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First Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(Hansard)

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authority of
The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 6, 1995

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY
STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

Committee Of Supply

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

I move, seconded by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the statement as to fidelity bonds on deposit with the Minister of Finance, and, on behalf of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), I am pleased to table the Supplementary Estimates for 1995-96 for the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table, pursuant to The Regulations Act, a copy of each regulation registered with the Registrar of Regulations since the regulations were tabled in the House December 1994.

Also, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table in the House the Supplementary Estimates for the Manitoba Status of Women and the Women's Directorate.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister charged with the administration of The Workers Compensation