alternatives that are better—critical thinkers that can analyze like that. I would not think people who can do robotic tasks and produce widgets for employers. What is it that they are complaining about?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the member hears the complaints as well as I do. I am not going to sit here for one moment and protect the business community or defend the business community, because at times I do not really understand what it is they are seeking either. But let me say very clearly that I too am troubled in many respects with what the Grade 12 graduation certificate does not say. It says basically today, in the minds of many, at least that are reporting to me, that this student has been in the public school system for 12 years or 13 years. Some would say not a lot more.

So consequently the good-faith public school model that we have in place lends itself to a growing degree of criticism and is almost hapless and helpless to defend itself, and that is unfortunate. Because many, virtually all, are graduating without differentiation and, in fairness to them, are presenting their wares, in other words their certificate of graduation and their place in our

society, having achieved, to the marketplace. The marketplace is growingly upset because they sense some individuals are lacking some shortage of achievement in the area of math, science, language, social studies skills, the ability to read, write and communicate and to creatively solve problems.

The great discomforting aspect to me is one I believe that tends to be truer more often than I would like to see. Secondly, it is so unfair to that student who has made this achievement in their own mind, presented their academic wares, and are turned down or criticized because of the shortage, perceived and real.

Now, the business community comes along and they say, well, we want a change. Well, good for them. I mean, what has gone wrong in the first place if something has gone wrong? Well, the business community 25-30 years ago began to delegate. I mean, they were once pretty vital partners in the community within the education area. But, of course, individuals like the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) and myself and many others, we graduated and we had some higher learning and we convinced people that now if we went into education it was in good hands. So the business community said, well, we do not have to watch as carefully as we used to. Public education is in good hands.

Not indicating for a moment as to whether or not it was, the fact is the world was changing, everybody was pulling away from everybody except of course the teachers and the practitioners who were pulling away from the public school system, and pushing more and more upon it, expecting it to be all things to all people and be successful in doing it. All of a sudden, now it seems to be short in some dimensions. Now the business community says, well, they want change. They want back in. They want it righted. They do not know how to get there though, and they never will, but you better believe they are going to have influence on the say. So let us understand then that they are going to have influence.

Are they going to rewrite the script as to what the public school system is going to look like?

Absolutely not. Why should they? I mean, the business community is one player in the community of influence, but will they have influence? Yes, and maybe that is exactly what the public school system needs again. It needs the business community. It needs the home. It needs the church. It needs the service groups. It needs everybody to take an interest in it again, and when that happens your public school system again will grow, because then no longer can the Minister of Education and/or the locally elected trustees and powerful associations, whether they are trustees or teachers, have the monopoly of influence. So I am not troubled by it, but believe me I am not also carrying a business agenda with respect to reform.

Mr. Plohman: First of all, I thank the minister for his frankness on that. I think taken to extreme we see some of the things that are happening in the United States with corporate takeover of schools in some areas, actually managing the schools, and directing to a large extent, as I understand it, even what is being taught in the schools, charging tuition fees and so on.

* (2050)

Is this the kind of competition that the minister would like to see developed? He did say on several occasions in different forums and here at the table that competition, he believes, is good, keeps everybody on their toes. It is going to be a positive thing, in his view, for the public education system too, but he talks about doing that in the public domain primarily, as I understand it.

I just want to ask the minister whether he sees this moving towards a kind of corporate involvement in the public school system in any way, or does he feel that there is absolutely no way that should be an avenue that should be pursued?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not see that type of model coming in here into Canada, certainly into Manitoba. I could not countenance it if it did. I believe in the public school system. I am a product of the public school system. My three oldest children are products of the public school system. I believe in it, but that does not mean for one moment that it is going to be able to rest on its laurels. It cannot. At this point in time, because the

world is moving so quickly, the change that we are engulfed in right now is going to have to be, by necessity, quicker than we may be used to.

I think if we do that and we reach out to everybody to once again claim the public school system as part of its own, just not in words but indeed by actions, and we break some of the monopolies that exist around it, we will end up with a better system. If we do not do that, then the model that the member is talking about in the U.S. system will find its way here in some form or another. I mean it is a given because there are desperate parents out there today who have means and will go to any length to see their children access them if need be.

I have said this many times, and I do not ask the members to accept it—because I say it is the main reason I do not ask them to accept it—but education is power and the great opportunity for so many of our people from lesser advantaged classes or locations is always through the public school system, but to the extent that the level it provides is in any way average or lower, then I say that the great opportunity we talk about just is not there.

The greatest opportunity for those disadvantaged in our society is when the public school system, the standards around it, free access to it, are at the very highest levels. That is then when you can make meaningfully the statement of equal opportunity for all and for anybody in the space of a generation to pull themselves from below average economic status to something average or above. Indeed, that is the foundation of our system. That is why we believe in it, but to give that common effect we had better make it as high quality as possible.

Mr. Plohman: It is an interesting discussion about the system resting on its laurels. I do not know whether that is because governments have not led sufficiently.

If you look at this government in the past few years, the Curriculum branch, for example, which should be developing and working with teachers, with parents, with school boards, with students, with all the partners in education to develop and update curriculum, has been decimated by the

government over the last few years. So when the minister talks about, the system cannot rest on its laurels, I mean, who is really resting on their laurels here? What has really been happening? Would the minister say, would he fault his own government for perhaps not taking enough initiative in this area over the last number of years and in fact failing in that particular role?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, most definitely not. I do not fault the government, and I do not fault anybody particularly. I do know that my statements, per Manitoba, are in keeping—I look at this not so much as a Manitoba Minister of Education, I look at this as a Canadian issue. Yes, I would like to have done better but, I mean, this is not a Manitoba issue, this is a Canadian issue.

The member may like to try and corner me to suggest that our government has not taken a lead. I do not accept that. A lot of the work that my predecessors have done with respect to review are going to be meaningfully used with respect to the reform, and it is all in place.

I really do not think we are following anybody in the nation. I have read all of or at least most of what has happened in other places. I have seen the gyrations British Columbia has been going through. I am mindful of Alberta. They probably have a curriculum development area that probably is leading the nation in some dimension in the public school system.

Mr. Plohman: It was, you mean, or is?

Mr. Manness: No, is.

We of course are going to want to work closer with Alberta and Saskatchewan to the extent they want to work, and I think they do, together, because there is no use reinventing all of this, particularly in your—what is the word? You cannot use the word “basics” any more—foundation and skill area, fundamental. So we are trying to do it.

No, I will not cast any blame on the government. I think we are where we should be, but we have to move the pace forward a little more quickly, and we plan to do that.

I just may say, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that in discussion with the stakeholders I find it so interesting that when they are talking about back to the basics they are not using the word basics. The most interesting part of the discussion that you would have with an educator today, or anybody for that matter, when you talk about the past is, they cannot talk about the past without using the word basic. They will use another word. As sure as I am sitting here, what they will say parenthetically is, well, I mean, like the old basic, or they will use the word "basic." It will come up almost in every third sentence. You cannot get away from talking education today without using the term, even if you do not want to. Even if you want to wash your own mouth out in using it, you end up using it.

Mr. Plohman: That is right. People will talk about the most important things as being basic. They may not be the same things as what we would call the traditional basics, but they are fundamental to today. So they will say, these are basic things that we must concentrate on. I do not have a problem using that word as long as what we are defining is the modern-day basics and not just what was viewed as the three Rs or whatever it was in previous years.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. We will have to recess this section of Supply to go to the Chamber for a vote, and we will reconvene after the vote.

The committee recessed at 8:59 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 9:15 p.m.

(Mr. Bob Rose, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. Rose): Order, please. We will now resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training. We are on line 1.(c)(1).

Mr. Plohman: Well, we are not going to, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, get into too much more, I think, here. There is lots of time in the departmental areas to discuss some of these issues that we are discussing now as we get into the changes in the department and some of the

branches of the department, but I just wanted to ask one or two more questions following on what we were discussing before, and that is whether the minister could give some idea about, shed some light as to, what he feels the role or impact of so-called competition in the public school system is supposed to have on the quality of the service that is being provided?

It seems to me that a combination of things are taking place, unless you are talking about resting on their laurels at the present, and they can no longer rest on their laurels. I asked him whether in fact maybe that could not be blamed somewhat on the department not showing leadership and, as a matter of fact, reducing staff in key areas, in curriculum, for example. So the minister is saying we have to get on with changes in a more rapid way than has been customary in the past, but then he says that there has to be some competition built in. With cuts and funding that have taken place and so on, I just wanted to know whether he thinks that the system is not trying hard enough, or the people in the system, to do the best job they can with what they have, with the resources that they have, which are limited and dwindling in many cases.

What is it that the competition is going to do to enhance educational opportunities in the public education system?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I am not one who is here lobbying for competition per se. What I am saying is that such incredible structures are built into place right now within public education in Manitoba that if these structures cannot be freed a little bit to give and take some of the turf protection, for want of a better word, ultimately competitive models will come into place that will provide a service that in the minds of some parents will provide an alternative, and maybe one that is more in keeping with their educational philosophy.

I am not advocating for competitive systems; I am saying that they are inevitable if indeed we cannot begin to have more flexibility with respect to the traditional partners. Now, I must say that from a Manitoba perspective, what we are engaged upon as far as discussion and collaboration, I am

led to believe—and these are not my words, but I am told by certain members of some significant associations involved in the process that what we have in Manitoba is a dialogue between groups that does not exist elsewhere. That is all meaningful, and that is all very important.

Let us hope that we can continue to see that dialogue bear fruit, but ultimately, at the end of the day, the government, as the lead in education, after they collate all the views, are going to have to come forward with a plan. I am hoping, and today there is no reason why I should not hope, but today I am hoping that the traditional partners and the parents and the business community are all wanting to be supportive of in-broad terms. Naturally, nothing can come forward that everybody will accept in totality, but that the community at large, just not the education community, but the community at large including the education community can accept. So I am not here to drive the competitive model, never have been. I am just saying that common sense dictates that if you cannot move quickly enough, some other force will grow.

* (2120)

The member can say, well, if we were in government—and I will put words in his mouth now—we would make sure that no level of funding went to these other systems. We would find a way. We would close it. We would make sure. The reality is he cannot do that. The reality is legislatively he may be able to do that, but in a free society he cannot do it because we are free people. People can demonstrate their freedoms in various ways, not the least of which is making sure that in some fashion there is an alternative or a competitive education system in place.

So let us take the one that we all I think sense as, in many respects, the most relevant to Canada and to Manitoba and improve it.

Mr. Plohman: Those are, by and large, positive statements from the minister regarding the public education system and perhaps shed some light on his reference to competition, perhaps as a motivation for change is more than any real

specific models for it, at least in the first instance included in the so-called blueprint.

I am pleased to see the minister characterize the environment for change in Manitoba as co-operative and positive and perhaps unique. I think that is a very positive approach for all of us to look at it that way, because I really think it is that, and there is a tremendous desire to be part of innovation and change. I do not sense that there is this kind of resting on laurels mentality.

I just wanted to explore that with the minister a bit as to whether in fact he thinks there is a desire by these entrenched powers, as he talks about them, as being desirous of kind of pushing this whole thrust for change to the side and not wanting to really see meaningful change and improvements, that they want to just keep things as they are type of thing and to protect their turf as the minister said.

Has he sensed that is a real problem? I do not really get that feeling in talking to those organizations, to the trustees, to the Teachers' Society. Although they have their own very strong views, I sense a willingness and a desire to involve particularly parents from all sides. It is almost universal that there has to be more involvement and I think not token involvement, but meaningful involvement by parents in decision making. It is something that is embraced with open arms almost—welcomed.

So I do not know where the minister is getting this idea or his statement, his basis for his statement, that in fact there is some kind of monolith here that does not want to move.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, it is a study of human nature more than it is reform. We do not have to look very far. We just have to look into the entrenched positions in the area of health reform to have a real insight into human nature. You are right at this point. We are all saying all the same things and we all want to go to the same goals, but I was asked a question here earlier with respect to empowering parents.

Good will and people involvement and you can basically have a scenario which was infinite in size, but when it comes to power, governance

power, there is only so much power. So if you give the parents more, if you give the parents some power, by definition, you have to take away power from somebody else. It is a given; it is an axiom. Well, share power, but if one person has all the power, to use an example, and you want to share it, that means somebody has to give up power. [interjection] Oh, no. I think it should happen and that will be part of the program, but that, then, will be the test of our uniqueness of working together and to what extent some will be able to give up some turf protection.

As the Minister of Education, I am prepared to give up some power for changes in other areas, but then let us put out all of the players who now have power and let us see how the ones who are going to lose some power react. Then we will know whether we have meaningful buy into the will to work together for the good of education. Then we will know, because we all, of course, in principle can accept the reform. That is when the rubber hits the road. That is when we will know whether everybody's best interest is the student or to some degree maybe is also their own self-interest. Without appropriating any of that comment to any group in specific, that is a general statement I make.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I do not know that democratic decision making necessarily means loss of power or whether it just means more people involved in making decisions. It is an interesting view and actually ultimately, if a proposal comes forward that means that parents are going to have, for example, more say in budget decisions for their school or in the hiring of the principal or local curriculum component or whatever the case may be, obviously that means others who were previously making those decisions are going to not be able to make them as easily on their own, or they are going to have to share them with someone else. That will be when, as the minister says, the rubber hits the road or the test of what is happening. That is true.

On the other hand, I think if they are involved in the process, they buy into the process, they say we are prepared to go where this process takes us and to accept the consequences of the end result of this

process, then I do not think there is going to be the kinds of major upheavals or resistance to it in the final analysis if they are committed to change in that regard in that way.

Does the minister still feel that the issue of—after what he is saying today, it almost seems premature to say that the issue of choice has to be at the top of the list here, because even in the workshop at the Parents' Forum it was contained in the same statement about parent involvement as if choice and parent involvement go hand in hand. They were contained in the same statement. I do not see them necessarily having to go hand in hand. To the minister, is this issue fundamental to any change?

Mr. Manness: Choice can find its way into the dialogue in so many different areas. Originally when I used the word "choice" in Brandon before Christmas, I did so in the context of saying, look, I am concerned that there is not going to be movement in this system, and that ultimately the only way you can give parents what many are clamouring for today is some option within a larger make-up of school division or school entity or school unit to not necessarily be forced to go to a school. So that is an element of choice, and although it is a secondary priority, it certainly is not one of the burning issues that is keeping me awake at nights. I still believe that parents have to have, at some additional cost to them, not to the other taxpayers, but some additional cost to them, freedom. That is an element of choice.

There are other types of choice too. There is choice, within schools, of programs, and I would have to think that we are going to have to be able to present that with greater clarity, with greater certainty to some stated goals in education but with a greater understanding by parents at the beginning of the term, not after the end of the school period of time, Grade 12, when it is too late in many respects, or later on when it is too late. But there are some greater elements of choice certainly as we move into the senior years.

* (2130)

Of course then we can give effect to choice in the area of home schooling. I mean, I am not

troubled by it under certain conditions, and yet those elements of choice I tell you will not be exercised to the extent that the public school system becomes again the central point and the focus point and the most important institution of the community, just not paying lip service by those of us who are educators, but indeed meaningfully met by everybody, whether they have children in that school or not. Today that is, I daresay, missing.

(Mr. Jack Reimer, Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Plohman: Certainly there is a great deal of choice within the existing system, a choice within school programming and so on. I would suggest that if parents have a greater say in shaping their local community school that there will be less desire for change, and that will take care of itself or could to a certain extent or to a great extent than the desire to choose a different school because they are dissatisfied with what is happening in their local school.

I think that is something that the minister will obviously have to consider if in fact he is committed to a model that would see more parent power and involvement in decision making. It seems to be a logical outcome, if they do have a greater input that there is going to be less desire to want change or choice in terms of school options.

I wanted to ask, and maybe the minister could comment on that, but also I am very concerned about something he said on a number of occasions too, and that is, linking funding to education outcomes. Perhaps he could shed some light on that if in fact it is still something that he as minister thinks is a kind of a relevant way and a fair way of funding the public school system in the province?

I think there are many drawbacks to that kind of system and many inequities that can result. We could discuss those at greater length at some point. That is why I am interested in hearing what the minister has to say about it.

Mr. Manness: There is no doubt that today, because public dollars are so scarce in all of the areas of responsibility that governments have today, that there is without exception in the

western world greater focus being placed upon how programs are delivering. Evaluations are being done, very difficult within the context of subjective evaluations, but still they have to be done.

Somebody has to make decisions, and education, of course, is not any different from that. In due course I would think results with respect to how schools are doing vis-à-vis are ultimately going to report. And ultimately the question is, would you want to fund something or a location where it is not working? Would you want to do that?

Yes, you will go through whatever changes you can, but ultimately you are going to see—I mean if you are putting into some location an awful lot of money and the results are not there, I do not think it will be the government that will ultimately decide that. I think the parents and the community will want to know that. So it will have some effect.

If the member is trying to trap me by saying, what will be the funding consequences, I say to him that dollars for outcomes is basically accountability. It is telling the public the truth as to what is happening at that school or at that school setting. If indeed you tell the people and they have some greater choice to attain education for their students elsewhere, they will make the move. Why should they not in a free society? Obviously, as they go, the dollars and the pupil grants will go with them.

Mr. Plohman: Well, I guess the point is, if parents are more involved in the setting of the goals and objectives of the school and if the measurement instrument to determine how well the school is performing is measured against those objectives and goals, then it is a fair kind of a way to do it, as to how is the school performing, how is it meeting the goals that the parents and the administration, the principal and the teachers and the students, that they have determined are the important goals, how are we meeting those?

I think if that is the yardstick that is measured, is used, I do not see any great difficulty with that. However, if there is some artificial measurement that is used, that is imposed on that particular

school, without consideration of what objectives and goals have been set by that school and the kind of student clientele, or the make-up, socioeconomic condition and so on of the student body is not considered, then it may not be fair to measure them against a common yardstick in all cases. There may be another kind of measuring tool that has to be developed.

Does the minister see an external evaluation then to determine how well a school is doing, in other words, determining how to determine if the school is meeting the objectives and, therefore, how much funding they should get? If we take this to its logical conclusion, I imagine it would be based then on how well it stacks up in the evaluation as to how much it is going to get in terms of provincial funding.

Mr. Manness: Well, the short answer, no. I cannot see it taking into its logical conclusion that the member may want to drive me, no, but I do see, yes, some outside measurement. The yardstick will be measured in some of these fundamental or these foundation skills for sure. Now how the community reflects itself in all of the other activity it wants to, hands off, the funding will be there nevertheless, but again, in those very, very important areas of education, yes, a community, I would think, would want to—those parents that are interested.

You know, parents are not interested in all settings. To the extent they are though, and they set a goal for the school, in those fundamental courses, the department will want to know what objectives are in place. Ultimately, if the school is not attaining those goals or those objectives, then I would have to think the Minister of Education of the day will want to know why and may have to take steps accordingly, but to withhold funding, no.

As long as you are open and accountable, and the parents say, my goodness, I do not like what is happening in this school, I do not want my child to go here, well, the dollars will go with that person to whatever the school of choice becomes. That is opening up the system. That is the issue.

I am not talking vouchering. I mean, I do not have time for that. That is something that I do not think works particularly well in very many settings, but you have to have some additional freedom today. I mean there is nothing more important than an education of a young person.

Mr. Plohman: Is the minister talking about taking those funds within a division or from one division to another?

Mr. Manness: Well, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, I cannot answer that because our thinking has not gone beyond the principle that I have expounded. I would have to think that for some type of normalcy, you have to recognize that there are school boundaries. I mean in the area of nonresident fees, we have not even discussed yet.

Mr. Plohman: The minister did make a public statement about eliminating—it seems, at least it was interpreted that way—boundaries insofar as choice, that students would be able to, or parents would be able to choose the school that they wanted to attend, irrespective of boundaries, without having to pay additional fees. That was the way it came across.

* (2140)

Is that something that was just amusing at the time but nothing that the minister is committed to, or is that unfairly attributed to him?

Mr. Manness: Again, I made the comment in the context of within division and the expectation that divisions are going to be larger in the urban context. In the rural context, to me, the freedom of choice is more easily provided through technology, through the adoption of technology by way of distance education.

Mr. Plohman: When the minister talks about these fundamental standards or fundamental skills or basic skills that should be measured, is he talking only about academic standards or is he talking about manipulative standards? There are many different kinds of courses.

Of course the minister prefers to recognize I guess, after some of the statements he has made, that the whole area of apprenticeship has to be explored and opened up, vocational education,

technical education. Depending on the nature of the student body, there could be a valid outcome from testing that is quite different from one to another in terms of how well a school is doing. In fact, a school could be doing very well with a much lower number of academic students, for example, than another might have. We cannot measure them all with the same yardstick then, in terms of how well they are doing. Does the minister agree with that?

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in theory I agree with him. I am sure I would not surprise him or anybody to indicate that this is a tough area, but still we believe that in some areas those referred to in the Throne Speech Debate or in the throne speech have to lend themselves to some greater measurement. Whether that is grading, it has to have some greater description to it in the form of references and performance levels so that the parents understand, because parents are asking. They want to know. I know there is another point of view out there—well, let us define the student totally in all of their capabilities and all their weaknesses through subjective means.

I am sorry. If I have to decide between one or the other—let the subjective comments come. That is good information. That is great information. As a parent I would like to see it—but I am sorry, unless I know what the benchmark is, I do not know how my child rates relative to the rest. Today people want to know that, so there is going to have to be some measure. We are trying to find a way that is meaningful, certainly meaningful and yet carries with it some greater degree of measure and is subjective to.

Mr. Plohman: I just want to say, I do not know that there are a lot of people that disagree with the idea for greater definition and benchmarks being necessary and defined and communicated so that everyone is aware of what they are and how their child is doing in relation to those benchmarks. I think that is something that all of us as parents would like to know.

Of course if our child is not meeting those standards or up to those particular benchmarks at

the ages for which they are established, then we would like to know what is being done to get them to their capacity, moving as quickly as they can or developing to their own capacity. If they cannot meet those benchmarks, then what are they meeting and what kind of—I do not know if I should call it remedial action—but special individual kind of programming is being put in place to move them along as quickly as possible?

Individual programming is necessary, and it seems to me is fundamental to this. That does not mean we throw out standards, but it means that every student advances at a different rate and learns in a different way. What concerns me, of course, is that this is where it ties into funding. If we do not have the resources made available, it makes it very difficult for us to meet the needs of all of those students.

I think that might be one of the reasons why the minister never endorsed the parents' guide on gifted education, for example. That was developed after a lot of work in the department and then is left languishing, as I understand, from talking to Joanne Bevis and not endorsed by the government. It was not talking about an elitist type of education just for the brightest kids or anything. It is talking about enabling every student to develop to their potential, enrichment for every student. Really what that involves is individual programming. Yet that was just tossed right out, and I do not know why the minister did that, but I wanted to know if there is any linkage with what I have just said.

Mr. Manness: Well, the member has said it correctly in his last breath he drew when he talked about individual programming. Who in our society has the right to individual programming? In the last 25-year model when government has been borrowing money hand over fist, we led a lot of people to believe they had the right to individual programming. Where did this word "needs" come from? It came from the last 25 years when governments have borrowed money hand over fist to provide.

So now I inherited a model which was always add-on, add-on. What I am saying is, hey, I understand the argument from those parents of

exceptional children (gifted). I understand the arguments well. You have got a base which was starting to diminish in size, and yet you had this program hanging from here, this program hanging here, one over here, one here and you have all the ad hockery around that and the base could not sustain it, because individual programming means exactly that, individual programming. It means specialization; it means additional resources. It means whatever it takes.

Today we no longer have the resources. So let us again rebuild the foundation. Some would say let us reinvent education, but let us rebuild the foundation so that indeed we can move everybody along at a higher level as long as we can and then let us do the streaming at a later period in time which will really challenge, significantly challenge, those who are exceptional and however defined.

Mr. Plohman: This gets right back to the structure that the minister talked about earlier, that he talked to students, and he found some who wanted more structure, tending to support his view of the world, I guess, he said, something like that, then others who wanted to have complete freedom like a university setting, where they could come and go when they felt like it. As long as they were meeting their requirements, I guess, who should worry about it? I guess it is a question of, at what age do they get that kind of freedom? Do you have complete structure right to Grade 12, as we know it, or do you allow greater freedom and therefore individual responsibility, particularly for some students who have proven that they can function under that kind of situation at a much earlier age? Therefore, you do not have to have all of those additional resources.

The minister says individual programming, just by its very nature is going to cost a lot more, and we just cannot afford it. A lot of this comes about as a result of allowing students to undertake individual initiative to explore enriched activities and undertake research and so on, and they are quite capable of doing it. It just means that they have to be given the means to do it and the flexibility in their timetable to do it, as long as the standards that they are meeting for the basics are

there. They have met those, and they are ready to move on to apply them, to problem solve, to develop models and applied situations for that knowledge. It seems to me that we do not have enough of that freedom in the system at the present time to allow those students who can function independently to in fact do that. They have to sit in that structure and go over and over the same stuff that they know with their eyes closed long before the teacher opened their mouth.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the member sets himself up as an advocate for a group with whom I also have great empathy, but a policy statement by itself by the ministry is not going to do very much. I am as troubled by the lack of challenge for some of the students as he is, but I can tell the member, I am even more troubled by the lack of challenge what I sense is the vast student body.

I am sorry, I have to in my view—my mandate is to deal with the greater number and to challenge them at a higher level so that they will be meaningfully productive in a world that I am afraid and I am very fearful is going to become very tough. Government will be helpless, even if it is an NDP government, to do very much. We have no alternative but to take the vast majority of our students and equip them with the best possible skills we have, because the world I see coming will dictate that half of them are going to have to find their own employment. So they are going to have to be up to the task.

* (2150)

I know we talk about the world of employment, but we never talk about self-employment, do we? But it is coming. So I know, with respect to the gifted, and I say, where you got that special teacher in the classroom today, that special teacher who has that ability still will draw out of those gifted kids, even in spite of the programming restraints, still will challenge those kids at a higher level. But parents are going to be called upon to do their bit, and many are, many are, but they are going to have to do quite a bit also.

I can change the policy. I could have put the policy out. I do not think it would have made

anybody happier though, if I did not have a bunch of money to follow it or if I started shifting money from here to there in support of that policy, and that was my dilemma.

Mr. Plohman: Well, the minister hit on what I thought was the major reason for this not coming out, and that was money. It is hard to come in with this program, with this policy even though it involves parents getting more involved in the education of their children, understanding how they can get involved, that was a parent's guide, but I think the minister thought he would generate a great deal more demand for additional programming, and it was clear that he was cutting back in funding to the school system. How could he be putting out something like this that create greater demands? So he felt that he should not go forward with it. I do not know that it would have led to that. I think it might have led to a more educated parent body generally who therefore would get more involved in the education of their children, which is something we all want to see.

It is not just aimed at exceptional children, although some people would say all children are exceptional or gifted, as we call them. It was not just aimed at that, that group. It was aimed, if you look through it and if you talk to the people who developed it, it is aimed at all children. The minister talked earlier about his concern about problem solving, and I am simply saying to the minister that this leads to activities that allow children of all abilities to apply some of those basic skills in a way, in a problem-solving situation, an applied way.

That is what this does and so, therefore, I do not see it being at odds with the concern that the minister expressed there as a result of that test that took place. He says we have to challenge them all. I could not agree more with that statement, and I do not believe that this should be equated with challenging only a small number of exceptional children.

However, I will leave that. The minister may want to make some closing comments. I have said enough on this for tonight. I think we can move on

to some other areas where others can get involved insofar as the discussion is concerned.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I did want to make, just very briefly before we pass this line, quick reference to a couple points. The first was, when the minister was talking in terms of that public perception of education where there was quite a bit of discussion about public perception of education, you made specific reference to a Grade 12 graduation certificate. I have had at least one individual who had come up to me and had talked about his son and the graduation certificate that his son had and was unable to read or write or was illiterate. I am wondering if the minister could give some sort of indication whether or not that is in fact the case and to what degree.

Mr. Manness: Well, I cannot quantify it, but it is happening too often and too frequently. It is happening more than it should be. I will not stamp or label anybody illiterate, I have no way of doing that, but I do know that a lot of students are moving—there is no policy of no-fail provincially—but I know a number of students are moved continually through the system, and I question really what they do know in some respects, and many are otherwise. I cannot quantify it, but it is happening too frequently to satisfy me.

Mr. Lamoureux: In the discussions that I have had with respect to back to basics, if you like, or fundamental skills—

An Honourable Member: It is that bad word.

Mr. Lamoureux: That bad word as the member for Dauphin and the minister has talked about, the fundamental skills then, I reflect in terms of why it is that there seems to be that push, and as much as we might not necessarily like to acknowledge that there is a problem, I am of the opinion that there is, in terms of there is a public perception that is out there and I think it is widely shared that we are not receiving the type of education that we could be receiving, and one of the primary reasons why the whole discussion of educational reform is coming up.

Make reference to standards, standard exams, particularly the maths exam, if you like. Parents indicate, or I should say a parent—I had one

teacher who indicated to me that you have a curriculum of maths and a certain number of hours set out that they are supposed to be teaching maths, yet he is not aware of any other colleague math teacher of his that actually is able to teach the number of curriculum hours that he or she is told to teach. The minister somewhat frowned on that statement. Maybe I can ask the minister that there is a set number of hours to teach math, particularly say Grade 9, and I am wondering if he could comment if in fact the curriculum does allow for a teacher to teach that many hours.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the deputy tells me that in high school we prescribe that a 110-120 hours are to be in place for one credit. That is a guideline. Most schools follow the guidelines. Some do not, some exceed that. I see a former principal here who I know would ensure that those guidelines were followed. It has been brought to our attention that there are some schools that are below the guideline, and that are significantly below, and right today are questioning what authority we have, questioning the authority for the Department of Education to have a guideline. In other words, in their view there is nothing in place. They can teach as many as they want for one credit. You can bet that issue will be addressed when the legislation comes forward to deal with or to reflect the blueprint.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I want to bring it back in terms of that public perception, if you will. Public perception that is there, I believe at least in part, is held because of that lack of confidence on some of those fundamental skills. We can talk in terms of being able to communicate, reading, writing, to speak, to listen, in terms of communication. We can talk in terms of some of the numeracy or basic elementary math problems and so on. I have had numerous presentations saying, look, the curriculum, there seems to be a lot of additional pressure being put onto the curriculum from outside groups.

* (2200)

I think in terms of, there was the Pedlar report, where there was a recommendation, for example, that domestic violence be incorporated the

curriculum. I recall the Manitoba Intercultural Council recommendation that combatting racism be incorporated into part of the curriculum. I have had discussions with a number of teachers, and that is why I am somewhat surprised by the minister's remark that, generally speaking, schools are, in fact, hitting that 110 hours, by and large. I plan to further look into that because it does surprise me, but I am wondering whether or not the whole issue of number of hours is being discussed or a part of the curriculum, discussions that the minister is currently going on with.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Before the minister answers that, may I seek what the will of the committee is, seeing that the hour is after ten o'clock. Let us carry on? Okay. We will carry on for now.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we have not focused in that area per se, but we will be. Our dialogue will come forward and we will ask the partners to reflect on the school day, school year firstly, the school day, and to suggest—and again the government is going to be most concerned about those core subjects, and to help us decide the proper amount of time in a year to devote to them.

If a community—but I dare say, in the same breath, the time that governments now are going to force mandatorily subjects on the public school system and/or areas, I think those days are just about over. If we are going to give the community again the say back with respect to the school, in wanting to see itself reflected in its school—not the school system, its school—then you have to give them some choice, choice of programming, outside of what I consider to be the very important core areas. So government itself is going to have to do a rethink about imposing yet more compulsory courses of study and focused areas on the public school system.

Mr. Lamoureux: The blueprint that the government is going to be bringing forward in June, are you anticipating bringing forward the basic fundamentals, the basic skills?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the throne speech said as much. That was the essence of the comment of the throne speech.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Shall the item pass?

Mr. Plohman: Just one question. I understand from talking to some groups that, and the minister can tell me if this is correct, that their statement was that the independent living skills or Skills for Independent Living course that was just made compulsory in the public education system over the last couple of years, has not been made compulsory for some of the independent schools. Is that correct?

Mr. Manness: Well, at this point in time, it is a compulsory course. I mean, what it will look like at the end of reform, I do not know, but I am led to believe it is a compulsory course through all systems.

I know there was some leeway at the beginning as to semester and full-year systems or some schools and/or areas were granted a year reprieve because of a—some took it. That is right. If to some it is not a full stand-alone credit, they had to show where they had integrated it into some other courses, so maybe they had integrated the subject material into other courses.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, that minister is getting at the issue here, and that is, some schools, I believe independent schools, were allowed to do this. I do not know, can the minister give us some examples where it did not have to be taught as a stand-alone course and that it could be shown at—and I would like to ask the minister how much of it, 70 percent, 80 percent, 90 or 100 percent was being taught in other courses? Therefore, was it necessary to have it as a separate course?

Mr. Manness: I would have to think it would all have to be taught. One example for sure in the public school system and it had to—the Glenlawn Collegiate did it, but they did it without permission. Permission has to be granted for it to occur anywhere, independent or public school system.

Mr. Plohman: And in the private school system? [interjection] Well, the minister is assuming my question. He gave me one example of a school that did not offer it on the basis that they had incorporated it into another course or into other

courses, Glenlawn Collegiate in the public school system. What examples can he give where he has given permission for independent schools to in fact not have to offer it as a separate course because it is allegedly being incorporated into all other subjects?

Mr. Manness: I cannot answer that question, but I will be glad to attempt an answer when we move into the school program area. I do not have that information right now.

Mr. Plohman: Well, that is fair enough, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Shall the item pass? The item is accordingly passed; (2) Other Expenditures \$319,500—pass.

1.(d) Human Resource Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$351,700—pass.

Mr. Lamoureux: We are still on (d)?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Yes.

Mr. Lamoureux: I just want to ask the minister, a while back there was the decentralization effort that the government took upon itself. Can he give some sort of indication in terms of any additional decentralized positions that have gone out?

The Textbook Bureau has already moved, relocated, but if there is anything else.

Mr. Manness: When the member talks about the incredible successful decentralization area, I guess he is talking about all of government but specifically in education. Well, the example that he uses certainly is the last one that I am aware of within education. Are we looking around for other candidates to decentralize in an active fashion? No. Yet, if there is a smaller unit that today, with the technology being what it is, we can consider as a candidate to be decentralized, we will.

This department has made a very honourable commitment over the years to decentralization. Some 74 staff years have been decentralized to rural Manitoba. The Independent Studies Program in Winkler is just an incredible success. We are doing things more efficiently at lower cost and servicing better than we ever were. There are some great success stories with respect to decentralization but right now, per the first phase

of decentralization, education has honoured its commitments to the whole global process.

Mr. Lamoureux: Again, I am drawing from memory. I understood the correspondence branch was also decentralized?

Mr. Manness: Yes.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes. And there was, at the time, some concern with respect to the costs of that not necessarily being as efficient if it was located in the city of Winnipeg, primarily because the number of individuals involved in that particular program were overwhelmingly urban in the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Manness: The correspondence program, now called the Independent Studies Program, moved to Winkler and the evaluation that we are receiving is very strongly supportive of the location and the service provided from that location.

* (2210)

Those that have been seeking services from the old correspondence branch, that number had been trending down for a decade long before this move was made, so I do not know what parallel the member is trying to draw, but I say to him that we believe we are servicing every client in correspondence as well as we were and better.

The member must remember that correspondence in the first case, I dare say, was probably put into place as a rural outreach. There were greater opportunities for specialized courses in many of your larger urban schools than ever existed in rural Manitoba, so the correspondence branch, although it reaches out to all Manitobans, certainly for decades had a greater call on it on a pro rata basis by rural people.

Mr. Lamoureux: There are more rural individuals involved with the correspondence branch than urban currently?

Mr. Manness: No, the total number that use the services basically represent the rural-urban split, but the subject material that the 40 percent rural area used were your fundamental areas—again, talk about the core areas in many respects—which were the most important areas of service. So to take that out into a rural context I do not think

made any difference to urban users—or has the member heard complaints? Indeed, they are to service all Manitobans the best way possible.

Mr. Lamoureux: No, not offhand. I have not necessarily heard the complaints. I can just recall that when there was the decentralization, there were a couple of areas within education that were being questioned. The teacher certification branch, I believe, which went out to Minnedosa was one, and this particular branch, the correspondence branch, because of the number of people that were using it within the city and the material that was necessary. At least at that time, it was a concern. I am just mostly trying to find out if in fact that concern was validated through complaints or anything of this nature, but I understand that the response to that is no.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I did want to move on in terms of affirmative action and ask the government what their objectives have been with affirmative action and this whole area.

Mr. Manness: I do not know how specific the member wishes to be, but as of the middle of March this year, we have 24 employees who declare themselves to be aboriginal.

We have basically four designated affirmative action classifications within the first category, the most populous being the women classification at 463—this is April now, this is coming in—disabled 20, and visible minority, 14.

(**Mr. Bob Rose,** Acting Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Lamoureux: There are supposed to be objectives that the government has, and not knowing necessarily the time frame of what it is he just finished indicating to me, I am wondering if the minister could state to the committee what the objectives of the department are for this area.

Mr. Manness: I am not sure we have quotas per se. I can tell you what the objectives are. We are responsible for our managers who are responsible for implementing affirmative action strategies and maintaining commitment to the affirmative action program. The government does not have specific targets. We never have had. This government does not deal in that fashion.

Mr. Lamoureux: The minister indicated, the numbers that he gave me were 24 aboriginal, four designated affirmative, 20 disabled, 14 visible minorities and 463 women. Where is he drawing this from? Is this just an overall report from the Department of Education, or are some of these more recent in terms of hiring replacements in vacant positions?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, in keeping with the general objective, we keep track of these numbers and ask people to declare where they might fall. So these are our running tabs of where we believe and how it is we believe we are meeting the objectives.

Mr. Lamoureux: Maybe the minister can indicate how many staff years would have been filled over the last year.

Mr. Manness: I cannot provide that at this moment, in spite of the urgings of my bench mate from the House. I just cannot do that.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, maybe the minister could take it upon himself to get me those actual numbers. You know, if you are talking about implementing an affirmative action program, we should get some sort of indication other than, here is what we currently have. That does not give us an indication whether or not you are committed to affirmative action. If you indicate to me that there are so many positions that have been filled, and out of those positions—then there might be something there. I would just indicate to the Minister of Education if he could provide that information, it would be most beneficial.

Mr. Manness: We will do our best to give a little bit more definition, in response to the member's question.

The Acting Deputy Chairperson (Mr. Rose): 1.(d)(2) Other Expenditures \$55,900—pass.

1.(e) Financial and Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, in this area here, I was wanting to get some sort of a better idea from the government about actual costs, if you like. Under Activity

Identification, it says that it represents the government by acting as a liaison between the department and a variety of other departments, government agencies, organizations and individuals.

There have been, in the past, responsibilities delegated down to the Department of Education, possibly from other departments. One of the constant criticisms that I have received is the fact that the schools are performing some responsibilities for which other departments should be responsible for. I am wondering if the Minister of Education could comment on that.

* (2220)

Mr. Manness: I think, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the member is kind of misunderstanding what this unit does. I mean, the issue he brings up is important and should be part of discussion that is coming forward, but this is purely financial and administrative service. This is the controllership function that every department has to have in place, or otherwise you have chaos. Somebody has to be in control, and we have no choice but to—this is Mr. Glen before us negotiating with the Department of Northern Affairs, National Defence with respect to the Brandon school situation. This is preparing Treasury Board submissions. This is the real routine, but a very important area of departments.

Mr. Lamoureux: So, again, just for clarification, this is not the area in which the minister would be able to indicate what sorts of costs are going towards a program—

Mr. Manness: That is the next section.

Mr. Lamoureux: The next section? The last time I took the minister at his word, he told me, not now, Kevin, to stand up. Well, I will save that question then for that point in time.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): I wanted to ask about one of the Expected Results of this department or this section of the department, and that is the "centralized, comprehensive, integrated information system." I wonder if the minister would like to perhaps, first of all, introduce us to that topic. What is expected in this year?

The minister may be aware that I have asked questions on this in earlier years, particularly dealing with the million-dollar pilot project which supposedly was on the book two years ago, which was conducted in conjunction with a number of school divisions and which did not seem to go anywhere. It did not seem to have any final conclusion.

So I am interested to see it here again on the books, and I am interested in knowing what is to be recorded, what the ultimate purpose of this. Whom is it being designed for? Who will have access to it, and whether in the case of this particular expected result, whether it is still in the pilot planning stage or are we now moving to completion of a program which was perhaps begun two years ago?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, the member asks a very good question. This is an area worthy of question, but I would think it probably follows more appropriately under the next section, 1.(f) Management Information Services.

Ms. Friesen: Just speaking for the record, I was replying to the minister in saying that on page 28 under the item that we are on now, section 1.(e), that this is listed. I am happy to discuss it in a later section, if that is more appropriate, but it does say that it is here.

Mr. Manness: Leadership of it is here. The cost associated with the programming is in the next section. So we can discuss it here or on page 31. It makes no difference.

So let us move into it now, then, Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson. Certainly this is one of the large initiatives of the department. It is going to try and be ready for the ed reform document, but it is also going to try and give education per se a greater insight at any point in time into a student's performance, indeed, a student's activity within education. Probably outside of education there will be a close—and the reason I remember this, when we were in Treasury Board, the reason we accepted the concept was that we had to have a better understanding of our students as they came forward from the community.

Not only was this dealing with educational expectations, but, importantly, some of the social requirements and/or realities of that student. We just sensed we had to have a better profile of our students at any point in time. Unless we moved into the modern age, programming-wise, we just did not know. I mean, we have a lot of our students today who are moving around from school to school in the period of time. There is an element of financial control here that can be used too, but that was not the main reason that we brought forward this program.

There will be accountability questions. It will set into place an allowance for providing a database for provincial tests once they come into being. But the purpose of EIS is to provide again centralized, comprehensive and integrated information regarding school divisions, schools, school personnel, school facilities, courses and students. We sense that, unless we have this in place, we will not really ever get to the crux of more effective programming. It has been a desire within the department; my predecessors have been pushing it hard.

I look at one of my predecessors, the member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach). In his capacity as minister he saw the benefit, and we have been building this slowly in the place over the course of the last three years. When completed, we expect the system will provide the department with information in the following areas: student tracking information, and I alluded to that, teacher workload information, educational staff counts, student performance, as I mentioned before. It will provide some key indicator information important to the department, as we do a diagnosis of what changes should be brought forward in programming and evaluating educational accountability and, as I have said before, results.

So these indicators will change, but again, as I have used already some of the examples, it will allow us to track student mobility, outcome analysis of, again, specially funded programs, student achievement versus socioeconomic factors—and I know the member is more than interested in that dynamic. So it just has a myriad of opportunities, in our view, to evaluate and react

to the results more meaningfully. Today we are reacting to a system that some would say should have been reacted to 15 years ago. I dare say, if we had had a database like this, we would have reacted more quickly.

Of course, this is what is happening in the modern world. It is happening in the corporate world; it is happening in public sector service; it is happening across the country—across the world, I should say. There is no reason why it should not happen in education, because information is knowledge, and knowledge, hopefully, will allow you then to make a reaction, an informed reaction, if you are to make one more quickly. Of course, that is what the parents are calling for ultimately today: a system that is evolutionary, not in the context of a generation, but in the context of their own children being in school. I do not blame them.

Ms. Friesen: It raises a number of issues. Perhaps I will start with one of the issues I raised earlier, and that was what happened to the pilot project. Where are the results from that pilot project? Are they available to the schools that participated? Are they available to the public? What lessons were learned by the department in that pilot project?

Mr. Manness: Well, yes, the first phase was completed, and, of course, we did not learn an awful lot out of that because we would have had to follow it with another couple of phases, but the first phase basically gave us a database of information on divisions, schools, courses and subjects, and what we went after, of course, were courses and subjects, and that is what we learned basically in the first phase of the pilot.

If the member wants a copy of the pilot and the results from that, we will provide that.

* (2230)

Ms. Friesen: Yes, I would be interested in seeing that.

Would the minister also have the information available at the moment on the cost of that pilot project? Is it indeed the \$1 million that has been suggested?

Mr. Manness: It was done several years ago. We will endeavour to—we did it in-house. It was not

even an add-on. We did not even go to Treasury Board for a separate allocation for it. We just did it some years ago, but ultimately when we get this whole system into place, it is not going to come cheaply, but it will be in place for generations.

Ms. Friesen: I assume that many of the costs of that particular program were in fact borne by school divisions, so that when the minister says that it was not an add-on here, I assume that in some cases in school divisions in the preparation of the material, in the preparation of the answers to questions that the department posed, that was where the costs were incurred, because this particular pilot project, as I understand the minister, dealt with the schools rather than the individuals and that what we are looking at in the second phase now is a transition to looking at individual students and individual programs.

Mr. Manness: Well, this is a partnership at work. I mean, the school divisions want this information also, and we have partnered quite well with other institutions. I can think of the assessment model we brought in. That was a partnership between municipalities and the government, and we took a larger share of the cost for a while and now the municipalities, once we are done, are taking back their traditional share.

Yes, it might have been some incumbency upon a division to delegate a responsibility of providing information to the department, but ultimately this information will be used to the betterment of all, and so as a leader this department took the challenge, but schools were very, very willing participants because they saw the long-run benefit to themselves.

Ms. Friesen: My issue was not with partnership or nonpartnership, but it was trying to estimate the cost of a pilot project. There is a number which is floating around in gossip terms. I do not expect the minister to have it now. He did seem to me in his response to be suggesting that this had been done at minimal costs, and I was simply suggesting that there was a broader sharing of those costs than the minister was indicating.

I want to look at the second phase of that project where, as I understand the minister to say, we are

now moving to look beyond the school and the division to develop a planning tool, a database for the records of individual students and teachers and workloads and program outcomes. Could the minister perhaps elaborate on that a little more? Are we, for example, looking at developing a student number which will accompany a student throughout the Manitoba system?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Acting Deputy Chairperson, staff inform me that, to give meaning to a system such as this, one has to seriously contemplate the concept of a student number, no differently, I guess, than a driver's licence in many dimensions, and a health number, social insurance number, Wheat Board number. Today, if you want to be identified, you are almost always identified by number. My university student number was 55—; I forget mine.

We are just beginning the process of building. We have an awful lot more work to do here. This, again, is not our No. 1 priority, and yet we just see how its time has come and how it should be part of, ultimately, the whole reform system.

Ms. Friesen: At the end of this project, whom does the minister anticipate will be using it? It is a planning tool for the department. Will the material be accessible to people outside the department, for example, school divisions, perhaps other public planning bodies in the province?

Mr. Manness: We have not crossed those boundaries yet, but I cannot anticipate how this could be anything but public information. I am talking about the base. I am not talking about specific students in the sense that there are student numbers to deal with as compared to individuals.

I would think to have full value this should be fairly accessible to all wanting to help out the process of education.

Ms. Friesen: One of the issues that we looked at last year and that I never found a very satisfactory answer to was the issue of aboriginal students and the counting of aboriginal students in the province. We dealt with it in the context of the Native Education branch, but, as I remember, the pilot project did look at the question of aboriginal. I asked that question. Now I am wondering if the

department is going to continue with that question or whether it is going to come at that issue of deciding upon the numbers and needs of aboriginal students within the Manitoba system in a different way.

Mr. Manness: I am told that the member asked the question more or less the same last year. The member was troubled with the lack of definition around the response, using her words. I do not know if I have much more to offer. Certainly, at this point, we are not contemplating trying to set up a subset within the global population, if that is what she is alluding to. We just have not set into place any methodologies around that identifying group.

Thus, today, is the member saying, well, could you contemplate doing it in the future? Well, I will have to listen to the arguments. But those certainly have not in any way been presented to me at all. I say honestly, if they had, I would say so. They have not.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Ms. Friesen: The issue was again an issue of planning for which this project obviously has a significant function. A department which has a Native Education branch, whose purpose is to serve native students, one would anticipate, might have a need for knowing where the native students are, what levels they are at, what the graduation rates are, what the social and economic needs and academic needs of the students are in different parts of the province.

So it is related to the provision of native education through this department. How are those two elements going to be connected? Is there any prospect in this planning tool here of being of some use to the development or furthering of aboriginal education in the province?

Mr. Manness: We are just into the development of this system in very rudimentary terms. I mean, '93-94 was the first year we really began to do some measuring. Perhaps eventually in due course we will attempt to do in-depth analysis by breakout of some dimension. I am sure if this system is properly built, as we are trying to do, it will lend

itself to some specialized measurement. But right today we are just trying to build the system.

Ms. Friesen: Do you anticipate including the federal schools in Manitoba in this?

Mr. Manness: Unless we can get into some data base-sharing protocol with the federal government, which they have been pretty reluctant to do—I mean, in some other social areas, we have tried to see whether the federal government would share information and have been flatly refused. Not in education areas, but in some of the social programming areas, we have been trying to determine commonality of client with no support whatsoever from the federal government. I would have to think that is not going to change.

Ms. Friesen: What is the planning horizon for this project? When do you anticipate that it will be available for use by the department and by the other areas of public policy that you anticipated before?

* (2240)

Mr. Manness: We are having an add-on come on every few months, but I would have to think we are still two, three years away from legitimately being able to say this system is up and running in a fashion that we want to see it.

Ms. Friesen: This is going a little beyond this line, but I wonder if we could look at page 31 and identify the cost of this particular program.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it is the lion's share of appropriation 1.(e), and I believe that for '94-95 I think I saw the number \$993,000. So it is virtually all of that.

Ms. Friesen: Fine. Thank you.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, has the assistant deputy minister's office changed in terms of its role of the reorganization?

Mr. Manness: No, it has not.

Mr. Plohman: So the objectives and functions listed in the reorganization book on this are just more detail of the same thing that we see in the Supplementary Estimates. I was looking through this and seeing that objectives are much more delineated here in detail and specifics than we have here. Is this just an attempt to provide more

specific information to the department or to those who are being communicated this information as opposed to any change in role? I understand that the minister is saying, yes, that is the fact. I just wanted to ask if the information that is contained in here reflective of this year's management thrust, or is this based on the last year's and has been updated for this particular year since the reorganization took place?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we would always try to improve reporting. You always try to improve to provide more information rather than less. Yes, we are trying to enhance the financial controllership function. The member reads the Provincial Auditor's report, and he knows that every few years the Provincial Auditor comes around to another department and finds a couple of areas where enhancement of reporting and/or methods of accounting can be improved or changed, and that is reflected in the additional information.

Mr. Plohman: Is this office involved at all in the work of interdepartmental committees, for example, the ones dealing with the co-ordination of services?

Mr. Manness: The short answer is no.

Mr. Plohman: That is it right now.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I wanted just to go back to that one question I had asked earlier. I am not entirely convinced—when I read through the objectives it talks in terms of: to provide leadership in all areas of departmental financial administrative requirements. Then I go under Activity Identification: and represents the government by acting as a liaison between department and a variety of other departments, government agencies, organizations and individuals.

What I was trying to ask the minister, I think, is quite relevant to this particular area, and that is the impact of other departments on the Department of Education and potential in some of the offloading that has occurred in the past. One, for example, that has come to me in the past was the medical services for special needs children, whereas the responsibility is given to the Department of

Education, yet the funds do not necessarily follow. Just looking at it, again, it just seems that because this is the area where there is supposed to be liaison between the different departments, this might be the most appropriate time, not the actual dollars, but we are talking about the concept.

Mr. Manness: Again, I ask the member specifically to his issue of interrelationship with other departments, for sure it is not in this area, it is in the program area, but I will try and be more specific as to what he sees here.

The member has heard me talk about assessment, reform, the very basis of education and finance. Whom do we interact with? The Department of Rural Development. This is a financial area, right? We interact with the Department of Finance on a number of education—well, for instance, Department of Finance even on the Public Schools Finance Board. I mean, all that money that is brought in by way of education support levy. So we are interacting with the Department of Finance.

We are interacting with the Department of Government Services on leases. All money matters; that is the essence of the reference of interaction. The one area that he is dwelling on is a program area and it has nothing to do with the financial sector which is dealt with here.

Ms. Friesen: I am taking my cue here from the objective of the department which talks about financial control accountability reporting. I wanted to ask about Workforce 2000 and the financial accountability under Workforce 2000, particularly the recent newspaper article which suggested that the minister's concern about abuses in the program were certainly warranted, at least in the case of one individual.

I wonder if the minister could perhaps take us through the reporting of that particular abuse. How did it come to the minister's attention and how was it dealt with under this department's responsibility for accountability?

Mr. Manness: The central controllership function of government is housed here, but Workforce 2000 has its own controls in place. The member wants to talk about how we found out. We found out

because one of our consultants in the field was suspicious and reported it internally to within, I gather, the Workforce 2000 internal audit.

We in this particular branch look at the global funding, and I gather Workforce 2000 has to report to us as to how their cash flows are in maintaining the global funding, so this division here has kind of a distant view on the global macrosense on Workforce 2000. Yet, this group here, to the extent that they are concerned about there being enough money in place, can certainly call forward Workforce 2000 people to report.

I say to the member, this particular branch is a fair distance away, cash flow, revenue, expenditure, but not case-by-case review and audit.

Ms. Friesen: This section of the department, however, does evaluate departmental accounting and financial management activities, including financial reporting, so perhaps we could pursue that under that line.

How has this section of the department evaluated the accounting and the reporting and the evaluation of Workforce 2000?

* (2250)

Mr. Manness: We are, I guess, the mentor of the department and we tell all the program areas how it is they should set up financial controls and foster that development in a new program area.

And government, in its more centralized internal audit function, of course, anybody can call upon internal audit to review these programs. All they have to do anywhere in a department is report to the deputy and the deputy, of course, will call internal audit and this is what happened, of course, with respect to the case cited in Workforce 2000.

Ms. Friesen: I understand from the minister's responses of the particular case in question, could I go then to the broader policy questions of the—presumably once an individual case like that has been brought to the minister's attention, there is then a question of how this could have happened in the broader policy sense, could the minister explain to us what changes have been introduced

into the Workforce 2000 accountability procedures, as a result of that case?

Mr. Manness: From memory, I have to indicate that the systems obviously were in place because it was brought to our attention by one of our staffers, one of our training consultants, who reported it very quickly and internally. The government internal audit team went up very quickly to question certain of the employers to see whether there were any trends or consistencies. I asked for that information and was troubled with what was found as far as some of the looseness and demanded that we take it to the law enforcement people and see whether or not they had a case, and they sensed that they did not.

Internally, we have it in place and the Provincial Auditor has said so. All one has to do is look on page 49 of the last report. Our internal structures are in place. This proves they were in place. Indeed, no money is paid until we see claims and billings or at least proof that money has been paid out already, so the question is, is there proper accountability?

As the Auditor says, and I quote on page 49: "The program provides appropriate accountability reporting to program management and to the Legislature on the financial activities undertaken and the results achieved."

I guess what we found out in this latest example is that we have a pretty good system of accountability in place.

Now at the intake level, that is a fairer question on criteria, and that is fair game. But as far as the accountability system that we have in place and when you take into account that there are literally hundreds approaching thousands of files, to this point we have not been, by my estimation at least and many others, bilked at all. The one case where it was building, it was one of our alert staffers who caught it before there was any damage done, thank goodness.

Ms. Friesen: So the minister then is quite confident that there are no other abuses.

Mr. Manness: Well, as confident that my children are going to be home at two in the morning when they said they would be at home at two in the

morning. I mean, how do I know with certainty? I know that the independent third party, in this case, the Provincial Auditor, who has passed judgment on our procedures and our methodology for trying to maintain the integrity, as I have said, of a good faith model, that it has passed the test.

If the member is going to say, well, I will embarrass you, I will make sure that I catch you, so do not ever swear that this is the last time. Well, I am sure she will have another day in court or in the court of the Legislature when she will be able to try to embarrass me again because something else has surfaced.

We are talking literally of several millions of dollars very thinly spread over literally hundreds if not thousands of training opportunities and files. I think to question whether or not all the funds have gone in the right direction, that is a fair question, but the extent to which, once that decision has been made and whether or not they have been wasted or whether somebody is taking advantage of them, I honestly believe that it has been one of the very good programs of government to deliver 99.9 cents on the dollar to where it was supposed to go.

Of course, the proof is in the pudding, and the proof is in the positive responses that are coming from many, many employers, and of course, many of the 55,000 people who have been trained under the program.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, my intention, of course, is not to embarrass the minister. That is neither here nor there, and the minister should not take it personally. My intention was to push in fact how far he was prepared to back his assertions that everything had always been in place, is now in place and presumably will always be in place, and he is as confident of that I gather as—[interjection] Well, you used another example which perhaps is not a fair one to repeat.

The Auditor to whom the minister keeps turning for reassurance about this program also recommended that the minister publish annually an accounting of this program. So far, in my questions in the Legislature, the minister has not given an indication that he is prepared to do that.

Can we pursue that a little now? The Auditor's recommendations for the publication of an annual accountability, is the minister preparing to do that next year with his annual report?

Mr. Manness: Well, I guess I would have to ask what the term "public accountability" means to the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen). I mean, there are different ways of doing it. I think when I provide to the caucuses of the NDP and the Liberals kind of a listing of where we are at any point in time, that is a form of accountability. Is the member talking about frameworks? I do not know. We think that we can do something with respect to frameworks. The division, of course, then has agreed to review its plan for the evaluation of Workforce 2000 within the context of the available human services that we have within the division.

Ms. Friesen: Well, my question was specifically, is the minister preparing or is he prepared to follow the recommendation that I think he has got in front of him from the Auditor's report, to publish an annual account of Workforce 2000?

Mr. Manness: I guess I will have to ask department whether they have sat down with the Provincial Auditor to determine exactly what she means by that. If I made public the information I made available to the opposition caucuses, is that disclosure significant enough, or is there something more that is contemplated? I thought that, in giving it to the other parties, in essence that is what I was doing. I really thought that I was living up to the spirit of the Provincial Auditor's request.

Ms. Friesen: The Provincial Auditor's request refers to an attachment to the annual report of the department. The provision of the information to our caucus was most welcome, but I should remind the minister that it did take two letters this year, two letters last year—the provision of not a very helpful document in the first instance last year. It is not as though this is public information freely delivered. It came on the day that the session opened, almost to the day a month after I had requested it.

I think that what the Provincial Auditor is suggesting also goes beyond what the minister has

provided. I believe that her recommendation there was in response to suggestions that I made at the Public Accounts committee about particular kinds of audit for effectiveness.

Mr. Manness: I dare say, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we have gone far beyond what the Provincial Auditor has said. In my read, the Provincial Auditor asked that we disclose the results of the evaluation in the department annual report. The Provincial Auditor did not ask us to disclose the actual files, not the files, but a summary of all of the activity under the program. So we have gone far beyond what the Provincial Auditor even referenced.

Ms. Friesen: To repeat my question again, is the minister intending to comply with the recommendation of the Provincial Auditor?

* (2300)

Mr. Manness: Well, do we agree that that recommendation was the disclosure of the results of the evaluation in the department annual report? Are we talking about the same thing?

Ms. Friesen: Yes, I am talking about that specific recommendation of the Auditor, which I have asked the minister about in Question Period, and I am looking for an answer as to whether that will be included in next year's annual report.

Mr. Manness: Well, we certainly are giving serious consideration to including that with next year's annual report.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, one of the elements that is very disturbing about Workforce 2000 is the evaluation—not in this case only the financial evaluation—but the actual evaluation of what I expect in audit terms is called "effectiveness," and I have brought this to the attention of both the Auditor and to previous ministers in that the evaluation is most commonly done by the same person who does the training. In some cases, but not all, the person who does the training is also the owner of the establishment. There are some very clear difficulties, I think, here for anybody in looking at accountability of any program of whatever nature.

The minister has said now on a number of occasions that he is convinced that the right controls are in place, and I think he was thinking only in the context of financial controls. Could I address his attention now to those kinds of evaluations of effectiveness, or, as the minister has said in newspaper reports, of whether in fact training even occurred, when you do have this situation of the trainer doing on an extremely informal basis, sometimes only a phone call, to the actual company where he has been training?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I suppose if we had the department evaluation in front of us, it would clear up some of the commentary around that question, certainly, but then it may— [interjection] Yes, it might do the opposite because the member might say, well, who have you asked, and how do you put in the hands of a third party more objective—I guess the member can always ask that. I mean, I do not know how to ultimately answer a question on effectiveness other than to say that, when employers tell us in a large measure, if we did not have this program, their total staff complement, their number of employees, would be down significantly in many cases. There is no way that they could do this training on their own because what training they would have to access would be, by necessity, longer term, more difficult to access. Government has to make a decision whether or not that is honesty at work, I mean, those types of statements.

You know, I do not know ultimately, in time maybe we will do a research project and ask an independent group, but certainly at this point in time we tried to survey in some honest fashion and believe that basically we are dealing with an honest public who is going to tell us the truth. To believe opposite is to say that there is not an honest business community out there, and they are out just for government handouts. So it depends on the base of the beginning of your statement. If you believe that the business community is dishonest, then whether you random sample them and you try to determine whether or not your program was effective, nothing will convince you by approaching them directly that it is.

I come from a different perspective. I believe that generally the majority of business people are honest, and we ask them the very legitimate question, is this program of value? Do you have additional employees or a program in place that you would not otherwise have if this program had not been here? Then I say that then the results are ones we have to live with. We have to take those results and, of course, we impose them—we still do an awful lot of monitoring. Our staff are on site. The separation of staff functions from training functions from monitoring, this is what we try to do to, again, get a greater understanding of the effectiveness. That is legitimate. That is the member's role, too, to ask questions about how effective the programs are, and I understand, but I do not know what more we could do, other than setting up a third-party tribunal or some outside agency to pass judgment. Yet the Provincial Auditor—when you turn to the Provincial Auditor to report as to framework, as to objectives and accountability and the monitoring procedures you have in place—has looked at all of that and is giving us a passing grade.

So I guess we have to disagree then as to the starting point, and the starting point is whether or not the business community is basically honest.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chair, I do not believe I raised any question of the business community's honesty or dishonesty. That was the minister's starting point. My concern was for the value of a system whereby the only evaluation is by the person who has done the training, and this is in a context where the curriculum is not available, where there is not necessarily—in fact, in the majority of cases, there is no certification at the end. So the very issues which the minister is concerned about in the public education system—standardization, curriculum, certification, standardized tests—are not there in this system. So under that situation we do have to be concerned about the process and the evaluation of public monies being transferred into private hands.

Mr. Manness: Again, that last phrase indicates that that is bad. That is bad: the transfer of public money into private hands and—

Ms. Friesen: And the accountability.

Mr. Manness: The accountability question is fair, but the transfer into private hands does not end there. It ends by training individuals. So then let us focus not on the transfer of money, but let us focus then, and rightfully so, on the effectiveness and what training is there.

I would say that, in due course, as this program continues to grow in popularity and acceptance, and, indeed, be mirrored in other jurisdictions, ultimately, we will try to measure more concretely the areas of study and even yet reach out to determine with greater comfort that there is—well, I hate to use the words standardize and testing because that is why we brought this program in. You could not apply standardized testing here. This was to be specific, very specific to the training need for that business.

So I had somebody the other day come and tell me, he says, you know what happened under Workforce 2000? I had the ability to go down into Tennessee and learn how to clean rugs at the highest level. I said, well, how does that help the value of the economy in the province of Manitoba? He says, well, this way—I mean he thought about it—I, for some of the better customers, am now displacing and providing a service that otherwise individuals were being called for and paid for outside of our province, and how it is you clean these very expensive rugs. He says, I am the only person in Manitoba that does it; I never would have had that expertise.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I can tell you, we never would have offered that as a course at one of our trade schools, and we never would have offered it anywhere in our post-secondary area. But he said with the little bit of support that he got to do that, he is now setting up a business in Manitoba.

I say, you cannot set standards for that. The member says that I am wrong, that I can set standards for that. Well, maybe she can tell me how it is that all the great thinkers today can set standards for everything, and that does not work at cross purposes with what I said dealing with the public school system, in my mind.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, in a number of areas, dry cleaning, rug cleaning, specialized use of chemicals and those kinds of areas, there are, indeed, certifications by the trade itself, by business associations, and they do provide certification of a level of skill or a level of training which has been taken. That certainly does occur in some areas of the private training; in the printing trades, for example, there are certifications which are publicly available, which have been met by people in some of these programs.

The issue is that that is not the case in all of the programs. In some of the programs of Workforce 2000, training takes place in a public, accountable manner. Those people having access to courses at universities and at the community colleges through Workforce 2000, there is a publicly accountable curriculum. There is a classroom with a publicly accountable teacher, and there is a collective process which goes on which is in itself a measure of some kind of accountability. That is not the case in all elements of Workforce 2000, and those are the issues, I think, where we do have some concern about the level of accountability.

* (2310)

What I am understanding from the minister is that he will look at the recommendations of the Auditor and that he himself is quite confident that the kinds of controls which are there now are adequate.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I guess in a perfect world, not to my world, because I would not consider it perfect, but to some, you would have certification in every, every area of skill, and I cannot accept that.

I am saying that, as we are moving into the new world, the new world of innovation, there are going to be trades and practices that are going to be in place and they had better come here, and there will not be standards in place and there will not be certification methods in place. They will come in due course, but the innovation and the practice and the wealth creation and the reaching out in the market will find itself long before the standards and certification. That is the way it has always

been and that is the way it will always be, and that is the essence of innovation and wealth creation.

Now, the member wants to get into some of the existing trades that have been with us longstanding, traditional—fine; I understand her point, but Workforce 2000 was not only for the public or the traditional trade area. It was also for the new wave of innovation that we want to catch in this province.

Ms. Friesen: Well, the minister can resort to futurism to defend this, but it seems to me that we have in existence in the program, in Workforce 2000, monies which are being paid out not in futuristic or new technologies, but in areas which perhaps are quite traditional or areas which—

An Honourable Member: Like used-car sales.

Ms. Friesen: Yes.

Mr. Manness: That is a misnomer and you know it.

Ms. Friesen: And where is the accountability for those particular programs?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, we have not put a dollar into selling of used cars in a training sense, and if we did—[interjection] No, we have not.

An Honourable Member: They are new cars.

Mr. Manness: No, there was a dimension of a new wave of leasing arrangements that has hit our province, but I say to the members opposite, these are legitimate areas for question, and I am reviewing that at this time.

Ms. Friesen: Is the minister saying there have been no courses under Workforce 2000 in salesmanship, in car dealerships?

Mr. Manness: No, I am not saying that. I am saying, let us focus specifically on what the car dealerships are doing, and if they are in areas of computerization, which we are reaching out to in this technical age to many people in various areas, and if we are talking about new leasing arrangements, and if we are talking about, of course, technical areas in the maintenance side, that is a long stretch from selling used cars, to use the words. That is quite a stretch.

Ms. Friesen: Well, I would suggest that the minister go back over his records, and certainly in the first two years of this program there were indeed programs in the selling of cars which were not involving new leases, which were not the technical programs that may have been involved in the last year, and I would be prepared to suggest some names to him if he is interested in looking at the accountability of this program.

The same principles come in when we are looking at the hairdressers who brought in the motivational speaker. Certainly that is an area, I think, where accountability of the program was sadly lacking. Is the minister convinced that those kinds of loopholes have been closed?

Mr. Manness: I am on the record as saying that these areas concern me, and I think many of these loopholes have been closed. Have they all been closed? I hope so.

Ms. Friesen: There is more than one leap of faith in this program.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I do not know why it is that the member for Wolseley hates this program with such passion. It must be because she sensed that training dollars or education dollars have been taken from the safe, protected havens of community colleges and universities and have been directed to a freer existence of the marketplace. That must be it. It must be basically a philosophical issue. I can think of nothing else, because it would be great if we could maintain the status quo and find additional money to put to this, but the reality is we cannot.

Any reading you do today tells you that the traditional models—even though we are trying to find additional money as a government to put into community colleges, and yes, we did dismantle some of their programming and now we are building it back up, and that was done by design. That was done by design for a good purpose, because you had to get in tune with what was happening in the world, and I say to the member, part of that is to do anything you can to promote and foster innovation, short-term work.

Yes, the entry point and the program, the entry point—and the member that shepherded in

Workforce 2000 is sitting with us and I congratulate him because he saw how important it was that we bring this program in quickly. Originally the intake was very wide and it was done deliberately. It was done deliberately to get our business community the realization that they had a responsibility in training, they had a responsibility to put some of their own dollars forward, and to do that in some cases maybe we overincented, but we did it, we overincented.

We took a wide intake, and we did that deliberately to try and make our corporate community realize that they had a responsibility. It was to move them into this generation of training and it has been very successful, and now, as pointed out by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen)—listen, did you know that some money went there and did you know that a fraction went there, and are you not worried? Do you not think you should change?

Now it is time to provide the finer tuning, and that is what we are doing—the finer tuning. So I am not offended with the questions from the member, but the program is here to stay because it has been very, very successful.

Ms. Friesen: The minister wants to look at some principles. He has just suggested that one principle is to encourage the business community of Manitoba to increase their payment for training, and certainly that would be a very valuable goal in any province of Canada. We all know what the statistics are in the investment in training by the business community in Canada overall. It is abysmally low, has been for generations.

So given that and given that the minister is now fine tuning, would he, for example, next year give a grant or a payroll tax rebate to companies which already have a strong commitment to investment in training, and the one that I have used in this example is, of course, IBM, which runs over 400 courses a year. It has a very high reputation for a commitment to a corporate culture of training, and yet this is one of the ones that the minister chose to invest in. I am not quite sure where the minister's priorities are in that case, and while I laud his goals, why did that one fit in?

* (2320)

Mr. Manness: I would just wish that public policy setting was so easy, that you could nicely weave the fence of being in or outside of a program through all of various sectors and make it black and white. I remember when we brought the program in, certainly my portion of it on the payroll tax offset, I mean, I would not provide any offset to the financial industry.

Well, we did that, but then we began to realize the financial circle, that means banks, it means insurance companies. All of a sudden we realized well, hey, we want to reach out and put into place in Manitoba a calling centre, develop a centre of calling. Then we have to change the criteria a little bit because we deem that to be an important strategic area of economic growth. These are policy decisions made, yet hopefully within the context of a principle that still can stand up over a period of these changes, and so far we have done that.

Now I, without fear of criticism, when we first brought the program in again—and I am threshing straw here—we took in a wide entry. Now it is time to fine tune it, and we will continue to do that under this program. We will continue to do it. Did IBM receive—it is eligible because of costs related to training and transferable generic workplace skills. So when IBM does this training, is that training proprietary to IBM? Does the skill stop at the door when the employee leaves and decides to go to another business? Well, of course not. Generic, the term said in the statement—generic.

An Honourable Member: How do we know?

Mr. Manness: How do we know? We search these things out. We look at them. Our trainers there, they go look at them. So who is the benefactor of that? Well, obviously, in the first instance, IBM, but if there is downsizing or if indeed something—the ultimate person who has this knowledge base and can use it hopefully in other workplace opportunities is the employee. Is that not what it is all about, to empower the employee? That is what Workforce 2000 is all about.

Ms. Friesen: The minister says—again, we are in the context here of the accountability of this particular program—that he is now aiming at fine tuning the program. I asked the question about IBM as an example of a company which has a high reputation as being a devotion to training in its own corporate culture, and I asked the minister, are these the kind of companies, those with already sound investments in training, which will continue to be eligible under Workforce 2000?

The minister answered by going off onto a tangent and saying it was generic skills. We can come to the issue of generic skills in a minute. We are talking about corporate training at the moment. If the goal is to encourage and to initiate corporate training cultures, is that where the fine tuning of this program is going?

Mr. Manness: There are obviously several goals but that is one of them. Are we taking—the fine tuning, is it drawing us down one path that we will follow forever? The answer to that is probably no. We will continue to shift the emphasis of criteria as need be to achieve the desired end. The desired end, in this case, in my point of view at this time, is to try and do two things: provide the generic workplace skills and secondly, to try and also provide value-added to the Manitoba economy.

Two very, very broad areas. Yet within that, given that we have a shortage of dollars to allocate to this program, we may very well—I mean, we set aside the financial circle business. Even though they do an awful lot of training internally, we set them aside, and yet we encouraged within that subset, telecommunications, which is a first cousin in many respects to the financial side. So it is very hard to do pure categorization of sectors and businesses. That is where the first problem is, and that will always be a difficulty when you are trying to set in place public policy.

Ms. Friesen: So the answer to my question essentially is that the criteria are going to vary?

Mr. Manness: This program, if it is with us for a generation, the fine-tuning criteria will always vary but the general goals as long as we are in government are the two that I enunciated just in my earlier statement.

But, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, again, what are we talking about—eligibility criteria for '94-95 include businesses competing in national-international markets, businesses introducing new technology, equipment to improve productivity and profitability, new and existing businesses expanding in emerging sectors of the provincial economy, and small business entrepreneurial development. Those are the guidelines, but the general umbrella goals are the two that I enunciated previously.

Ms. Friesen: Somewhere in that list of criteria and the two that the minister mentioned I seem to have lost track of where the empowerment of the individual comes.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the empowerment of the individual comes through additional learning, which is the generic training for the most part in the examples cited by the member, and the specific skill set that an individual can carry from one job to the next. That is empowerment in my view. That is learning transferable from one company to another.

Ms. Friesen: Can the minister give me an idea of what he considers to be generic skills, transferable skills? We have been using the example of IBM, for example. What are the generic skills that were provided in that particular training program?

Mr. Manness: I will gladly try and answer this when I have my staff here in Workforce 2000. I would have to say that an example of generic training is computer application, and it can be used from one place to the other. If the member wants greater insight into the specific program offered by IBM, I will look into that. I am not saying I am going to provide it, but I will see whether it has anything proprietary to it or not.

Ms. Friesen: May I just put that on the record that I think what the minister has pointed to is, in fact, the very issue of accountability in these programs? It is that some of the training is, in fact, proprietary, that it does relate very much to particular companies, not so much the empowering of the individual that the minister is talking about, but particularly in areas of salesmanship, human relations, "total quality management," all of which

is being taught under this program, that the issues are not ones that are amenable to the kind of accountability which should be there under public programs.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, I guess this is where we have to all agree to disagree. In my view, virtually all of these skills are transferable. I cannot cite one case having come to my attention where that was not the case, but maybe the member has had somebody express that to her, that the training they are learning on site is of no value to them once they leave a particular location of employ. We will have to agree to disagree, I suppose.

Ms. Friesen: Yes, I think there are fundamental differences of principle here, but I think there is also the issue that one of the ultimate leaps of faith in this program is that we have to take the minister's word for it because there is no publication of the curriculum, or of the trainer, or of the selection of people to be trained, or of the final result, the outcome, all of the elements which in a public system the minister is trying to focus our attention upon and to insist upon a new kind or even old kinds of accountability. Yet for the private system it is something that we have to take on faith of the minister.

* (2330)

Mr. Manness: My statement stands. Obviously, I sense that virtually all of the business community is doing the honourable thing in providing training that is of a net contribution to the employee and to society. In due course, were it an absolutely perfect world and we knew beyond what our staff tell us—and our staff go there. They go and look to see what exactly is taught. They have access to the training manuals. They have access to these programs. I have delegated my responsibility to them to bring back the word. To that end, there is something that is being taught, and it is in keeping with the general criteria of this program.

The member may choose to disbelieve that because of a couple of examples that she cites that call into question whether any training has been done. I am mindful of those. I am taking action to

deal with those as they arise, but I say to her that overall this program is working well.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chair, I do want to repeat that the issue is not the honesty of the business community, which the minister keeps raising, nor is it the question of my disbelief that is an issue. The issue is having a system in place which is accountable to the public for the expenditure of public monies, and those are my concerns.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, maybe the member can tell me then how the \$200-and-some million that I directed to the University of Manitoba is all held as being accountable. You see, I have to answer for that no differently than I do for Workforce 2000.

The Provincial Auditor has no more or less access to the University of Manitoba than she does to this program. Yet I am held accountable for every one of these dollars that is spent, and yet nobody is held accountable for the results and indeed the training that takes place at our universities. You never see the president of the University of Winnipeg here made accountable to the Legislature or to the public.

If the member wants to talk about accountability in my role as minister, I can draw some pretty strong parallels, too, because I dare say a lot of people today are questioning the accountability associated with hundreds of millions of dollars spent in a number of areas of education, just not in Workforce 2000.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Chair, if the minister wants to draw some parallels or some comparisons to the accountability of public universities, I think that is an interesting issue, something we could raise under that particular area.

I would suggest to him that the monies which he applies to universities are distributed by the Universities Grants Commission, of which he appoints the vast majority of the members. He has an equal appointee on every board of every university in this province. The board minutes of every university are published. The annual reports of the universities are published. Every graduate of the university at a graduate level is evaluated by

essentially a national process of external examination. Departments are annually—or it is not, I should say, I think it is every four years—evaluated, and they are evaluated on a rotation basis by national visiting committees whose reports are made publicly available. They would be available to the minister through the boards and through his appointees on those boards.

The curriculum of every course taught in our public universities is available to anybody who phones up the department and says, I would like to see what the program is, I would like to see how the marks are distributed, I would like to see who is teaching that course. The qualifications of the people teaching those courses are listed in the front of every university calendar.

So I think the issue of public accountability of universities is there for the minister if he chooses to use the avenues which are available to him, and indeed there have been. He mentions bringing the university presidents to the Legislature. There have been proposals from time to time that indeed there be an education committee of this Legislature which does examine such public issues of the universities. I wonder perhaps if the minister has looked at those.

Those are a variety of issues that we could discuss under the public responsibility and accountability of universities and colleges perhaps at a later date.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, the member makes my point. Almost all of the examples the member used were issues of reporting and the issues of how it is that government tries to reflect public policies by way of appointment of certain individuals to boards.

The big issue is effectiveness. That is what the member talked about. Reporting in itself is not effectiveness. We started this whole conversation around effectiveness, and so the question is, to use the parallel, are the universities effective? I am saying they are, but how do I know with great certainty? I mean, having a standing committee of the Legislature deal with education, is that going to answer the question? So these are the

choices—[interjection] Yes, it was my suggestion. I agree.

An Honourable Member: Now you say it would not be effective.

Mr. Manness: No, I did not say that. I said is it going to deal with the question of effectiveness? So if I call the business people here in a standing committee, will it deal with the question of effectiveness to satisfy the member? It might. “Would it?” is the question. I dare say, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, it probably would not. So I only drew the parallels to deal with the question of effectiveness, and how is it that reporting in itself is the guarantor of effectiveness? Well, it is not.

Ms. Friesen: I believe that the minister responded with his university question, not on the issue of effectiveness but on the issue of the one that I had raised about the leap of faith, where we had to take the minister’s word for the effectiveness and accountability of Workforce 2000. That was when he suggested that he was in a similar position with the universities, and I suggested there were a number of ways in which he was not.

If he would like to look at the issue of effectiveness in his universities, we could look, for example, at the system which evaluates departments on a national basis. We could look at the accreditation, international accreditation, in fact, of certain types of programs, for example, dentistry and engineering. We could look at the evaluation of every graduate, from a Master’s to the Ph.D. level, by external examinations, which do in fact by external examiners who visit on site and who examine the candidate so that there are national standards continuously being established and being developed across the country. It is a kind of guarantee of effectiveness. Obviously, not totally there, but it is a process of determining effectiveness which we do not have in this program.

To come back to Workforce 2000, my issues are, and we can perhaps look at these more closely when we get to the Workforce 2000 line in terms of the individual grants which have been made. What I was focusing upon here was the role of this

particular department in evaluating departmental accounting activities.

Mr. Manness: Well, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, to sum up what I said a half an hour ago, some distance away with respect to the Workforce 2000 program.

Mr. Plohman: There could be a lot more that could be said on that, and there will be, I guess, Mr. Deputy Chairperson.

There is another objective for Expected Results in this area dealing with the public schools funding program which states: a schools funding program that effectively meets its objectives, including program results, real and perceived equities and satisfaction of school divisions and other educational organizations.

Then others allude to some of the same thing, and the minister talked about the assessment program or the assessment liaison with other departments.

I know we are going to talk about public school's financing in another area, but in terms of developing the model that was used for this year, I would assume that this branch, this office, would have a role to play in terms of equity of financing for the school divisions throughout the province.

I have raised this with the minister, and he says that funding is not an issue, but in terms of the impact of reassessment and how that has impacted on the funding formula, and how it has resulted in tremendous differences in what some school divisions are getting in terms of increases or decreases, as the case may be, I think that we have to take a look at that issue. This might be the appropriate place to look at what kind of study and analysis was done to determine where the cutoff might be as to what divisions would be given increases on the basis of assessment decreases or increases and how that would apply. The minister must have done modelling with the computer information that was available to determine the impact of reassessment to how that would impact on funding.

* (2340)

I see cases where, for example, in the Lord Selkirk School Division, supplementary funding was reduced from \$512,303 in 1993 to \$14,000, almost wiped right out. In the Interlake School Division, it was dropped from \$403,000 down to \$12,000, almost wiped right out.

As a result of the change in assessment, I have also been advised that in some cases school divisions that had an increase in assessment over 10 percent, about there, received decreases in provincial funding, whereas those who had assessment increases below 10 percent basically received the same or more funding. There must have been some trial runs of this to determine the impact of reassessment in terms of the impact on school divisions.

I am saying this because I know some school divisions would have been able to capture additional dollars with the same mill rate. Obviously, when they have a higher assessment, each mill is going to raise more money for them, the local levy. But they could not do it because of the cap. So they were not able to recoup the funding that was lost because the province reduced their funding as a result of higher assessments, so they lost on both sides. They got higher assessment; the province says, okay, you got higher assessment, you are reduced in terms of the number of dollars that we are going to give you. But they could not make it up because of the impact of the cap that was in place.

That is what they are telling me, and that is why I see some school divisions, Mr. Deputy Chairperson, like Lord Selkirk, which cut 5.4 percent; Transcona, 3.5; Evergreen, 6.87; Interlake, 4.06; and others with an increase. So, when the minister talks about a 2.6 percent decrease for the public schools, in fact, some have had much greater cuts, and others have had increases. I do not know how that can be perceived as equitable or fair in terms of its impact on students, on programming.

The Interlake School Division, for example, advises me, and I think it is borne out in the frame in reports that they are the fourth lowest expenditure per pupil division in the province, and

yet they see, this year, this major reduction. How can that be justified? It cannot be based on the amount of spending that school divisions are doing.

What would seem to be efficient school divisions are being penalized, and so I do not know what the minister is using for criteria, whether he developed a standard level of service anywhere as to what was expected and what it would cost to provide that service and then try to fund school divisions in an equitable way. Was any of this done? Was there an analysis done? So, if I look at the overall situation, even for the last two years and we are just trying to get information on both years together, some school divisions received decreases both years; others received increases.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Deputy Chairperson, let me make the record clear right from the start. We practice no ad hockery on this. The formula is the formula, but there was a higher-order restraint placed against the formula. It was not even placed against the formula; it was against the results of the formula. The member rightfully points out that what has caused some greater pressure on some of these school divisions is the effect of Bill 16. Had it not been in place, obviously, school divisions would have been able to inflict some greater tax impact upon their ratepayers, but Bill 16 is in place. So when the reassessment came along, the government of the day had to decide to do one of two things. It had to decide whether or not it wanted to put in a buffer, an ad hoc measure, a transition. The government decided not to do that and to maintain the results of the formula, not to change the formula.

Now the member says, well, what did assessment do. Well, assessment had half the divisions gaining the net impact of assessment, had half the divisions gaining more or less, and half the divisions losing, because that is what it is, assessment increase. I believe it increased across the province 10 percent roughly, the value of the plant, as we say, of all of our assets, all the real estate, increased 10 percent.

If you were in a school division where it increased 6 percent—because between the

balances of farmland going down and homes going up and you did all the measurements across the school division, some divisions went up 6 percent. They became greater benefactors of the formula, because that is the way the formula is supposed to work.

Other areas, and the member has used Interlake as an example several times, it has had a growing base of wealth because of a large movement, particularly into the community of Stonewall. That drove funding to that division up by 8.4 percent in '92-93. Of course, Interlake has not given him that information, but that is the level of additional support it had under this very same formula in '92-93. There was no complaint. There was no complaint from Interlake in that year. Then in '93-94, another increase of 1.7 percent, Interlake. I was not in the office then, but I do not think Interlake came in to complain. But in '94-95 when it fell, the total level of support fell by 3.9 percent or by per pupil, 5.5 percent, then the complaints have come in. But the formula has not changed, dealing with that particular school division.

Now there are some school divisions that took days off, do not have surpluses—there were just a couple—and that we have tried to reach out, in spite of the fact I hate ad hockery because very quickly you have no formula. Then no minister can sit here and look anybody in the face and say, well, we have a system that is fair; it has taken into account the past; it is going to take into account the future; it is going to try and be based on some constant base of principles. The minister cannot do that if you start providing ad hoc measures all the way along.

That is what happened to the NDP, of course. That is exactly what happened to them. By the time we came to government, nobody was on the formula. Everybody was guaranteed their level of expenditure. Regardless of whether student numbers were falling, everybody was guaranteed. I think there was—one division, two divisions left. I am sorry, maybe that is the way the NDP want to govern. I will not. I cannot govern that way.

So we tried to maintain the program, and I think that basically in most respects, it is a fair sharing of

the resources taking into account the wealth of the divisions. Now, certainly it has had greater impact on some divisions than others. That is a given. Once the cap comes off, divisions will be able to react accordingly.

* (2350)

Mr. Plohman: The minister is allowing some school divisions to borrow from next year. How can he justify that? In fact, they are borrowing against next year's grants and there is no commitment that they are going to get more money. What kind of false hope is he trying to give them? Is this something they are supposed to collect from their local levy on the basis that the cap will be off the following year, or how is he justifying that as opposed to providing—I mean this seems contrary to the minister's philosophy that you pay as you go, or to whatever extent you can, to have these school divisions being given special allowances to borrow from next year rather than providing them with an exception this year. What kind of parity is there in that kind of a system?

Mr. Manness: What the member is advocating is that anybody who had a negative fall, give them money. That is what he is advocating. He did not tell me where to draw the lines between those who needed it at a greater level than maybe at a lesser level because they were a negative down below the 2.6. So it is easy for him to say when he sits in his chair, if anybody is severely hit—he does not define severely—I gather what he means is if they have any negative funding at all, give them more money. Sorry, I do not have the tens of millions of dollars more to give.

What we were trying to do is say, look, you did take some extreme measures last year, to a couple of these divisions. You did live within the intent and the spirit of Bill 22. You have no surplus and we do not want to see you, given that you have done these things, decimate your programming, so why do we not advance-fund you some next year. Obviously if you have greater flexibility to go to your ratepayers, you will have another year in which to make a budget and over a period of time come up with your own solution. I thought it was a

fair offer in the couple of instances where it was provided.

Mr. Plohman: Yes, Agassiz and, I think, Transcona are two of those. I do not know which others that the minister is referring to, but I cannot understand—again, he did not answer the question as to how this was keeping the formula pure as opposed to supporting those divisions with severe hardship.

The minister gathers wrong if he gathers that I am saying anyone who had a negative impact should have been given additional dollars. I think there is clear need in some school divisions where they have provided information to the minister to show that they do not have surpluses to draw on. They have reduced teachers' salaries by way of Bill 22 and asked the teachers to contribute to the operation of the school division through that bill and others have had really no options left, some of those divisions, without having to cut programs.

The minister knows that some divisions are having much greater hardship than others. I mean, look at Lord Selkirk School Division is laying off or severing some 47 staff. Twenty-five of those were teachers, instructional staff. Some 22, I think, were support staff. Transcona is reducing some 30 staff.

I think, when we see the impact on the quality of education impacting on the children in the schools, and the minister could define a level of service that is expected and through no fault of their own they are having to do this because of the impact of the minister's formula and reassessment this year, that some exceptions could have been made on that basis.

I do not know whether he is going to have the opportunity to be in government a year from now and if Bills 16 and 22 come off, if in fact they are not renewed by this government, how he is going to provide the supplementary funding that is required to offset the deficit financing that has been going on, in effect, for the last couple of years, the deficit financing by drawing from reserves or using Bill 22.

There are a whole lot of things that have to be corrected when we come off these artificially

imposed restrictions that have taken place over the last couple of years through Bills 22 and 16. I do not know if the minister has any proposal as to how that—does he propose giving traditional provincial dollars then to those divisions that have to make up the shortfall then just to balance their budget, to get back to zero? Or is he going to say, well, you get that from your local taxpayers?

Mr. Manness: Well, that is the essence of Bill 16. Bill 16 was to protect the local taxpayers, because we have been around in government too long to see that when we do assessment—[interjection] Well, we said to school divisions, yes, you are going to have to come to grips with your expenditures. I mean, everything about Bill 22 and Bill 16 was purely expenditure. You are going to have to come to grips, and, yes, it did not fall out as nicely and neatly and fairly across all divisions as we might like to have seen.

I can certainly indicate to the member, had we begun to understand purely by just providing transitional grants to the two divisions he mentioned, there would have been a lineup at my door from divisions that the year previous had taken eight days. Lord Selkirk did not take eight days the year before; it took three.

We tried to get the message out—my predecessor, the former minister, tried to get the message out how important it was that divisions take seriously that this was just not a one-year problem. This was going to be a two-year problem. So we have tried to be open and share exactly where we see education funding going. With respect to Lord Selkirk School Division, they had a large surplus; they have used a lot of it. They have also reduced some staff. They have, I understand, a very low mill rate, and next year they will have to make their own decisions, given that Bill 16 is no longer in place.

I say to the member that at least we have got an educational funding formula that we will again go to next year. I do not know what changes are being contemplated; we are just starting that process now. It will not be significant because right now all the divisions are on that formula.

Mr. Plohman: Just why did you cut the supplementary funding by an amount as the result of—well, it had an effect because of reassessment. It had the effect of causing some of these school divisions who were, I guess we could say, have-not become have divisions or something to that effect. So, in effect, those school divisions lost this money but could not recoup it. It does not reflect their ability to obtain funding for their division because they could not recoup it through local taxation. They were being penalized for having higher assessment by the province but were not able to recoup it. I mean, it was a classic case of being between a rock and a hard place. They have no justification in terms of their programming and the level of expenditures. It was not done on a fair basis. If you are caught in it, you are caught in it.

The minister seems to take pride in saying, well, I am not going to play around with this formula. I mean, there were some divisions like Lord Selkirk this year and Interlake that lost all of their supplementary funding. Why was the supplementary funding not maintained at the same level as the previous years, regardless of the reassessment, because they could not take advantage of it? They could not take advantage of the reassessment.

Mr. Manness: Then we throw out the whole model. This model was supposed to shift. What do you say to the divisions who have been waiting for years, knowing that they do not have the wealth that was recorded and saying no for another year? Even though you are poor and the numbers prove that you are much poorer than you thought, yet for another year you will see your tax dollars transferred over to the other divisions. That is why.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being twelve o'clock, committee rise.

HEALTH

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply is dealing with the Estimates for the Department of Health. We are on 1.(f)(1), page 81 of the

Estimates manual. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

1.(f) Health Information Systems (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,099,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$3,684,800—pass.

We will defer dealing with 1.(a) until completion of all other resolutions.

2. Healthy Public Policy Programs (a) Administration.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Chairperson, I move

THAT this committee censure the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) for failing to support real health care reform for the development of preventative community-based health programs, and instead, wasting much needed Health dollars on high-priced consultants like Connie Curran who are seeking to Americanize Manitoba's health care system.

We have copies of the motion.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, we have been in this committee now for over a week—

Madam Chairperson: The motion is in order.

Mr. Chomiak: —attempting to determine if the course of action adopted by this government this fiscal year or by this particular minister is different than the past, and it is fairly clear that the government initiatives and the government measures adopted are continuing. We have not heard any different in terms of responses from this minister to our queries or to our responses.

This afternoon we heard that the Connie Curran contract would still be paid out despite the fact that the province has three-quarters of a million dollars waiting in trust that could go to much needed health care reform, Madam Chairperson.

The minister has confirmed that still the government's plan, albeit quieted down now that we are heading more into an election year, is for 1,500 more people to be laid off at the Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface.

The minister has met with many, many groups and attempted to talk to them, but it is talk. As I

indicated in my first comments, it is a monologue disguised as a dialogue. I have had groups come back to me after meeting with the minister and said to me, why does the minister say one thing to us and another thing outside and another thing in front of the press? It happens over and over again. It happened as recently as this week.

We have waited for some new initiatives in terms of community-based care, and they have not taken place. In fact, community-based care has been cut back through the imposition of Bill 22 to community-based care. So nothing has fundamentally changed in this health care system.

We have tried to ask the minister questions about the new MMA agreement. It appears the minister is intent on deinsuring services in years three, four and five of the agreement, and the minister has not said anything to the contrary. We have asked in Question Period, we have asked in Estimates, and still we have gotten nowhere from this minister and this government.

It is clear the government's so-called health reform continues along its path. Now they attempt to disguise it by doing a bit of a better PR campaign than previously, but all the fundamentals are still there: the Americanization of the system, Connie Curran, more layoffs, more bed closures, no expansion of home care, no expansion of community-based care. The course continues; the die is cast.

It is clear that if Manitobans want to reform the health care system, if they want a better health care system, if they want to improve the quality of care, they cannot rely on this government and the delivery of health care as outlined by this government. They have no confidence, and they should have no confidence in this government. We have put in an act for health care reform accountability and have heard nary a peep from members opposite about an act of that kind.

They have the opportunity, Madam Chairperson; they had an eight-month hiatus between the by-elections and now, and they did nothing to try to improve accountability in health care reform. We at least introduced an act, and we are asking for support from members opposite. All

the minister could do is say, come to my to office and sit down and talk with me. Well, it is more than that; it is more than sitting down in the minister's office and talking with him. It is real action.

We introduced an act that called for statutory and regulatory dealings on health care reform, and we have got not a word from members opposite. It is fairly clear that the government's plan has not changed. The agenda has gone underground. It is a hidden agenda; it is an underground agenda, and it is still taking place—the same cost-cutting measures, the same slash-and-burn, the same attempt to try to pare back the system through the removal or the downsizing of our universal system and the move towards profit-making privatization, all under the guise of health care reform. It is clear what the government's direction is in this area, and it is clear that their alternative is no alternative. It is, in fact, the same policy, only it has gone a little bit underground; it has a little bit of PR.

They do not even call it reform anymore—and that is true, because I do not know if their focus testing has indicated they should do other things—but the long and the short of it is that the health reform under this minister is no different from health reform under the previous minister, which is no different than health slash and burn, which is the same policy, the same techniques, Madam Chairperson, and it is no better illustrated than the responses this minister gives to questions. Does this minister provide information? No, this minister reads from press releases. He attacks. He fails to defend. He uses the opportunity in the Estimates to try to find straw dogs, straw persons, in order to look at.

So we have no choice but to condemn this government's actions in health care reform and ask that members of this House look at this so-called reform, look at this slash and burn, look at this underground agenda which is seeking to do nothing more than what was done by the previous minister.

Having said that, Madam Chairperson, I will allow perhaps if the Liberal Party wants to

comment and members opposite on this important motion. Thank you.

Point of Order

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): I just arrived in the House, and I just perused the proposed motion of the honourable member. I suggest to you, Madam Chairperson, that perhaps it is out of order.

I would indicate that the purpose of this committee, of course, is to discuss the spending Estimates of the Department of Health. This is filled with inaccuracies and somewhat fictive enlargements of the member's imagination.

I suspect that if the member wanted to censure the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) for one action or another that had some basis in fact, he ought to bring that motion in the House as a regular order of business and not attempt to subvert the process here by bringing it in the back door.

I suggest that this motion is actually out of order and ought to be so ruled.

* (2010)

Madam Chairperson: I assume the honourable government House leader was standing on a point of order.

Mr. Ernst: Yes.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you. The Chair had previously reviewed the motion at the time of the introduction and had indeed declared that the motion was in order.

* * *

Ms. Avis Gray (Crescentwood): Madam Chairperson, I do not have the motion in front of me, but given the comments of the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), I can appreciate some of his frustration, and I share some of those frustrations. However, we have just come to the section of the department Estimates where we are going to get into detail and talk about Healthy Public Policy, Continuing Care Programs, all of the Wellness programs, all of the health promotion programs, and although I can share some of the frustration of the MLA for Kildonan, I think he is a

bit premature. I want to hear some of the direct answers.

For instance, in the Home Care program, we have asked some general questions in the beginning of these Estimates, but certainly we have deliberately left some of the technical questions until this section. I am prepared to give the minister an opportunity as we go through these Estimates to very clearly outline if, in fact, he has moved to community-based services, and I think this is a section where we have an opportunity to do that.

I might suggest to the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) that he keep that motion and perhaps hold it in abeyance until we have an opportunity within the next few hours to get some specific answers to the questions.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Chairperson, if anybody should be censured around here, I suggest it should be the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and his colleagues for the hypocrisy in which they engage on a daily basis, not only in this House but elsewhere in this province. All I see is hypocrisy in the health care debate coming from honourable members opposite.

It is somewhat disturbing but nonetheless part of the political landscape in which we work that from time to time hypocrisy creeps into the debate, but it is done on a consistent basis on the part of members of the New Democratic Party. I find it disturbing, but it is not going to deter me or all of the health care providers and health care consumers in this province who are embarked on an appropriate course for change that will provide for a sustainable health care system for many years to come.

You see, Madam Chairperson, if we were to take the advice of honourable members opposite, advice which sometimes I do not even think they mean, but they give it anyway—and that is to go back in time some 20 years and try to preserve a health system which was developed at a time when we were not so concerned about revenues, when we were not so concerned about outcomes, because governments in those days spent first and

asked questions later. All they did was respond day in and day out to the latest demand that their friends or others made on them, and this was their way of governing.

Madam Chairperson, those days are over. The rest of the world knows it, and all we need to try to achieve now is to get members of the New Democratic Party and some of their friends to realize that this is the '90s, and beyond lies the next century, and unless change happens now, there will not be a health care system. Honourable members opposite choose not to believe that, but their colleagues in other jurisdictions who have responsibility for making decisions see it quite differently.

So it is simply an exercise in hypocrisy. They talk about—the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) began the day today talking about bed closures in hospitals. He forgot to mention that in the past couple of years we have opened 367 additional or replacement personal care or long-term beds. They conveniently neglect to mention that the Home Care budget has increased by 93 percent in the last six years, far, far greater than the paltry sums made available to the program by the New Democrats of earlier years.

At a time when it would have been good to have been building more completely on a Home Care program, what were they doing? They were simply closing beds permanently in Manitoba. This was the approach of the New Democrats, and now in opposition they engage in rhetorical comments on a daily basis which amount to hypocrisy of the worst kind.

Madam Chairperson, the changes we have been undertaking in Manitoba have been very carefully designed, not only by the government of Manitoba, but working with health care providers and consumers from the ground up. We are taking our health care system, with their help and with the help of health researchers and those interested in population health needs—we have been designing a system that should indeed serve us well for many generations to come.

I have, chapter and verse, many, many examples of the kind of double standard that the honourable

members opposite practise day in and day out, and there is no point, for the purpose of debate on this particular motion, to go through each and every example. But I cannot think of very many things New Democrats have been positive about in regard to positive changes in the health care system. Certainly in the last year or so they have been particularly negative.

I did not hear any positive comments when it was announced that we would extend province-wide and to that group of women between the ages of 50 and 70 a breast-screening program for that particular group of Manitobans. I did not hear any comment from New Democrats when independent medical people said that that program could save many lives in Manitoba in the future because of the preventive nature or the early detection nature of breast screening.

I did not hear anything from honourable members opposite when we spoke of announced plans and changes to enhance mental health delivery services in virtually every region of Manitoba.

I did not hear anything by way of comment from honourable members opposite when the government of Manitoba announced its plans to increase and complete the continuum of care when it came to forensic mental health patients who have needs.

I have not heard from the honourable members when it came to issues directly regarding the budget, which is supposed to be the subject matter of the discussion we are embarked upon now, the fact that there is an increase there again for home care services, a very significant increase for mental health services, the increases in the budget for dialysis services in Manitoba, continued support for important programs in health care, not only institutional but also in terms of long-term care and preventive initiatives.

I did expect this type of tactic to be used in the House. I just wondered when would be the first time they would use it, and, of course, being the parliamentary adventurers they sometimes can be, it did not take them very long to test the, what has

it been called, razor-thin situation we have in the Legislature.

I think it has been commented on and called parliamentary gamesmanship. There is nothing really in the budget for the members opposite to be against, so they want to fight former wars from other times and eras to raise an issue at this relatively early stage of the Estimates deliberations of the Department of Health, just simply to, I do not know, try something different or just simply to get some attention or whatever it is honourable members in the New Democratic Party are attempting to do these days.

* (2020)

You only have to look at the views of Manitobans as they are currently reflected in some surveys to know how very, very troubled members of the New Democratic Party must be in terms of their place at this particular time in the history of Manitoba. Of course, comments like that are bound to evince some response from the seats opposite. It was Tommy Douglas who once said that, members opposite, we wonder where their brains are when they get so exercised when they are sitting in their seats. That was something Tommy Douglas said, and I do not like to engage in that kind of talk, but that was something Tommy Douglas said years ago.

The honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) says Tommy Douglas had a sense of humour, and what a wonderful sense of humour it was. I had the honour and the privilege many times to record speeches made by Tommy Douglas when I was an employee at the House of Commons for some eight years. Ever since then, people have asked, well, who are the great orators in Parliament and who have been? Of course, Tommy Douglas was very near the top of the list, and as a Hansard reporter, he made my job so easy. He practically punctuated every line for me so I did not have to use whatever skills I had as an editor or even as a Hansard reporter. It was always a pleasure to report what the man said.

The thing though, the reason that I refer to Tommy Douglas is that I look to the seats opposite, and I see no resemblance whatsoever in this House

or in our provincial party. The member for Burrows says that Tommy Douglas was a preacher. Tommy Douglas, when he left Parliament, he said, Mr. Speaker, I have done many things. I have been a preacher, a printer and a politician, otherwise known as the descent of man. That was the kind of humour that Tommy Douglas would sometimes bring forward. Of course, when he said it, people laughed. When I say it, members, sad-sack looking members opposite tend not to catch on to those kinds of things.

That does describe the way I feel when I am faced with a motion of the kind raised tonight by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). This lot is no descendant lot of the likes of Tommy Douglas and Stanley Knowles and those people who gave social democracy some kind of true meaning in this country.

Today what we have are some wild-eyed, rag-tag group of disparate interest groups represented in this particular political party, and they are groping and grasping, as John Crosby would say, by their fingernails and by their hangnails to try to get a piece of power, and they will resort to anything.

I have, as referred to by the member for Kildonan, on repeated occasions asked him if he would not care to sit down and talk rationally together about health care issues. Never once has he taken me up on that offer because he knows he is going to hear the truth, and he knows it is not something he can use in a debate like this. He knows the truth is not something he can use in his dialogue with the public. He knows that working some version of the real facts is the only way for him to succeed because he knows the great majority of people involved in the health care system are on the side of the kinds of changes we are seeing here in Manitoba.

He knows from his discussions, if he has discussions with people who live outside the province of Manitoba, that the Manitoba reform measures and initiatives are far more attractive to the general public and to those people who are plugged into those reforms elsewhere. They know

that the Manitoba experience is going to be far more likely to achieve the kinds of results that we need to achieve and the process is far less painful than we see in other regions of this country.

You know, our health care system is a national system, and I feel a great deal of empathy for people who live in other parts of Canada because they are my fellow Canadians. Some of them are my relatives; some of them are your relatives, Madam Chairperson; and some of them are our friends. Canadians are, by and large, a transient group of people, and we tend to move from one region of the country to another in search of various things: employment, quality of life, in search of a chance to be closer to family, as was my case when I returned to Manitoba in 1982 from Ontario. For various reasons, people do move about this country. So we care a great deal about what is going on, not only in our own jurisdiction, but elsewhere in the country as well. As we engage in that experience of caring, we also take the trouble to find out what is going on elsewhere.

I have learned things about other provinces which, for whatever reasons—and I always make the point that I am not critical of other provinces because they have no choice about making changes. We had choice and we started early enough to exercise choice so that we could choose a less intrusive or a less dramatic way of changing our health care system, so that we could somewhat less painfully make the changes that are required to guarantee a health system for many generations to come.

There are those who cannot see beyond the ends of their noses when it comes to meaningful reform, and there are those who, worse, do not wish to see and choose deliberately to misunderstand what is going on in order to make a case and in order to move a motion like the kind we see tonight without having to blush. I think that is the most remarkable thing about it; the honourable member for Kildonan did not even blush as he moved this motion tonight.

That is why, among a lot of things I am not, I am not a New Democrat, nor could I ever be one or contemplate being one. You see, having had the

honour of being a Minister of Health in this province, there is going to be a day, where if we do not do a good job now, those who come after me, my own children—and Darlene and I have five—may well ask, what did you do when you had a chance, Dad, back in the '90s and you were Minister of Health and you had a chance to do something to preserve something for us? Why did you keep it all for yourself? Why did you keep it all for your generation and then listen to the New Democrats and kill the health care system?

Well, I do not want to face those questions. I do not want to face those kinds of questions, and that is why, in working with all of the people in the health care system, we are making the right kinds of choices today, and we are doing it in a way that respects the views of our fellow Manitobans. But I must confess, I never cease to be amazed by the depths to which New Democrats will sink, again, without even blushing in terms of putting across information and perceptions that bear no resemblance to the truth or no resemblance to what is going on in contemporary Manitoba society.

I think that is why the New Democratic Party in Manitoba is having the struggle that it is having today. It is not seen in the '90s to be relevant to the people they claim to represent. You see, you can only represent narrow interests for so long before the real public out there catches you in the act of not representing the people who elected you. That is something that is very important. I do not mean to lecture anybody; it is their own business how they want to do their jobs. But I am entitled to pass comment on my view of the world as I see it, and what I see honourable members opposite doing is guaranteeing their own extinction as a political force in this country, along with other actions that are being taken.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): How is the Conservative Party doing actually?

* (2030)

Mr. McCrae: In Manitoba—the honourable member for Thompson knows he can always bait me with questions about the federal Conservatives. I am not here—and I guess the members opposite are not here, to defend the federal New Democrats,

because they are not looking much better than the Conservatives these days. But at least the Conservatives have a chance to come back and to be relevant again, whereas the New Democrats, unless they change their ways, are going to have a real problem with that.

Honourable members opposite want to talk about two seats held by the Conservatives in Ottawa. Let us talk about how many seats the New Democrats are going to hold in Manitoba if they keep looking after their narrow, wild-eyed interests here in Manitoba. Why is it that they come to this House, day in and day out, reflecting only the interests of their union boss friends? They will not come here and speak for ordinary Manitobans as other members of this Legislature try to do day in and day out.

The one area where I detected in my meeting the other morning with some leadership of several union organizations, the one area that I wonder how solid the ground is upon which the NDP stands is the position they brought forward the other day on self-managed care.

Now, I am a proponent of self-managed care and working with those who want to see that happen. I want to see that happen and expanded. The honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has come in to committee and made the point that he is a big supporter now of self-managed care. It is not something he talks about a lot, but he did come forward and make that comment. Well, I did not detect that same kind of support when I met with the union leadership the other morning, but time will tell. I think that union leadership as well as fellow Manitobans, too, may search their souls and find that self-managed care is a worthy goal to try to reach for all people who need care in Manitoba, but certainly we cannot get from here to there overnight and so far we have announced our support for a moderate growth in that particular program.

I acknowledge I have been criticized on that point for not seeing the self-managed care expand fast enough or to include a large enough portion of the home care client population, and I have undertaken to look seriously at trying to see how

much further we can go with that. I will bend every effort I can.

It is nice to know that I have the support of the New Democrats, and I know that support probably gives their union friends some concern and that is maybe to be expected. But in this area I am really glad that the New Democrats have seen fit to support something that basically does a better job of empowering the clients of home care services so that they can make decisions.

You see, just because you are ill or just because you are disabled does not mean you do not know how to make decisions for yourself. That is what empowerment is all about. That is why I give credit to my predecessor for getting started with that program. If he could only have seen the faces of the people I met with, maybe he did previous to my taking office—he must have—but I was certainly impressed by the support and the satisfaction felt by those people who are taking control over their own lives and making decisions about their care. They do not have to see somebody's union card before they want to be given service. That is not the way self-managed home care works, and I am glad that the New Democrats have basically shunned whatever the union line might be on this particular point and seen fit to support self-managed care.

On the other hand, the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) is quick to be critical of anybody who would support any pilot project that provides better care to patients that is not run by the public sector, in other words, reference there to We Care home services. In their own minds, we have made up our minds about that program before it is even done, and that is not the case. I have said I would be very interested to look at the evaluation of that program at Seven Oaks Hospital to see what the results are. The fact is, we have not to this point at least been able to offer the flexibility necessary, for whatever reasons and I will not get into all of those, but the flexibility to provide for those earlier releases that are justified and justifiable, and in fact lamented that we have not been able to do that up until now.

Seven Oaks took the initiative because they care about their clients and patients as well. Seven Oaks took the initiative to enter upon a pilot project to last about 12 weeks to see if indeed early release could be brought about.

Early indications have been positive. It is interesting that even before the pilot is completed, the NDP has made up its mind about this. If it is private, it is bad. That is as simple as it is. Never mind what the patient thinks. If it is private, it is bad. It was interesting on CKY TV to see a report that covered the story of this pilot project, and they did profiles of patients involved, and the patients were very pleased with the service they were getting and said so, and the journalist at the tail end of the report said, the patients like the program; the NDP hate it.

I thought, well, is that not typical and does that not underline what I said a few moments ago about the relevancy of the New Democratic Party and its members in contemporary Manitoba society. It is problematic, I suggest, only for the New Democrats to the extent that their point of view might make a difference. That is when I get worried. I worry that New Democratic principles might sneak back in at a time when they are not welcome or they are not needed.

In fact, they are destructive to our society and our values as we know them, but that is a constant struggle, I guess, for us in the Progressive Conservative Party here in Manitoba to keep that New Democratic Party and some of its hidebound ideas from regaining any popularity or support in Manitoba, but, surely, all indications are that the support for that particular old-fashioned point of view which has been basically rejected in Eastern Europe—that it should still be alive and still kicking here in Manitoba should be somewhat strange to me, but there you have it. There is still some semblance of a New Democratic Party here.

Some of their ideas may remain relevant, and to the extent that they make those ideas known to me, constructive suggestions and ideas, I am very willing to listen to them, but when most of the eastern world has rejected much of the philosophy of people like the New Democrats, I think maybe

they are paddling up the stream instead of down the stream.

The honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) keeps his attack up on the Connie Curran contract, and I suppose if the only reason you are here is to score political points, you could do that and maybe should keep trying to do that, if that is all you are here to do. If that is all you are here to do, that is one thing. If you are here to try to help and make constructive criticism, well, then something else applies, and I have talked about that already.

I say with respect to this motion we have before us, the unmitigated hypocrisy which lies behind a motion like this is something that needs to be commented on. How is it that a party that embraces the likes of Michael Decter can say the things that this party says about Connie Curran, when Michael Decter has been appointed chief executive officer of all the Canadian operations for the Connie Curran firm here in Canada?

* (2040)

I do not know how many people know who Michael Decter is. Well, behind every government or beside every government, there are some very, very key people. Some people say those people have more power than the elected people themselves. One of those people in the New Democratic days in Manitoba was Michael Decter.

He was the chief civil servant in Manitoba and no doubt had a lot to do with the downfall of the Pawley government, but that happened in 1988, and Mr. Decter went his way and found himself ultimately in Ontario. He landed a job with the Ontario government, which found itself with a New Democratic Party at the helm. I know a lot of people in Ontario, but I have yet to find anybody who claims to have voted NDP. In any case, they did end up with an NDP government in Ontario.

Michael Decter, on the rebound from Manitoba, found his way into the towers of Ontario and was hired on as Deputy Minister of Health at the rate of \$140,000 a year.

An Honourable Member: What?

Mr. McCrae: \$140,000 a year.

An Honourable Member: More than Frank Maynard gets?

Mr. McCrae: Far more than Frank Maynard gets.

Well, at the time he took the job, he lived in Montreal, so somehow he had to get moved from Montreal to Toronto. So, yes, you guessed it. The Ontario government paid for that move. The Mayflower moving company says it should be a \$3,000 move, but it was more like \$38,000 that passed from the pockets of the people of Ontario into the pockets of Michael Decter. When you add on all the other perks in addition to salary over a 22-month period, you get a total of \$102,000 on top of the \$140,000 a year that Mr. Decter was earning.

During that time, Mr. Decter undertook efforts to arrive at the so-called social contract and, in the process, basically lost the support of the union movement in Ontario. Now this is the movement that the New Democrats come in here when in opposition speaking for every day. The social contract was designed to take billions out of the pay—billions out of the payrolls—well, to me, it may as well be a cajillion because I cannot even imagine what a billion is, as most people cannot either. It is a huge, huge amount of money.

When honourable members look at my budget, and we are talking \$1.85 billion, that is, \$1,850 million, honourable members opposite ought to remember about commitment, ought to remember about health care and prioritization and all of those kinds of words. The fact is that that \$1.85 billion amounts to about 34 percent of all the government spending in this province. That is 2 or 3 percent more than it was six years ago when we took office. Before that, you can then conclude, without a shadow of a doubt, that the New Democrats' commitment to health care was less than the Progressive Conservative commitment to health care because those numbers do not lie. As a percentage of total spending, this government spends more on the people of Manitoba's health care system than those colleagues opposite whose hypocrisy allows them to raise issues in the way they do day in and day out in this House and throughout the province.

When you remember—and Tim Sale is another fellow who often gets into the debate. I had a debate with him one day over at the Health Sciences Centre. What with his overheads and fancy graphs and diagrams and things and circles and arrows and whatnot, he calls himself a health care consultant, but he also says, with the use of all of his graphs, that it is a myth that the people of Canada pay too much in taxes. That is a myth. I say, well, tell that to the fellow carrying the lunch bucket to work every day trying to raise a family and paying the taxes that are imposed on him by governments in this country. That is what I say to Tim Sale and honourable members opposite whose reason for being, day in and day out, is to raise the taxes and mortgage the future of our children for God knows how long. I am telling you, that approach is the approach that is destroying the New Democrats, but we will not let it destroy Manitoba because that is not the approach Manitobans want to see.

We are pleased to be able, in this budget, to provide for continuing high levels of spending in the Health department because that is where the priority is, while at the same time maintaining the seventh budget where there is no increase in personal tax, no increase in corporate tax, no increase in sales tax.

I had the pleasure to dialogue with some Manitobans the other morning on Peter Warren's radio show. Peter Warren said, oh, yeah, but you have raised this and that and the other thing, and I naturally acknowledged that, because we have fees of all kinds because the government supplies many services, and I will tell you, Peter Warren would not like it if one of these days—neither would a lot of other people like it—after holding down various fees that are charged by the government, after five or six years, to come in and make up for all that time of not keeping abreast of the cost of providing these services. I will tell you, Peter Warren would not be very happy with that either.

So I think I was able to address the issue of those things, but certainly on a net basis Manitobans have been transformed from six years ago when we were the highest-taxed province in this country to being the third lowest today, all the while

maintaining and enhancing our commitment to health care expenditure.

So I say to you, Madam Chairperson, we have unmasked very clearly—this House, this committee gives us the opportunity to unmask the unmitigated hypocrisy of honourable members opposite whose sanctimonious approach has been found out by the people of Manitoba. I dare say, the fact that the member has shown no shame whatsoever in rising in his place repeatedly and putting forward the kinds of things he has been putting forward, then from his seat to tell us that he is proud of a motion like this, it is a measure of the man, and it is a measure of the party.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Chairperson, I have to say I was sitting in my office having a meeting. I had the prompter on, and I was listening to the activities in this House. I thought I heard something about a motion being put forward and did not get it quite right on there and came down—I have seen a copy of it—to see exactly what was going on.

Madam Chairperson, I am not necessarily surprised that a motion of this nature came forward, but I have to wonder at the political rationale for that. I have been here for 17 years now, almost 17 years, and we have had all kinds of issues happening, all kinds of debates have taken place, interesting ones, and when we were in opposition for six and a half years, we probably took and used all kinds of angles in terms of raising issues and stuff of that nature. [interjection] No, we did.

Mr. Ashton: The Bells.

Mr. Driedger: Yes, I was going to come to that. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says, the bells. That was quite an experience. But, Madam Chairperson, all those times when we do that, we did that with a sort of planned calculation. We had times when we made motions at the end of the Estimates of a certain minister we thought was irresponsible. We would move his wages down. In some cases we had it—for the Minister of Highways it was the price of a ton of asphalt

because we felt they were not doing the proper job on highways.

* (2050)

I remember, in Agriculture, we made a motion to move the Minister's Salary down to the cost of a bushel of wheat. These were things that were sort of done to show a certain displeasure, so it is well thought out. At that time, Madam Chairperson, it was not a matter of winning the vote; it was just a matter of recording our concern or displeasure at that time. I have to raise some concern as to the political rationale for making a motion of this nature at this point in time when the normal House Estimates have taken—how many hours?—60, 70 hours sometimes? Here we are just barely into the Estimates, and here we have a motion of censure, call it that.

I could not understand it, the rationale, if they wanted to concentrate on the health end of it, that they wanted to move a motion of salary reduction, which would show the normal displeasure of maybe what is happening in the Health department of the government of the day. But, for them to do it at this time, I have to look around and wonder what is driving this kind of thing. Certainly many opportunities are there during the debate, and having listened in the last week to the exchange that has taken place in this House, Madam Chairperson, it has been anything but something that anybody would find constructive, anybody listening to it or reading it. I do not know who would even want to read some of the diatribe that has been put on the record, and it is basically recycling of things that have gone on in Question Period for the last three years, even four years.

So I must wonder about the member for Kildonan, I believe it is. I have great difficulty understanding what he is trying to accomplish with this, Madam Chairperson. Now I can understand the fact that the House is virtually in a tie position: 28 members in opposition, 28 in government. So there will be ample room to play all kinds of games if they want to. I mean, we can do this till possibly the new year comes in, for that matter, if that is the idea. But, if the members of the opposition want to really do something that is going to leave a bit of

an impact or mark on the general public out there, then would you not go through the Estimates process and then say that we have not got that information?

So I have to wonder about the intellect of bringing forward a motion of this nature at this time because normally, if after 40, 50 hours, 60 hours this motion had come forward, you could say, well, maybe they do feel frustrated. Certainly this is not a motion of frustration from the member for Kildonan. This is some game that I suppose, with the advice of the new member they have in the back bench who used to be a clerk in the House here, possibly feels that, you know, is going to do something for somebody because we have had a few motions here.

I was surprised that the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) got sort of set up the other day by the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), who obviously is sort of championing himself to be the brain child in terms of how activities in this House are going to be run.

Madam Chairperson, I would just want to say that this House has had a very interesting impact on all people who have come here. People have come here with very predetermined ideas how they are going to change the whole system, and, ultimately, depending on how long they last in here, everybody gets sort of assimilated into a system that accepts that the democratic system we have here in this province and in this House, we all are part of it. To have somebody like the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) now try and say, well, because I used to be part of the House here as a clerk or assistant clerk, I will try and help gerrymander a new system in here, it will not —[interjection] St. Johns. Is it St. Johns? St. Johns, I am sorry.

Madam Chairperson, let me just tell you that is not how this system works. That is not how this system works, but we all fall into little traps once in a while, and I suspect that the NDP caucus fell into a little bit of trap by getting some advice from the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), because even an older pro, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), fell into the trap the other

day when he raised the matter of importance with the Speaker about his integrity.

I know the member for Thompson knows better than that. He got sweet-talked into that, and he knows himself that he got snookered. Now we have the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) who got snookered and somewhere along the line explain the rationale for this kind of thing, because the debate itself that is taking place in the Estimates of Health till now, in the last week, have been meaningless. They have been meaningless.

The member for Kildonan has tried in his own way—I almost said convoluted way—to try and score some points. That has not happened. If there is frustration on his part, I can see that, but he has never even gotten to the proper Estimates to this time. So I am very surprised that this kind of action is being taken now at this time. I mean the political games that can be played, we can play them with the numbers game for a long time. I mean, this can go on and on and on all during the course of the summer.

Madam Chairperson, we know what our mandate is; we will continue to do that. But the fact is, there is nothing really that the opposition, the member for Kildonan, can really get his hooks into in terms of the health issues. The general public has—the predecessor of the Department of Health, my colleague sitting over here at the present time, started the reform process. There was an acceptance by the general public of the fact that reform had to come, that we could not continue to afford the system the way it was, started moving in that direction. Ministers changed; the movement has continued onward.

But what I find ironic, and you know there have been exchanges between the present Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) about the hypocrisy of some of this discussion, the debates have taken place, really if you want to take and really look what is happening across the country, across the world, that basically we look at Saskatchewan at what they have had to do, an NDP government, take very harsh measures, if you look at B.C., the harsh measures they have taken there, if you look

at the Ontario government, the tough decisions they have made out there.

We have a Premier who is there until the day he calls the election, and it could be even more of a replica of what happened to the federal Conservatives, because Premier Bob is going to be gone. He knows that. Everybody in Ontario knows that Premier Rae is going to be gone when he calls the next election. These are people who have done the same things that we have tried to do, maybe not as efficiently even but have had to make these decisions.

Madam Chairperson, let me just tell you that the kind of activity that is taking place here today makes me a little sad, because I have a lot of respect for the activities of this House, and I really enjoy the strategy and debates that take place. This one sort of leaves me flabbergasted, but I have always said, once I believe I know everything that goes on, then I should not be here anymore. But I would like to have some of the members in the NDP opposition just think, because what you do in opposition—I was there six and a half years—what goes around, comes around. Some of the things that they are doing now are going to come back to haunt them.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

Madam Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

The resolution before the committee is that this committee censure the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) for failing to support—dispense.

Voice Vote

Madam Chairperson: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): I request a recorded vote.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE *was taken, the result being as follows:*

Yeas 20, Nays 28.

Madam Chairperson: The motion is accordingly lost.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: Just on a point of order, there was some question as to whether one of the Liberal member's vote was counted.

I believe the three Liberals voted with the motion, and I believe the third Liberal may have been missed.

* (2100)

Madam Chairperson: The Clerk, indeed, tells me that he voted two Liberals, not three. Therefore, the count should be—

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 20, Nays 29.

Madam Chairperson: The motion is accordingly lost, defeated.

* * *

Madam Chairperson: Will the committee please reconvene. This section of the Committee of Supply is dealing with the Estimates for the Department of Health.

Item 2.(a) Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,188,500.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, I wonder if the minister could provide me with just a brief job description of the Chief Medical Officer.

Mr. McCrae: We will take the honourable member's question as notice and come back with a proper job description.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, I wonder if the minister can outline for me the latest initiatives undertaken by the province with respect to the federal Liberal government's decision to decrease tobacco taxes, what the provincial strategy is, what the latest initiatives are and what the minister foresees in the immediate future with respect to that particular issue.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chairperson, I have never been very good at telling what will happen in the

future. More or less, sometimes things do not turn out the way you might think they will.

I think the decision was unfortunate. I think that a lot of people agree with that. I remember feeling personally very badly for the federal Minister of Health when on the day—I think it was in February—when federal, provincial and territorial ministers were together in Ottawa for a meeting, that that same morning the federal people announced their tobacco tax policy. That same day, that federal minister, relatively new like me and a few others, had to face all of these ministers and everybody else, the public included, but with virtually nothing to offer by way of explanation. The federal Minister of Health was left in the position, basically, of having to acknowledge that whatever efforts she had made to forestall or prevent such a decision were unsuccessful, and to have to say that to her provincial and territorial colleagues, personally, I felt badly for her.

Officially, I had to feel some anger as so many others did that day. What will be the future of that policy? Well, I try not to be terribly cynical in my work because of the nature of my work, but a little cynicism, I think, happens from time to time. I remember asking someone what they thought. When they asked me, I just turned the question on them. It was not a person whose usual work is politics. One might call the person I spoke to a mainstream Manitoban. The answer was to wait until the Quebec election was over, and then we might see a return to formal levels of taxation at the federal level.

I do not know if that is true. I know that I think the decision was hard for federal politicians to arrive at, too, but I felt resentment as one who has been through all the constitutional wars and fighting for the rights and interests and concerns of the West and the regions. I felt that not unlike other occasions in the past, all regions were paying the price for the problem of one. As a former Justice minister who addressed the issue of illegal or alleged illegal gaming operations, as one who faced that issue head-on and dealt with it—and took the heat, too—why was that not dealt with? Why not get at the source of the problem rather

than create a whole bunch more problems in the process?

I think there is general agreement. I think the federal government feels that for whatever reason, they wished they had not made that decision, but that is their call, and they thought it was appropriate to do that. I know smuggling is a bad problem. I know that, but I also know that it was a substitute policy for the courage that I know is required to address the issue of smuggling head-on, because there were those who were quite willing to make that into a racial issue and quite willing to make it into an aboriginal issue and all the rest of it. I do not accept all of that. I never did when I was in my former portfolio. I regard illegal activity as illegal activity no matter who in Canada is carrying it out.

That being said, though, that was not the course taken by the powers that be in this country. It is interesting, because I was there the day that the policy went into effect, and that very same day, right along the Ottawa River, there were immediate complaints from retailers on the Ontario side that immediately their customers were headed off to Quebec, and Ontario was brought into the resolution of a problem that they did not want to be brought into.

I do not fault the Premier of Ontario for what he had to do, because I could see the intense pressure that the Premier and government of Ontario were under. So I am not regarding this as a partisan issue; I am regarding this as an extremely unfortunate issue, because Canada was, previous to that, at the forefront in this world in terms of leadership in the area of addiction prevention, if you like, in the area of tobacco products.

* (2120)

We gave up the right to claim all that success as a country. We gave up the right to call ourselves leaders in that area. Those who are interested in health issues, of course, took a similar position to mine, and it was too late. There was nothing to be done at that point except to lament. It is true the federal government also announced at the same time all kinds of countermeasures, which, if taken in concert with the tobacco price tax policy that

was there before, would have made everything even more effective.

All kinds of research exists, which makes the point that young people are more likely to be affected by a lower price, and young female persons are even more likely to be affected by a lower price. I mean, you can talk about plain packaging, and you can talk—and we will talk about these things—about provincial legislation with more teeth, and we will talk about that and our intentions in that regard. You could talk about export taxes and all those other things. Each one of those things is probably good to take up or consider seriously or implement.

In the absence of that high tobacco cost policy, you really reduce your effectiveness, and everybody knows that. The federal people know that, and maybe that citizen who gave that opinion, wait until the Quebec election, maybe that person is right, and we will see, whatever the result in Quebec. I am a Canadian and I am proud to be one, and I can understand the politics that might have had to go into a decision like that. I do not think a low tobacco price will save this country. I do not think that is what is required. I do not think a low tobacco price will stop smuggling of various other commodities.

It has been explained to me that smugglers are smugglers, and if it is not going to be tobacco, it is going to be something else. If it is not going to be liquor—are the smugglers going to set national health policy when it comes to liquor as well? The smugglers set the national health policy when it came to tobacco. It is as simple as I can put it, and that is exactly what happened.

So I have moaned and groaned quite a bit about that, and that is enough said, I suppose, but the honourable member might ask, and I think he is, what the provincial government is doing to ensure the prevention and reduction of tobacco use in Manitoba. Well, there is a provincial intersectorial steering committee for tobacco control which co-ordinates activities around prevention, protection and cessation issues.

Different members of the committee are specifically responsible for the following: first,

monitoring the effect of the reduced federal tax on tobacco consumption. Well, I do not know about the need to monitor but to get precise numbers is helpful, of course. We know which direction it is going to go.

Second, implementing a comprehensive strategy to reduce the import of smuggled tobacco into Manitoba. That is led by the Finance department. See, Manitoba has become the western beachhead, as it were, in this particular thing. I think a lot of people felt that perhaps—the expression was “caved”—as soon as Ontario caved in to the pressure, it would only be a matter of a short period of time before Manitoba would do that, too.

An Honourable Member: Domino theory.

Mr. McCrae: The so-called domino theory, that is right. It did not happen, and we do not want it to happen. In Manitoba, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) I think will back me up on this, that we have the support of all the western provinces because they all have an interest in this. If Manitoba goes next then the next beachhead will be Moosomin or somewhere like that in Saskatchewan, and it will just keep going west until the whole thing is complete.

Well, we are holding. We are trying to be unobtrusive in our dealings with people crossing borders into Manitoba. This is, after all, our country, and we should be entitled to travel freely without being bothered along the way. Police and investigative authorities have other ways of dealing with a thing like this. I am not going to discuss those ways, but they have other ways of dealing with these things besides stopping every single vehicle that should come into our province.

The last report I had is that we are holding and that we are doing a relatively good job. I do not have data on how much contraband has come into the province. I do not have that presently, but we have support and I understand financial support as well, from provinces to the west.

This decision has been called the most important health care decision and the most negative health care decision made since medicare started in Canada. So for that reason, western provinces are

indeed supporting us in our efforts here in Manitoba.

We are also reviewing, as a third item, legislation to restrict access to tobacco by minors, including enforcement strategies. This is something that is of interest to the honourable member of Crescentwood (Ms. Gray). She has raised this with me in writing. I think that her party—was it your party or the other one—one of the parties in the opposition had a resolution before the House last session. Was it the Liberal Party? I think all parties, basically, are adamant on these issues.

Oh, there is the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) up there. We were just talking about the enforcement of the tobacco policy. I was saying the Minister of Finance would probably back me up when I say we have the support of the western provinces.

An Honourable Member: He is right behind you.

Mr. McCrae: Behind me all the way, right?

An Honourable Member: He is above it all.

Mr. McCrae: And he is above it all. We are, as we are preparing our agenda for this session, looking at that legislation that honourable members in all the parties are talking about, at least making sure our own law here in Manitoba is effective to deal with those who would make tobacco available to minors.

We are, as a fourth item, monitoring and implementing effective preventive school curriculum. That is being done by way of a partnership between the Department of Education and Training, the Canadian Cancer Society, and the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba.

As a fifth point, we are working with community agencies to implement effective cessation programs specifically for women and children. Sixth, we are consulting with the federal government regarding implementation of the tobacco demand reduction strategy. I think that is the name the federal government gave to their millions, their \$180-million program they are putting into effect over three years. It was a trade-off, and nobody is accepting it as an

appropriate trade-off, but they are all willing to see the programs go into effect, which, if the old policy comes back and those other things are still in place, then you will see some effective measures when all of them are taken together.

Of course, lastly, we are monitoring the effectiveness of prevention, protection and cessation programs on the health of Manitobans. We try to evaluate and monitor all of our programs to ensure that we are getting value for the resource that we are putting into them, either money resource or human resource. So all of this is to say, on the one hand, we are pulling and, on the other hand, we are kind of pushing. It is an awkward situation. I realize the political realities of some of the down-East things that happen, and those down-East things very often have an effect right across the country.

I am very interested in the unity of our country, if that is what really is behind all of this. I am very interested in the unity our country, but I am interested in a unity that is strong and that can stand the test of time. I have yet to be persuaded, and nobody is trying very hard, by the way, to persuade me that that taxation reduction was the right thing to do.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, that was a fairly comprehensive answer. I thank the minister for that.

My only additional question is—and this might not be appropriately directed toward the minister, maybe the First Minister, but I am wondering about the state of negotiations between the provincial government and the federal government about perhaps the next steps. Is there anything on the agenda scheduled between the federal government and the provincial government vis-à-vis, for example, the question of mailings and the like, or any other related matters?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member mentioned the mailing issue, and that one I would invite his colleague to ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) when that time comes up. I think his people are more in touch with that issue than I am.

Just as I suspected, there has been no follow-up from the federal government certainly with

Manitoba, maybe other provinces, but not Manitoba. That tells me that I was right the day that the new policy came forward, that everything was very hastily put together to try to bootleg—it is the wrong word in this context, but to try to bring in that other part of the policy that everyone objected to so much; I think a very hastily put together package of items, but no follow-up.

* (2130)

We, of course, are interested, but I have to admit we are a little disheartened not only by the policy but by the whole scenario. I think we are working at our own level here in Manitoba, and if we can somehow benefit from the package the federal people are talking about, our people are instructed to make sure we get our share here in Manitoba and to make sure those programs are made to work usefully for us.

We do not have the low prices they have down East, although they have been somewhat lowered, reduced, as a result of the federal policy, but I am disappointed on that front too. Here, I guess, I should not be quite so kind to the federal minister. There ought to be more active pursuance on their part of policies they have announced.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, I have a question and a comment.

The question is, can the minister update us as to the number or the extent of convictions under our act with respect to selling tobacco to minors, et cetera, if there are any convictions in that area or if the minister has access to that information?

The second point is a comment. It has been raised, brought to my attention by a physician, and that is, there has been a lot of emphasis on smoking and tobacco. I do not know if there has been an emphasis on an increase in smokeless tobacco and the use of smokeless tobacco; that is, chewing tobacco and the like, by young people. I just want to point that out as a suggestion in terms of the educational programs that are going on, whether that issue should not be considered.

Mr. McCrae: Perhaps because of the nature of the law as it is now drafted, there have not been many or any convictions. I do not know of any. The Justice department may have records, although I

do not think they would reveal very many convictions of tobacco-related offences.

That being the case, the suggestion made, and one that we are looking at very seriously to bring in, is to add that word “knowingly” to the legislation which will make this an absolute offence.

Along with that, there has to be some reasonable level of enforcement. I understand under the anti-sniff bill, we actually have some activity going on, investigative and prosecutorial, although I am a little removed from that now, so I am not able to comment on it in detail. It seems to me I read somewhere, or perhaps the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) has briefed me somewhere along the line about potential prosecutions in that area. That was legislation we worked very hard to design, and we took a fair amount of heat from honourable members opposite about it. They wanted us to bring forward legislation we knew would not work, and we brought forward legislation we hope will work, and there are some investigations underway.

So I cannot point to any convictions under the present law, but I am actively looking to bring improved legislation in. I imagine I will get support from honourable members for that when it does come in.

With respect to chewing tobacco, I do not know much about the emphasis being placed on it. Chewing tobacco has not been the subject of very much in the way of comment. If the honourable member has any information that could shed further light on the chewing tobacco side of it—I recognize, I believe, that the substances in chewing tobacco can be harmful, but I do not have the detail that I would like to have today. If the honourable member has further, I would be happy to have him share it with me.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, I will forward some information to the minister’s office. We will have to view the legislation with respect to the amendments dealing with the tobacco, but I suspect from the minister’s comments that you will have our support with regard to toughening up the legislation with respect to adding “knowingly” to

make it a stricter, easier intention—well, my words escape me—but to make it easier to gain a conviction under that act effectively.

I wanted to ask the minister some questions about myelagic encephalitis and chronic fatigue syndrome, CE and CFS. I was going to ask it at this portion of the appropriations because of the recognition that a more appropriate understanding of this kind of disease could help in the health care system in terms of a preventative fashion. Is the minister prepared to deal with questions at this point?

Mr. McCrae: I am prepared to try to discuss this with the honourable member if he is going to bring something to the debate. I say “if” because the issue is still debatable amongst members of the medical community. I know of reports that I have heard and read about people who suffer from this particular syndrome. If the honourable member has something to add to the discussion tonight, I would be happy to hear it and to perhaps comment on it, but my information is that we are still listening to that debate as a Health department.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, well, the minister has partially answered my question.

Effectively, the minister is probably privy to the same information that I am privy to. The question is: What stage of the process is it at in terms of the Department of Health so that people who are suffering from this disease, firstly, can have some assurance that the department will be at least recognizing or acknowledging the matter and providing information to the medical community, et cetera? What stage is this process at the Department of Health so that people in the community can be made aware of the possibility of perhaps the department embarking on some further action?

* (2140)

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chair, the research and the discussion into chronic fatigue syndrome is at still preliminary stages, unfortunately, for those who appear to suffer or do suffer, especially for those who suffer from chronic fatigue syndrome. Diagnosis, diagnostic techniques, diagnostic possibilities, treatment opportunities, cure, none of

those things have been developed to the point where either locally, nationally, internationally, any other way I know, members of the medical community have been able to isolate any particular part of this condition such that they can definitively recommend to insurers, treatment providers, anybody, the kind of information that would be helpful in dealing with this problem. Unless I am mistaken, or the honourable member has something new, unfortunately, that is the position we find ourselves in in Manitoba today.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, I take it from that response that the department is not contemplating the expenditure of any specific research monies in order to further study or review the situation.

Mr. McCrae: It comes to the kind of research that needs to be done in an area like this. Manitoba and its population base is not the first place researchers would look, unfortunately, to get involved in projects to get to the bottom of this. So the answer to this point is no.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, would the province be considering doing what has been done in some other jurisdictions, that is, assisting in the education of medical providers and the like by distributing or assisting in the distribution of materials and information concerning this particular disease to medical practitioners and others in order to alert them to possible symptoms of the disease?

Mr. McCrae: If in Manitoba, as a result of practitioners dealing with this particular condition, new information should come forward in Manitoba, you can be sure, the honourable member could be sure that we would spare no effort in alerting the research community, the scientific community to these new developments with a hope that they would take that information, work with it and try to develop the issues that I have spoken about, things like diagnosis and treatment and even cure if that were possible.

To this point, nothing in Manitoba has arisen that gives us anything that other jurisdictions do not already have in terms of information sharing.

So there is really nothing at this point for us to go on.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, is the department familiar with some of the initiatives that have been undertaken in U.S. states and other provinces with regard to this particular matter?

Mr. McCrae: From some jurisdictions, Madam Chairperson, you will have physicians who feel that they have come across information or something new that they share with other physicians in the field, other scientists. Those other scientists look at the information and either discount or discard or disagree.

We are at a very formative stage of all of this. I am not sure what it is the honourable member is getting at, but it is a difficult area because we do not have the kind of the meeting of the minds that you need in order to move forward. It is similar to the multiple personality disorder, where there are psychiatrists who see things one way and others do not agree.

We have to allow researchers and physicians and scientists who are very dedicated to the alleviation of suffering and pain—we have to allow them to keep working on these things to find some fragment, some small piece of this puzzle that they can agree on so that they can move forward to place that piece in with the other pieces of the puzzle. So it is a situation that I am hopeful that time and effort on the part of people in the field will bring forward some results that we can feel better about moving forward with maybe a protocol someday for diagnosis and treatment and cure.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, the only difference—I do see a difference between this and perhaps multiple personality disorder. It seems to me, at least from the information that has been presented to me, that a fair amount of time and energy is spent by individuals who are suffering from this, attempting to find an adequate diagnosis, a diagnosis and an adequate form of treatment or some form of recognition.

It seems to me this is an area where more information, not less, being communicated out within the medical community would serve to

assist in the process; further, of course, any research, energies and any information campaigns, I think, would only help to alleviate the problem. I think, in the long run, a lot of these people end up going from doctor to doctor, attempting to find a diagnosis for their illness. As a result, that in itself puts not only strain on the individual but on the system in general. So—fair point—the minister acknowledges my comments, and I appreciate that.

I wanted to ask the minister about what the new innovations are in Healthy Public Policy that are mentioned in this appropriation. I am familiar with the one—I just wondered if the minister might outline for us what the new innovations are, what the key innovations are, with respect to the Healthy Public Policy administration.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chairperson, there are a number of programs undertaken by the Healthy Public Policy branch, I think soon to be or already named the Healthy Communities. They are things like the antenatal home care program, the development of postpartum referral guidelines; the diabetes education resource program has 1,179 new clients. We have all of the community-based mental health services. That is not under this particular line in the Estimates, but then neither is the anti-drinking-and-driving initiatives and so on.

I am a little shocked that my honourable friend would talk about that as he did earlier today, that somehow anti-drinking and driving is the only thing that ever happened in Justice—[interjection] He admits he got carried away, fair enough. I will not say anything more about that, because I get carried away, it is true, on some things, and I think it is important to get carried away on preventive programs like that.

* (2150)

In the city of Winnipeg and elsewhere, programs like look both ways before you cross the street would not be a bad idea either, because we have people who are fatally injured in the kinds of things that you might think are awful accidents, that take people's lives, but if we had even more emphasis placed on prevention. It is not all Canada's food rules. There are all kinds of common sense things if we just stopped to think.

You know, I will just go off on a very brief tangent. My children are getting older now; they are not toddlers anymore. The oldest is 24, but every little while I say to them, when you are out in the car, be careful, and they are very good about some of the social things that young people get involved with these days. This generation, I suggest to you, is better than previous generations when it comes to care being taken of these things. I say to them things like, you are never too old to be told about if you are out walking—my youngest is 12—or riding your bike. Parents have a great big role to play, and we should encourage them to play an even greater role in taking an interest in partnership and ownership of preventive programs of their own.

I do digress, I realize, but we have a number of working groups. The Intersectoral Committee, which deals with various Healthy Public Policy issues, is developing a strategy paper for child health and well-being in Manitoba. Seven working groups were formed to address the various issues surrounding child health. Those include the Allied Services Working Group, Injuries and Violence Working Group, Lifestyle Working Group, Socio-Cultural Working Group, Socio-Economic Working Group, Special Population Groups and the Treatment Services Working Group.

We have the interim Report of the Healthy Child Committee. The Healthy Child Committee will be bringing forward its interim report in June. We did talk about midwifery.

It is in this area where I suspect the honourable member is making comments about me without telling the whole story. He said that I say things to different people in different places or some such thing, and I challenge him to give examples. He has not given any, so I am going to guess that maybe the suggestion has been made that somebody got the impression that this was not going to be an autonomous profession in Manitoba and maybe that is the MARN possibly.

If that is what the member is referring to, there are certainly a few things that can be said about that. I categorically deny any suggestion that I say different things in different places to different

people—categorically, absolutely categorically deny it. I try to make myself as clear as I can everywhere I go and with whomever I am meeting.

I think maybe some representatives of the nursing profession had certain hopes about that, that the government might go a certain way, but it was felt the most appropriate way to go with midwifery would be with an autonomous and deregulated profession. I think that midwifery, in terms of Healthy Public Policy, will play an important role in the future. It has in the past.

In fact the day that I announced this province was going to be going in that direction, I attended an international midwifery day observance. We are calling it the Introduction of Regulated Midwifery. They are calling it the Reintroduction of Midwifery to Manitoba. I suggest both versions are correct.

There is nothing new about midwifery. It has been practised for centuries and we recognize that. We also recognize that, I think the member referred to Dr. Manning sometime ago in these discussions, Dr. Manning has made the point that Winnipeg is the safest place in the world to bring a child into the world. That is saying something. That is really an achievement, and coming from someone of the credentials of Dr. Manning I think we have to believe that. Three of our five were brought into the world in Winnipeg, Manitoba. We can attest to the quality, to the kind of people who work in the system, and we can say some very positive things about all of those things and people.

Midwifery is something to provide for women in Manitoba and their families, a choice which is very, very clear to me that a significant number of women in Manitoba want to see by way of choice, and this is something we can do. We have announced that in the Speech from the Throne, and we have also been fortunate to have Dr. Carol Scurlfield head up the midwifery implementation council. We look forward in the coming days to appointing the other members of that council so that we can continue to move forward.

Breast screening in Manitoba is another important step we are taking forward. We have simply to establish the sites for the delivery of that

program in Winnipeg, and then we can move forward with the province-wide screening program. Here, again, the reason for the announcement when it was made was that we were satisfied by virtue of scientific evidence that was the right thing to do. Even when it was announced, there were those who suggested that it ought to have been—maybe the honourable member was one, I do not remember—somehow made available to women younger than the age of 50 on this elective or proactive basis, and, no, it is available for women who have had that recommended by their practitioner.

It is something that we encourage for women between the ages of 50 and 70 because we now have information, and scientifically backed information, that says that it is the right thing to do and the positive thing to do and a good sound medical practice to have a program like this for all women in that age group. That is 100,000 women in Manitoba, and estimates are possibly as many as up to 50 lives could be saved by virtue of bringing in this program. I never realized when I was Minister of Justice bringing in the drinking and driving countermeasures, and knowing that we could save lives, how many lives you could save if you did the right things in the Health portfolio. So I can tell you it gives me a great deal of personal satisfaction, and I am sure the people in the department and those with whom we consult can feel some very, very high level of satisfaction that we have done something good for our fellow citizens. It does give one a good feeling.

* (2200)

We have diabetes education manuals available now. We are into injury control through—we have just completed a report by an injury control committee. Our public health staff are out there in the field with their ongoing work. Many, many nurses are out there who are very well versed in prevention matters.

I had an interesting meeting this morning, which some of my officials are hearing about right now for the first time, with a dietitian who simply, like so many others, wanted to know of the support of their organization and their members for reforms

that will put the patient first. They did not come bringing a bunch of complaints or concerns. They came offering to help in the process, as has the—well, I will not name a whole lot of organizations, but the Consumers' Association came to see me. They simply want to be part of the improved health care system that we all want to have for the future that is results based and patient based and client based.

The dietitians recall—I do not know, maybe the member was listening the other day. I was fortunate enough to be a guest on the Peter Warren show. Somebody called in complaining that breakfast at one of our personal care homes was not up to that person's expectations. Of course, Peter Warren likes to get into the act sometimes, and breakfast on this particular day was muffin and apple juice. Peter Warren could not help but observe, it is probably a better breakfast than either I or the minister had. Actually, he was right about that.

But the thing that impressed me was later on in the program, the dietitian at the personal care home that had been identified phoned in, very proud to phone in and set the record straight, that there was quite a good variety of diet offered to the residents at this particular personal care home—and very, very proud. I could not help but respond to the dietitian who phoned in to say, well, thanks first off for phoning in and setting the record straight, but second off, this dietitian had not heard what had been said earlier. Already through the grapevine it came through to this person that these things are being said about the services we are providing.

Oh, by the way, the muffin and the apple juice were being blamed on staff shortages. I mean, give me a break. In any event, the dietitian was very upbeat, very enthusiastic about the quality of the service they provided. And the caring, you could feel it coming through the telephone lines, the caring attitude that was being displayed.

So my first response was to thank the caller for the call, for helping get me off a petard, but also to point out that indeed the staff at this particular home cared a lot about the people who are under

their care and took a lot of pride. They get sick and tired of the constant drubbing and hammering that goes on at the hands of those who do not really care except about their own political prospects for the future. That is what bothers me the most.

I was able to make the point that I appreciated very much that there were so many people like that in my visits to over 45—well, not over 45—communities in Manitoba and meeting with health care professionals. That is the attitude I find displayed everywhere. They simply want to do their best, and they take a lot of pride in it. We are doing our level best as a government to make sure they have appropriate places in which to work and to provide caring services to their fellow Manitobans. That is what it is all about. It made me proud to be a Manitoban. Health minister or not or whatever my job happened to be, I was proud to be a citizen of a province that has people like that in it.

I was also able to draw to Peter Warren's attention and all of his listeners that very day the speech pathologists and audiologists were meeting in Winnipeg, all of the representatives from across Canada, the territories and the United States. Even the Americans were welcome in Winnipeg, and I was very pleased that even the Americans were allowed to be here in our presence. I welcomed them because maybe they have an idea or two they can share with us, even those nasty Americans from south of the border.

But, anyway, I drew to the attention of Mr. Warren and his listeners that this group was also meeting in Winnipeg and sharing very positive experiences, but also sharing a dedication and a commitment and a motivation that really is quite noteworthy.

Well, I met this morning with Peter Olfert, the leader of the Manitoba Government Employees' Union. He reminded me. He said, you know, people out in the system, they do need to know that they are appreciated. Maybe the honourable member is impatient with me for talking about the contributions of so many dedicated people, and he gets frustrated when I do that. I do not mean to frustrate the member, but I do mean to be very clear about the commitment so very clearly

displayed by all kinds of people working in the health field, and that includes dietitians, as I mentioned, speech pathologists and audiologists and physiotherapists and all of the people who work in our institutions, the nursing professionals of the various kinds who—they do not take a very active part in their union's affairs.

(Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

The MNU does not represent, I suggest, on all issues, everybody. I know there are some 11,000 members of the MNU. I know, for example, when MNU recently voted to spend a bunch of money, taken from their members, without necessarily their consent, to spend it on an antigovernment ad campaign, that out of the 11,000 nurses that work and practice and are members of that organization, perhaps only 500 were even at the meeting where that decision was made.

When I hear honourable members opposite talk about the union movement and how democratic it is, I have to keep in mind some of those kinds of things. When I listen to union bosses and their friends in the New Democratic Party talk about how terrible everything is, I have to take that with several grains of salt, because I am out there in 45 communities listening to people who provide services to Manitobans who need those services. I listen to the real people, not the ones that are manufactured and actors telling us about how terrible everything is. I am talking to real people with real experiences, not all of them as positive as I would like them to be, I admit, but some of them very positive experiences. The stories they tell are stories of commitment and stories of service, and I do not think a lot of them appreciate some of the shenanigans that are carried on by honourable members opposite.

I think I have answered the honourable member's question.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Acting Chairperson, if I had not heard it all before, I would go through point by point and deal with it, but I do not want to take up time of the committee dealing with the minister's—

Mr. McCrae: Presentation.

Mr. Chomiak:—presentation. I will use his word—his presentation. He has done it over and over again, and I have responded and I am not going to waste valuable minutes of the committee's time putting on the record, correcting the inaccuracies of the minister. They will just have to suffice, and there is nothing I can say or do that will change the minister's approach, so I will proceed to do the best job that I can do on behalf of the people that elected us, the New Democratic Party.

Now to proceed to my question. I do want to question the minister extensively on two areas. One is preventative health programs with regard to mental health, but I suspect I should probably wait until the mental health people are here before I do that. I also—affirmative to that response—want to ask a fair amount of questions on healthy child development, but my colleague has been waiting for some time so perhaps I will pass the floor to my colleague at this point and come back.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I was interested in the minister's comments earlier on about the issue of cigarette taxes and the smuggling issue. Certainly when the federal government made its decision to reduce tobacco taxes to support that initiative, we were against that here in Manitoba as a Liberal caucus and do not regret that decision because I think it is the wrong decision.

I was interested in the minister's comments about legislation in regard to toughening up legislation in regard to curbing particularly youth who smoke and some of the efforts that the association for a tobacco-free province—I am not quite sure I have got the organization right—their comments. Can the minister tell us, is he actually bringing forth legislation this session that will strengthen the act to protect the health of nonsmokers?

* (2210)

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I appreciate what the honourable member said. There have been times—and sometimes a little bit difficult—in times when our own fusion to the federal party was a little closer that even then we have had to take positions which were not always

very much fun to take, but we took them anyway because that was the right thing for Manitoba. In this case, I am pleased that the member for Crescentwood and her caucus did take the position they took with respect to the federal so-called initiative. It was, I suggest, the only credible one to take, in any event, but I give the honourable member credit for stating the position on the record as she did. There really were not any redeeming features to that particular federal decision.

I will give the honourable member confirmation with respect to our own proposed initiative with respect to the protection for nonsmokers act. I am not sure what it is called for sure, An Act to Protect the Health of Non Smokers—and also tell the honourable member that we are partners on this, I believe, because I recall a letter from the member some months back urging us to move in this direction, and it had been then and remains our intention to do that.

We are indeed looking at the word knowingly. Legal counsel has advised us that the way the act is currently worded, it is not enforceable. We had the same problem, even though Judy Wasylycia-Leis never believed us, with the anti-sniff bill. It was not workable before, and so we moved forward to try to make it workable.

Even today we can, with all the best legal minds that we believe we have at our disposal—and I have experience to tell you that we do have good legal minds at our disposal—only say we are hopeful because we cannot say what a judge ultimately will do except that we think we are better served today than we were before.

The same point with the Act to Protect the Health of Non-smokers, we propose to deal with that issue of enforceability. The proposal is being drafted. In fact, it is basically almost ready to go is my information. It would clarify wording providing for the issuing of summonses and notices for violation.

It is going to deal with fines for selling tobacco; it is going to increase fines for selling tobacco to minors. Whether it is this legislation or some other legislation, we are also looking at using the

licensing provisions that we have in effect with respect to, you know, how you have to have a tax licence to sell certain merchandise. If somebody gets convicted of selling tobacco to minors, we may well use the power that we have to ban or to take away licences or restrict licences. I do not even know if you need a conviction in order to take action like that. You do not need a conviction to take away somebody's licence for impaired driving. We have been through that already. It was quite a battle, but those are all things that we hope to be coming forward with.

The last item I mentioned about licences may or may not be part of this bill. It may be part of another bill dealing with the tax act or some such thing, but we are looking actively at our rights on that. You know maybe the feds helped us because I do not think we were looking at that aspect of it before the federal decision came. We probably felt, prior to that, that some of the other things we were considering would be sufficient, but certainly that put us over when it came to looking at all possible avenues.

We are also looking at vending machines, although I think the federal ruling, the federal legislation, activated by the new federal government, takes care of that issue.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Sveinson): Would the members in the Assembly wish to take a five-minute break? [agreed] So be it, we will take a five-minute break.

The committee recessed at 10:17 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 10:27 p.m.

(Madam Chairperson in the Chair)

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

Item 2.(a) Administration.

Ms. Gray: Are we going to call in the minister's staff?

Madam Chairperson: I am sorry. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber.

Ms. Gray: Madam Chairperson, we were speaking of legislation related to An Act to Protect

the Health of Non-Smokers, and the Council for a Tobacco Free Manitoba also talks about introducing some measures such as banning vending machines. Does the minister have any comments on that issue, or has his department had an opportunity to study the impact of that type of a measure?

Mr. McCrae: Prior to the annihilation of the federal Tory government, there was legislation passed, I think, but not proclaimed. The federal government recently proclaimed that legislation, making vending machines illegal to be anywhere accessible to minors. That includes places like the Legislature. It is not supposed to be there, and it is not supposed to be in hospitals or public places of any kind. I think licensed premises might still have vending machines, but you are not supposed to have kids in there anyway.

We will look at whether that legislative proclamation leaves any further gaps that we think need to be addressed, and if so you can expect to see that. If the honourable member has any suggestions, I would be interested, but we think, my first examination of that federal legislation seems to render it such that—no need to address that in our own legislation. However if, to improve enforcement possibilities, there is some need or whatever, we will look at all of these possible opportunities or angles, but we are also planning to bring that legislation forward as soon as we can, this session.

Ms. Gray: I am pleased to hear that the minister is bringing forth that legislation, and any legislation which strengthens the health of nonsmokers in this province I would certainly support. If we can work on the blue room across the hall, that would be something I would not mind this Legislature looking at either, in terms of nonsmoking in government offices which I believe is now the policy. Is that not true that within the government or is it just the Department of Health there is a policy that there is no smoking in government buildings?

* (2230)

Mr. McCrae: Well, the Manitoba legislation calls for proscriptions in certain places, but the policy is

a no-smoking policy except in designated areas. The honourable member refers to the room across the hall. That is a designated area.

Ms. Gray: Madam Chairperson, yes, the room across the hall plus the hallways around this building on three floors.

Can the minister tell us, what kinds of educational programs is the department involved in to educate youth, particularly within the school system, as to the impact of smoking and/or drugs? What kinds of programs do we have available?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chairperson, I think it is clear that that is the appropriate focus, that being young people. Because it is like other bad habits, you should not get started in the first place. That is the best target group, most informed advisors and observers would tell you.

We have the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, which has a high school program that deals with substance abuse, and one of the substances that are addressed is tobacco. We have met, and no doubt we will be meeting in the future, with smoking cessation organizations and agencies involved with the health of Canadians, Manitobans, involved with preventative measures to continue developing proposals and programs.

I went through with the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) various things that are going on with education and prevention, tobacco education and prevention program, and I pointed out that there is an intersectoral steering committee. The different aspects of the committee are responsible for different parts of tobacco consumption cessation programming. I dealt with the Health department, the Finance department, the Health and Finance departments working together, the Education department, Cancer Society and Addictions Foundation working together, and that is on monitoring and implementing an effective preventive school curriculum in this area.

In terms of focus, women and children are the ones that we are focusing specifically on. Those are the ones we hope to achieve the best results with, and that is a good place to start, because down the road, as I pointed out, the federal

announcement—I am not the one who coined this phrase, but it has been called the most important and negative health decision made in this country since medicare came into being.

That being the case, we have to find other ways besides price to deal with tobacco issues. Price was, as I say, regarded as the most effective thing. We have had the most effective tool taken away from us.

We discussed earlier the potential for restoring the present policy and what kind of political climate might have to be in place for that to happen. I, on thinking it over, think that maybe indeed the federal policy announced in February will not be a permanent policy, but we await further developments. In the meantime the things that I have talked about are basically the things that we are trying to do here in Manitoba.

By no means do I claim that it is all inclusive, by no means claim that we are doing everything we possibly can. We are continuing to explore further actions that we can take, and I think that is appropriate for us to do because we had previously been making progress in the right direction, and we are just trying to keep us on that track as opposed to going the other direction.

Ms. Gray: Madam Chairperson, can the minister tell us, is there data available that talks about the effectiveness of general awareness advertising campaigns in terms of changing people's behavior, whether it is related to a healthier lifestyle, not smoking, not using drugs, et cetera, no drinking? Is there some data on the effectiveness of those kinds of what I call general awareness advertising programs versus other kinds of education to actually change behaviour of people, or in the case of young people, to instill in them a behaviour that is positive?

* (2240)

Mr. McCrae: I am not able to pass over to the honourable member any documents to back up what I am going to say; if that comes to my attention I will, but there is research on this topic. My information is that it has been shown to have some level of effectiveness with adult people. The problem is, we are pouring a lot of money into

anti-lifestyle advertising directed at young people, and there does not seem to be a corresponding result, a positive result.

I was engaged in a town hall debate in St. Boniface on this topic, and it was Jim Rae from CBC who moderated the discussion. A young woman student was there. They played a documentary, about a 20-minute documentary that one of the networks had put on. Depending on whom you listened to on that program and the young woman who was there to try to promote smoking cessation or a no-smoking attitude, these ads are not doing the job. I think that there is a lot of money going into them, a lot of creative work that is being put in. I have seen the Ontario ones; they were unveiled when I was in Ottawa at the Health ministers' conference and, you know, really slick and really hep and all of that. But somehow it is not doing the job. We continue to see increases in the number of young women beginning to smoke.

The comment made by the young woman at the town hall discussion was that it is good as long as it lasts, but you soon put out of your mind what you have seen on the television or on the billboard of whatever it happens to be. That seems to be borne out by the stats. So, while one might be tempted, in order to be seen to be responding to something, to go out and spend a whole bunch of money and hire actors and actresses to do a really slick job of advertising against the use of this product, I do not know today how effective we can say it is with that particular group, which is basically the target group. Maybe more can be said about the impact on an adult population.

That being the case, if I come up with something by way of background papers or studies, I will share them with the honourable member. We will get that for the honourable member. The promise by the federal government to spend big dollars in this area rings a little bit hollow, unfortunately, as the honourable member will understand. So we will keep looking at things that will work, of course, but we do not want to spend a lot of money on something that is not going to work either. I do not know all the answers—neither does anybody else—but we will continue working with those

organizations in the community, volunteer organizations, to work together and devise the right strategies or the strategies most likely to result in success.

Ms. Gray: Madam Chairperson, can the minister tell us specifically, is there a drug and alcohol prevention program that is in the elementary schools that is spearheaded by the Department of Health or at least in conjunction with the Department of Education?

Mr. McCrae: We believe this is primarily high school, but we will check, and if it is not, we will look into the potential for expanding it to elementary because I know that some of these patterns and ideas get going before high school starts.

Ms. Gray: Madam Chairperson, so are any programs related to drug and alcohol abuse or prevention always handled through the Addictions Foundation of the department?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, in partnership with other agencies.

Ms. Gray: Just to change subjects a little bit, now that we are on the section of Healthy Public Policy, I did have a few questions about the midwifery report that the minister made available to us this past week.

I have only glanced through the recommendations and the next steps briefly, but can the minister tell us, with this report and the next committee that will be looking at implementation, is the idea that there will be room for laymidwives as well as what are now called nurse midwives or professional midwives? I was not sure by reading this document if that was the case or if in fact that decision had been made yet.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chairperson, this is going to be a profession. So in order to practice the profession, you have to be licensed, and to be licensed you have to have the appropriate training. Those who already have skill and training will obviously be given credit for that. If, for example, we are talking about a nurse, a person who has trained in nursing and is practising midwifery, it is our wish and our proposal that as they enter into the stream of education with it, which has yet to be

curricularized and set up, that there be appropriate credits given for those who have previous training and/or experience.

Ms. Gray: Madam Chairperson, do we know what the scope of this type of training will be or is this one of the things that this committee is looking at? Are we talking about a two-year program, a diploma program or what is the nature of the training or do we know that yet?

Mr. McCrae: That is one of the numerous issues that we will place in the hands of the implementation committee, but if you read through the report you will see a number of things set out that I think will assist the implementation committee and give it direction. For example, I recall my own briefing on this which calls for training in what signs ought to be recognized as signs that mean that the services of the midwife in something other than a normal pregnancy ought to be signs that someone else maybe ought to be called in. Training is something that will be developed, training programs.

As you know, in the nursing profession standards are changing and being updated and we are into dialogue with the nursing professionals about what the nurse of the future's requirements are going to be. That kind of discussion will be going on in the midwifery implementation committee as well to see that people who entrust their care to midwives, just as they do entrust their care to other health care providers, are entrusting their care to people who are appropriately trained, licensed and regulated.

Ms. Gray: Madam Chairperson, I cannot recall if the minister had indicated this earlier, but is there a time frame for this implementation committee to finish its work, even a general time frame?

Mr. McCrae: The chair of the committee understands the enthusiasm with which the government announced its intentions, how pleased we were to have the support and assistance of Carol Scurfield and to have the support of so many who were involved in the midwifery committee in the first place, as well as those who support the findings of the midwifery committee. It is our wish to move this along. We feel it is a positive

development in the history of health care in Manitoba. We feel that women in Manitoba are looking for just this kind of option and choice in the system. We have no wish for it to take any longer than necessary.

* (2250)

The implementation committee members will know of the priority and the importance the government places on this. I do not know how long it takes to put together a curriculum. I do not know how long it takes to do a lot of the things, but I think that by this time next year we will be able to have legislation before the House which will make it all somewhat official, and we can then proceed in a real way. That window of a year, I think, keeps being discussed as I discuss it with various people.

Ms. Gray: In looking at health reform or changes in the health care system in general, and I am not sure if this is a reasonable question or not, but given the number of committees that the department has established to look at health care reform, can the minister indicate, of these 80-some committees that were mentioned, or 45, one or the other, how many of these committees have been specifically established to deal with health promotion and disease prevention activities, even approximately?

Mr. McCrae: I am asking senior staff who are here to quickly do a review. If we cannot be numerically specific, we will try to make it very close. While they are doing that, I would just remind the honourable member that her question demonstrates very clearly that what we are doing is not driven by the minister or by the government all by itself.

The other opposition party somehow has given us their whole health care strategy. The first one is consult. That is the first thing you do. When you do not know what else to do, you consult, because they do not know what else to do.

The fact is, the question put by the member for Crescentwood points out graphically—I think the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) chimed in that we have 89 committees. I do not know if it is 89 or 91 or 87. It is a lot of committees. I remember earlier on, several years ago: Oh, you are studying

everything. You are not doing anything. You are studying everything.

Well, the fact is, we have involved over 13,000 Manitobans in the process to this point. If that is not consultation, I do not know what is.

Then when you consult, of course, we are accused of having a monologue disguised as a dialogue. Well, you see, some people just want to criticize. They do not want to be part of a meaningful reform process. So at some point, you do not want to be arrogant about it, but sometimes you just have to dismiss the attempted contribution by some people or the contribution disguised as obstruction or the obstruction disguised as a contribution—I am not sure which that is. Neither of it is helpful—but over 13,000 Manitobans involved in planning and/or the implementation.

I guess the other part of the NDP platform is to throw away the plan, the plan that enjoys the support of everybody, even the NDP. They keep talking about our reform policies. I thought they were for the policies, but against aspects of the implementation that we have been involved in. I can accept the latter, to be against some aspects of the implementation or to be critical, because we do not change an entire health system without making some mistakes along the way or without doing things that raise eyebrows or, certainly, give the opposition something to talk about.

So I am trying to be really open about this and quite honest with all 57 honourable members in this House about what we are trying to do, but the honourable members, what they are going to put before the people of this province, are doing now, is to throw away any idea of reform of our health care system. Well, that is not on; that is not possible, No. 1. It will ruin our system within a handful of years and we will not have a system at all. That is not a legacy I am prepared to leave. So there is no alternative policy in place put forward by the New Democrats.

The question asked by the honourable member had to do with preventive health issues, and out of those 89 or whatever number of committees out there, I am told by senior staff that approximately

20 of those committees are working toward disease prevention and healthy living.

Ms. Gray: Madam Chairperson, the health advisory committee, I believe, had a number of subcommittees—

Mr. McCrae: Health Advisory Network?

Ms. Gray: Health Advisory Network—had a number of subcommittees that were looking at various kinds of programs. One of them was related to actually health promotion activities.

Can the minister tell us, what were the main recommendations of that committee? Have they been decided that they should be implemented?

Mr. McCrae: I met with the main part of the Health Advisory Network. Dr. John Wade chaired that, and indeed they were involved in various pursuits. We were talking about a process for making all of the reports available to people like yourselves and members of the public, interested parties, and arrangements. As we talked about the various reports, at that time they were just finishing up the last of the reports. We now have them and my general question is, well, not having reviewed all these reports in detail to this point, what is in all the reports? Answer this question—are they consistent with the reform strategy which enjoys the support of everybody? The answer was there is nothing in any of these reports that is inconsistent with the strategy set out in the Quality Health for Manitobans—The Action Plan.

I still have trouble, not with the honourable member for Crescentwood, but with other honourable members who sit to her right about where all the opposition is coming from and why and what is the reason for it.

With respect to the specific question the honourable member asks—not available tonight. I will provide the honourable member with further information tomorrow if she will remind me about that.

* (2300)

Ms. Gray: Madam Chairperson, the public health services within the various regions, I know, have been looking at the types and kinds of services that

they provide and trying to, as a group of front-line staff, supervisors and managers, get a handle on: Are the services they are providing beneficial and doing the job? Are there some services that they should not be providing? Are there other services they feel they would like to provide but cannot because of resources or because they are spending their time in other activities?

I am wondering if the minister could give us an update as to that ongoing review of public health services. Are there some programs that the department is looking at—I should not say programs, I should probably say activities—not doing? For instance, prenatal classes, I know, were under discussion as to there are a number of other organizations who provided that type of a service, and did public health staff need to be involved in that or should they be involved with specific targeted groups, child health conferences, the early discharge program that public health is involved with, providing nutrition services and consultation and education to schools, some of those kinds of programs? I am wondering if the minister has that information or could give us an update on where that is at.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chair, I thank the member for waiting while I discussed this with senior staff.

It is not a question of discontinuing programming, unless the honourable member knows of some that are not getting results that we do not. The honourable member listed off a number of services that if delivered appropriately are very valuable services. I mean who is ever going to want to put an end to prenatal care when we know, from an outcome's point of view, that a low birthweight baby can have all kinds of problems throughout an adult life that if they were prevented would not only yield a higher quality of life but also have an impact on health care costs?

The other things the member mentioned fall into basically the same category, in and of themselves. The objectives of all of those programs are appropriate to a health care system, whether it is reformed or not reformed, those are the right things.

I think it is safe to say though that we are always exploring more appropriate, more effective, efficient delivery models for all of these things. We have our public health function, but that function is being carried out in consultation and co-operation with other agencies. We talked about that a few minutes ago when we talked about tobacco policy and those issues.

We are reorganizing in hospitals. We are reorganizing, I suggest, where opportunities present in other areas as well. We are exploring with nursing professionals the concept of community nursing care, which is a kind of primary care delivery that perhaps should be explored further, and we expect to do that.

I do not think it is so much that we want to—if I dare, I will refer to the child dental program in rural Manitoba where that program was cancelled. We hear members of the New Democratic Party and perhaps others—I do not feel very happy about that particular thing, but it is the kind of program we could no longer support as a government.

The New Democrats, of course, would never have done a thing like that, but in government they do things like that. In opposition they talk about things like that, but in government they do things like that. There are few people in this province who had more consultation regarding that program than myself, so I do not need to take too many lessons from New Democrats who hack and slash their way through health reform throughout Canada, wherever they have a chance. The only fortunate thing about Manitoba is they have not had a chance since they were put out of office in 1988 after their first round in 1987 in Brandon where they closed permanently for the first time in Manitoba's history 42 acute care beds with no concern for alternative care.

The arrogance of the attitude displayed here by the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) tonight typifies the reason why the New Democratic government of Ontario is likely history and why New Democrats in Manitoba may never see power again in our lifetime, Madam Chairperson, because of that kind of arrogance that exists amongst them.

An Honourable Member: Want to bet on it?

Mr. McCrae: Now they want to bet on it, a sure sign of arrogance, and arrogance is a sure sign of failure in politics.

All the honourable member has to do is look at the arrogance of the New Democrats in Manitoba, the arrogance of the New Democrats in Ontario and in other jurisdictions as well to see how far that approach takes you. One thing that people will not tolerate from public officials is arrogance, and that is what we are hearing tonight from the honourable member for Transcona.

The member for Transcona, my impression of him was that of a member who came here to serve, but he came here to be arrogant, and it is that attitude that will make life very difficult for him in the future if he keeps it up.

An Honourable Member: When you need a nurse, who is going to be there?

Mr. McCrae: Well, the honourable member asks, when you need a nurse, who is going to be there? The honourable member for Transcona asks that. I ask him, with 5,000 beds closed in Ontario, how many nurses do you think served those beds?

An Honourable Member: How many nurses ads do you see in Saskatchewan and B.C.?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member asks arrogantly, how many nurses ads do you see in Ontario and B.C.?

I do not watch TV from Ontario and B.C. All I know is that in B.C., the NDP government of B.C. closed a major urban hospital, Shaughnessy Hospital. I do not know how many beds there were there, but in a hospital like that I assume hundreds, and when you know how many nursing staff you need to run a hospital bed, you know that it is many, many hundreds of nurses. I do not know about the ads. Maybe the honourable member is preoccupied with ads.

I am preoccupied with people. [interjection] The honourable member tells me the nurses are telling me we are going in the wrong direction. Well, in the 45 communities I have visited, the rank-and-file nurses have not told me that. They have asked me to be mindful of patient care issues,

which is exactly what we are doing, which is exactly why nursing layoffs were put on hold by me last fall when I first took office.

The honourable member sits and grins like a Cheshire cat talking about television ads. [interjection] Then he asks, is that why nurses keep calling his office with details? Well, Madam Chairperson, I will sit down and let the honourable member for Transcona talk since that is what he wants to do.

* (2310)

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): If the Minister of Health maybe can answer the question of why we in our constituency offices are continuing to get calls from the nurses living within our communities telling us about the patients who are lined up in the hallways in the various hospital emergency wards, why they are in the waiting rooms in the hospitals, why they are in the other offices in and about the emergency areas of these hospitals. Why are patients in those rooms instead of up in the hospital beds receiving the treatment to which they should be entitled to within our health care system?

The minister has not answered any of those questions. We keep getting these calls from the nurses in our communities. They raise these issues with us. I rely on their judgment as health care professionals. I do not have that expertise in the health care system. I hope that the Minister of Health would be listening to them as well. It is obvious that he is not because there are still patients lined up in the hallways and in these waiting rooms where they should not be. They should be in the hospital beds which this minister has been closing.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chairperson, the honourable member used the opportunity that he had to tell me about his telephone call. [interjection] Are you finished? Do you want to have some more time?

Mr. Reid: I guess the minister wants me to burn off a little of his time here in his Estimates, but I can assure him that there is more than one call. There are many calls that we receive from nurses in my own community and I know in other

communities, because I have talked to my colleagues as well. They are getting similar calls from people working in the health care profession that are concerned about what is taking place and the inaction of this government to deal with any of those serious issues.

These nurses are coming to us because they do not have an ear that they can bend from members on that side of the House to get some changes made, the improvements that they want to see in the health care system. That is why they are coming to us, because they are frustrated in trying to deal with you.

It is not that they believe that we, right now, because we are not in government to make those changes, it is because you will not listen, Mr. Minister, for what is taking place in the health care system, you and your colleagues. That is why they are coming to us with those problems. I hope you would take some action to deal with it.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chairperson, dialogue is a two-way street and that is exactly what I have been engaged in for the last eight months is dialogue with health care professionals—many, many hundreds of nurses in Manitoba. I do not know how many calls the honourable member has got, but I assume if it is members of the nursing profession, there are concerns out there and I recognize that. Sorry?

An Honourable Member: It is not nurses.

Mr. McCrae: Yes, I heard you, that is why I said that. I visited with hundreds and hundreds of nurses. When you go to Selkirk, for example, as I did, spent four hours and forty-five minutes with that group in Selkirk, and as we met and chatted about the various issues, the question arose, well, why are you replacing the hospital in Stonewall? I thought, well, because the people who live in Stonewall want to have care, the same way that people in Selkirk want to have care. The nurses who work at the Stonewall hospital want to continue to work and provide care at the Stonewall hospital and that was my response.

You do not need to do that. The point was the same one as when I raised the issue of the closure of 51 hospitals in Saskatchewan. The nurses in

Manitoba said, oh, well, they did not need those hospitals in the first place. I said to them, well, the people who worked in those hospitals were nurses. Tell that to the nurses at the 52 hospitals in Saskatchewan. Tell that to the nurses there that those hospitals were not needed. Tell that to the patients in those hospitals in Saskatchewan that those hospitals were not needed, and see how they feel about that.

We are not dealing with what is going on in somebody else's yard. We are dealing with what is going on in our yard right here in Manitoba. It is not fair and it is not even responsible to suggest that reform is fine for everybody else, but we do not have to look at the operations of our hospitals.

The honourable member talked about line-ups. I acknowledge there are line-ups for various procedures depending on the number of specialists we have available in the province and the number of people wishing to avail themselves of the services of those specialists, so this results in waiting lists for various procedures and this happens in all jurisdictions.

With respect to waiting rooms and emergency areas, I recall one night having a town hall meeting in St. Vital, and nursing professionals from St. Boniface Hospital came to the town hall meeting and two or three of these nurses spent a good deal of the time of the meeting explaining to me the problems that they have experienced at St. Boniface emergency room. This caused me sufficient concern and I told them that I had visited hospitals throughout Manitoba and emergency rooms, and they said, well, yes, but then the administration knows you are coming and everything is put right so that everything looks good for the minister.

So I took note of that point that was raised by the nurses who were raising these issues at the St. Vital meeting, and the next day I arrived unannounced at the emergency room at St. Boniface Hospital. Lo and behold, I think the staff there were pleased that I took the time to come and see them and talk to them. I was there about 20 minutes and both physicians who were on duty spent the whole 20 minutes with me, and several

members of the nursing staff had time to visit with me about some of their concerns in the emergency room.

I say that to point out that maybe the time that I arrived was not a peak time, but in emergency rooms you do have peak times, and there are busier times than the time that I arrived unannounced as well, and I recognized that. On three occasions since I took this office, the waiting line-ups at emergency rooms and congestion of emergency rooms has become an issue in Manitoba. Certainly the last one the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) raised had to do with the psychiatric situation at St. Boniface. I have been assured by St. Boniface Hospital that more beds is not what is required, but a better co-ordination of our psychiatric services in all of our Winnipeg hospitals is what is required.

You see, the New Democratic approach when in opposition is, well, do not adjust anything in our hospitals. Leave everything the way it is because our union friends like it that way. Do not change anything because that will cause us to comment and to be critical.

In response also to these concerns, last winter there was a very, very busy day at Health Sciences Centre, and this was on a Friday night or a Thursday night that I got wind of this. I got on the phone with the CEO at that hospital and that hospital opened unused beds or closed beds for the purpose of relieving the pressure at that particular hospital. So I could tell the people of Winnipeg that we were mindful of the traffic that was increasing there, that we were not prepared to place emergency patients at any risk. What the honourable member is not prepared to listen to is the fact that none of those open beds were used or needed.

Similarly, with the psychiatric issue there a couple of weeks ago raised with full fanfare by the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), we opened what are called "swing" beds at St. Boniface Hospital—[interjection] Thank goodness for the opposition for raising these issues, the member for Kildonan says. The fact is, not one of those swing beds has been used, and so when the

honourable member for Transcona rudely and arrogantly injects himself into a debate about which he knows absolutely nothing, I think it is important for us to set the record straight.

The honourable member—I will give him a compliment—for Transcona is clearly a young man, but he has the mind-set of an old person who still has it in mind that the model of health delivery of 20 years ago is appropriate, except for that little thing in Brandon where we closed 42 beds without any warning, without any other provisions being placed on site. You see, I am from Brandon, so I kind of resent the hypocrisy that is so evident in the approach of people like the member for Transcona, who so sanctimoniously sits there and arrogantly sits there and makes health policy on the run without any thought for what he is doing.

* (2320)

What the honourable member would rather not do is look at plausible solutions as opposed to the ones that will really work. He does not want to look at solutions that are the right ones, he just wants to look at the ones that call for more, for sticking his hand into people's pockets and pulling out more money so he can continue to waste it like his predecessors in office used to do.

I remember making that allegation one day, when I was sitting over there just next to where the member for Kildonan sits, and over here on this side was Rolly Penner, who was the Attorney General at that time, and I was fairly new at this business.

I said: Get your hands out of the taxpayers' pockets. And Rolly was very offended at this comment because he went on to make a long dissertation about how his hands appropriately belonged in the public's pockets. And I thought, that is NDP philosophy for you. I can pull that for the honourable member, and I am sure he regards Rolly Penner very highly and will want to follow in his footsteps, and no doubt he will, given enough elections. That is exactly what will happen to him. The member for Crescentwood made that point very clearly for us.

The honourable member for Transcona assumes that our health care system is perfect and ought not

to be reformed. The honourable member for Transcona assumes that the NDP left the health care system in Manitoba in just perfect running condition.

Madam Chairperson, I am having a little trouble. There is an echo or something in this room. It makes it hard for me to concentrate on what I am trying to impart to honourable members here. The echo seems to be coming from a backbench, the bench right behind the member for Kildonan. That member for Transcona, I am sure, keeps piping in something.

The fact is, the NDP did not leave us with a healthy health care system. They left us with one that was very sick, very sick indeed, not unlike what was left in Saskatchewan and in Ontario and in B.C., where New Democratic governments procrastinated and procrastinated and left things for too long until, instead of looking after health care the way we are trying to do here in Manitoba to a plan, with support from the health care community, except for a few union bosses, who have some problems with health care reforms, because it has labour implications. We know it has.

If you think the labour implications here are something to be concerned about, how many people do you think run 5,000 acute care beds in Ontario? How many people do you think ran those 52 hospitals in Saskatchewan that were shut down? How many people do you think ran the Shaughnessy Hospital in B.C., and how many people do you think it pays for the salary of the likes of Michael Decter and the likes of Marc Eliesen in Ontario and B.C.? [interjection] It has been several hours since I mentioned those things, so I thought I would bring them back home.

I would like the people of Transcona to know that in the last six years funding for home care services in Manitoba has increased 93 percent. Under the New Democrats the program was allowed to be—how did we ever manage before this government came along when the NDP were spending so little on home care services? Was everybody being taken care of in hospital then? That is the answer. The answer is yes, everybody who needed care, if there was no home care and

insufficient long-term care, that is where they had to be.

The policy of the NDP is to make every hospital in this province a hotel. That is their policy—an \$800-a-day hotel. Well, the people of Manitoba, or Transcona, do not accept that. I do not care which member they sent to this Legislature. That has nothing to do with it. The people of Transcona are my fellow Manitobans, and they want to have a health care system for their children. If we followed the honourable member's advice there would be no health care system for the children of the people of Transcona. [interjection] They ought to be with people like you going around spreading—with people like the member for Transcona going around spreading information that is not accurate.

I never really noticed this about the honourable member for Transcona before, but he is an extremely arrogant individual, and that kind of person does not last long in politics. People like the member for Transcona and other national leaders of the past, who still poke their heads up from time to time, are living proof that you cannot fool all of the people all of the time. The honourable member for Transcona may be out there trying to fool some of the people some of the time, but he is not going to fool all of them all the time. [interjection] Maybe the honourable member thinks he is doing a good job fooling a lot of the people a lot of the time, and maybe he is. [interjection]

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, I thought we were in the appropriation dealing with Healthy Public Policy Administration, and I do not know, we seem to have slipped. We periodically slip off of that trail, and I wonder if we might just continue along dealing with questions because we have a lot of questions in this area to ask the minister.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable member for Kildonan does not have a point of order. However, we were very diligently dealing with the items under 2.(a) Administration until, for some unknown reason, the minister was sidetracked with some questions.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chair, thank you. I was indeed trying to answer a very responsible, well-put and succinct question put by the honourable member for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray), but an extremely arrogant member of this Legislature walked in here and in a very smarmy and arrogant way attempted to disrupt the proceedings here tonight by putting incorrect information on the record.

One of my greatest frustrations as a Health minister is that people like that can go around misleading people throughout this province through the power that he is given by virtue of his election to this place. I find that very unhelpful, and I do not think the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) is very well served by having such a disruptive member sitting right behind him and disrupting a dialogue that I felt was being responsive to questions being asked and has basically distracted me and distracted this whole House bringing in issues about line-ups, waiting rooms and emergency rooms.

I have found it extremely off-putting and distracting, but I think the people of Transcona are going to find out just how arrogant this gentleman is and will make a judgment about him sooner or later. You cannot be that arrogant and remain in politics for a career.

I think I answered the honourable member's question.

Ms. Gray: Madam Chairperson, the subject that we were discussing was public health services that were provided through the Department of Health, and we were also talking about some activities such as prenatal classes. Is the department still providing prenatal classes for the general population?

* (2330)

Mr. McCrae: We do continue the operation of prenatal classes, and we are trying to target that so that we get the maximum outcome for the effort and resource used. I think that target areas, target age groups, for example, we try to encourage to attend prenatal classes.

I feel fortunate as a father to have had that opportunity when our first child was expected. Darlene and I were both able to attend, and I feel today that it has been helpful to us in raising all of our children. We did not do it with each and every child, but we certainly did with our first, and I speak from that experience. But I know too that the more we can have people in those classes that are more likely to benefit from such classes, the better we will be spending our health care dollars.

Ms. Gray: Madam Chairperson, the minister the other day, when he was talking about dollars that were being redirected from institutions, I think it was some \$9 million to other community programs, mentioned a nutrition program, and I do not have my Hansard here, but \$440,000 rings a bell to me. Can the minister tell us what the nature of that nutrition program is?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chair, I do not remember putting a dollar figure to this, but perhaps I did, and contextually if the honourable member reminds me of it maybe I can—the honourable member has something and we may as well—we will keep looking.

I would like to add to whatever it was I said previously, that we are exploring with community health centres the possibility of transferring to them some responsibility for nutrition programs. If the honourable member wants to read me the passage it might jog our memories over here.

Ms. Gray: I guess I need a card system like the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). I have been looking for this book all night, but it is here.

The minister had indicated, and it was actually related to prenatal nutrition, \$440,000 has been redirected to prenatal community public health services in the area of nutrition.

Mr. McCrae: Either the card system of the member for Kildonan or Reggie's computer, one or the other, but that I think is part and parcel of what I just said a minute ago about our exploratory talks with community health centres to have them partner with us with respect to nutrition programs.

Ms. Gray: Which community health centres is the minister referring to?

Mr. McCrae: We have had some discussions with the Mount Carmel Clinic, with the Health Action Centre, and to some extent, also with Klinik, sometimes referred to as Klinik with a K.

Ms. Gray: Madam Chairperson, do these agencies, some of them already provide, I believe, prenatal nutrition, so does the minister have this evening or at some point can he share with us the specific nature of what that \$440,000 is going to be used for?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chair, what we are referring to is a transfer of staff and accompanying operating dollars from the Department of Health to community health centres.

In addition, I do not think I finished the thought I started on earlier. My discussions with the dietitians' organization in Manitoba, I was going to pass on to staff people in the Department of Health that I would like to explore with them also how dietary issues and dietary services can enhance our total home care system. I learned in my meeting with the dietitians that there are areas where we can work together but also areas where we can improve the range of services in our home care system for people who are recipients of home care services.

Ms. Gray: Madam Chairperson, I know the member for Kildonan and I have quite a few more questions under this area of Healthy Public Policy, but I think I will turn the remaining 20 minutes over to my colleague.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, one of the areas that all governments in all reform of the health care system talk about is the whole question of prevention. My sense of the departmental priorities is that a great deal of emphasis and major announcements will be forthcoming with respect to Healthy Child Development as a major initiative of the government with respect to the whole aspect of preventative health care and the like. One of the areas that of course is important to this whole development is the whole question of interdepartmental co-ordination.

There is no question that in order to deliver services more effectively it will require a better co-ordination of services from government, and

one of those areas of course is in child development. I have a whole series of questions in that area, but I note there is a specific appropriation that is coming up that we can probably deal with these questions in more detail.

* (2340)

My specific question is, approximately a year and a half ago I asked the then-minister about a program that was launched by a number of nurses who formerly worked at the children's rehab centre that trained aides, that is teachers' aides in the school system, and assisted them in dealing with medical problems with children. The minister at that time promised there would be a major initiative insofar as that program ran out of funds and ceased to exist.

I am wondering if the minister has any idea of where that program or similar program is today with respect to the training of aides and others in the school system as it relates to dealing with children in the school system.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chairperson, there is quite a debate and discussion going on with respect to our education system and what services are provided and by whom and where, and all of those issues are even now current in Manitoba. The Minister of Education (Mr. Manness), I think, is doing the same thing in the other room as I am doing here and that is responding to questions, but the Health department, the Education department, the Family Services department are all working and have been working with other interested parties to develop some planning for this whole area.

While that is going on, we are also engaged in a very much larger public debate about what the schools are really supposed to be doing, what they are supposed to be for and who is really responsible for health services and who is really responsible for education services.

So I cannot, at this moment, tell the honourable member that all of the things that have been and are still being discussed have been put into action and that the planning process has been completed, but I can tell you that we have a Minister of Education (Mr. Manness) who is joined by other

ministers in being committed to bringing some clarity to these issues because, like the Minister of Education (Mr. Manness)—I should not be talking about education issues here—but I share with him some views, some fairly important ones, that have got people thinking in Manitoba for the first time in a long time.

What have we been doing in education? Have we been heading in the right direction? Frankly, I am quite satisfied that a lot of listening and discussion needs to happen right about now. We need to hear from employers. We need to hear from parents. We need to hear from teachers. None of those people do we need to hear from exclusively to the exclusion of everybody else.

That is what we have been doing wrong in Manitoba, listening to a few friends who promised to support us. That has happened with the party opposite, and it has happened in other places too. That is why we got ourselves into such a mess in this country.

I am glad that the Minister of Education is listening to parents and to employers and to teachers and listening to all of them, because that is what is required if we are going to have a school system that properly prepares our young people for the future.

Those who have needs in the area of health should have those needs met, but should it be delivered by the education system? A very important question—I thank the member for raising it. I do not have the answer, but we found the right way to find the answer, and that is to listen to all of the people, not just some of the people.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, I have to state that I am disappointed by the minister's response. I am disappointed firstly because the minister turned a legitimate question—and almost, I would say, 99 percent of the questions are legitimate. I mean, the odd time I suppose I get off on a tangent—but turned a legitimate question and turned it around, as is his wont, into a political debate, and I do not want to do that here.

I am also disappointed in more practical grounds, because the previous minister promised

me that some policy would be put in place on this very issue. So it is very clear that the new minister is not aware of, and I am not saying that to criticize his knowledge of the portfolio, not aware of that particular development, or the department has changed its policy again in this regard.

Let me lay out the issue for the minister, because I feel very strongly about this issue. That is that when the Voc Rehab Centre was closed down at the Health Sciences Centre some of the nurses from there put together a pilot project based on a provincial model from another jurisdiction to train aides.

Now, why were they doing that? They were doing that because there were concerns raised by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, a nonpolitical body, and there were concerns raised by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, a nonpolitical body, and there were concerns raised by people in the Winnipeg School Division No. 1, which the minister may or may not indicate is a political or nonpolitical body, but they raised concerns.

These nurses put together a pilot project that provided training and medical services to aides, to students that were in the classroom, that were in the system. The funding ran out, and the then-Minister of Health indicated to me in this Chamber—and I do not have the Hansard quotes. If I did I would send them to the minister, but I am trying to be as accurate as possible. He indicated to me on several occasions, because I raised it on several occasions, that something would be put in place. He assured me that there would be something in place that would take the place of that program, because it was recognized not by members of the opposition and not by union bosses and not by anyone with a special interest, but it was raised by people in the system and it was raised by an audit—in fact, there was an audit going on of medical services provided at the College of Physicians and Surgeons—and it was raised by people in the system that there was a difficulty.

The then-minister assured me that something would be dealt with. So I am given, from the

minister's response, that that is not taking place, and now there is a re-examination of the role of schools and perhaps the role of Health, et cetera within the—in fact, it appears to me that rather than moving towards a more integrated approach, we are now going in the opposite direction. The minister is saying, no, we do not want any involvement and it is not our responsibility.

* (2350)

I am quite disappointed by that response. Perhaps the minister has an opportunity to delve more thoroughly into the issue and outline for me a little bit better the question at hand. I am asking the minister if in fact my interpretation is correct, or is that not the case?

Mr. McCrae: Perhaps, Madam Chair, for the first time I sense a genuine concern in the honourable member, and I appreciate it.

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, the minister has spent a fair bit of time questioning members' motives on all sides of this Chamber, and I wish the minister would cease and desist from that. I believe it is against parliamentary practice for a minister to impute motive.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable member for Kildonan does not have a point of order, but I would caution and remind all members to pick and choose their words carefully.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: I accept your admonition, and I apologize to the honourable member for having offended him. I did not mean to do that, but I did sense in his comments a concern here for children. I appreciate that in any person because I happen to have concern for kids too. I have a lot of time for kids, and I sense that the honourable member was quite sincere in what he was saying.

I meant no offence whatever, and I am sorry that my friend has taken offence. Sometimes I do not always put things the way I should, and I can accept that. I am prepared to work with the honourable member on this point because of that sincerity that I feel he has for this particular issue.

The honourable member has to understand that the Health department does not walk into the schools and exert its authority all over the place unless it has authority to exert. It is a difficult area. I think the honourable member should accept that.

It is a difficult area when you place in the school environment children who require care and whose needs go beyond other children in the student population. There is often quite a convergence of departmental responsibilities that have to be sorted out, and I am not very good at elbowing my way around when it comes to authority issues.

We want to do the right thing for all children in our society—those who do not need the higher levels of services as well as those who do need them. So I am prepared to listen to what the honourable member may offer by way of advice as to how we might arrive at the policy that he is suggesting we should have arrived at by now.

It is not that the three departments have not been working together to try to, but it is not an easy issue, as the honourable member might well understand. If he knows something that the rest of us do not, by all means, we would be interested in hearing what he has to say.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Chairperson, I have never suggested that I have all of the answers.

The fact remains that there is a report sitting on the desks of the ministers from MAST to MASBO, the Manitoba Teachers' Society and alike, asking for action in this area. The report is three years old. Arising from that, I thought there was an interdepartmental committee of the cabinet looking after that.

On the specific point of the training of medical services to aides, I think he would serve the department well to review the program that was instituted by those nurses and to consider within the context of their interdepartmental committee a similar program or something that would provide a service of a similar nature given concerns that have been expressed, as I have indicated, not just by the opposition but by people involved in the system.

The trial program that was entered into by all accounts was very effective, so I would ask the minister perhaps to report back at some point

during these Estimates as to what the status is for that specific program.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Chair, any more detail that I can obtain for the honourable member throughout the course of these Estimates I will indeed share with him. He has asked that I instruct the department to review what the nurses' proposal was or what the nurses were doing and I will ask that that happen. That responds, I think, to what the honourable member is requesting for the time being.

I think also that if he and his colleagues shared their points of view on this issue, we would be interested in hearing them, just as we are interested in hearing the points of view of others besides the MAST, the MASBO and the MTS. We are interested in hearing what the parents have to say. It is the parents who are looking at the report cards. I am looking at report cards and I am not satisfied with what I am seeing. I do not know whether to blame my own child, whether to blame myself, whether to blame the school system, whether our local school system, the Teachers' Society, the principals' society and all these other societies. I do not know who to blame. All I know is that I think my own children, and if my children are coming through high school with needs unmet, other people's children are coming through high school and finishing with needs unmet.

I am told in some schools you cannot flunk. You cannot fail. Well, imagine that. Failure is part of the human existence. First you fail, then you try harder and then you pass. That is the way I understand it. Now maybe that is very old-fashioned, and I am prepared to accept if I am wrong about these things—but a no-fail policy. That is really something. How is it everybody just achieves and nobody ever fails? Come on, we learn from our mistakes. That is not old-fashioned. I learned from my mistakes yesterday and from my mistakes the day before. I learned not to do them again and I learned how to change my approach. I learned tonight not to go and insult people unfairly as I have done to the member for Kildonan and should not have done. I learned from those things and the honourable member and his colleagues, they can learn and we can learn from them, too.

So information and advice given to us in the right kind of spirit makes all the difference in the world. There are times, the honourable member knows, that we do not appreciate some of their criticism. On the other hand, some of it can be very helpful. Some of these questions, I think, the honourable Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Manness) ought to be maybe reading Hansard from this side of the Estimates committee because he might be interested in knowing what the member for Kildonan has been saying about this issue.

I have said that I will ask staff of the department to review the history of this process, so that I can bring forward perhaps a more detailed account of what has been happening in this area.

Unless the member has more questions in the next minute or two, that will be all.

An Honourable Member: Should we call it 12?

Madam Chairperson: Is that the will of the committee? Is it the will of the committee to call it 12? The hour being twelve o'clock, committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Deputy Speaker (Louise Dacquay): The hour being after 10 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

Erratum

On Monday, May 2, 1994, Volume 18B, on pages 988 to 990, "Rolof" should have been spelled "Rolla."

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 9, 1994

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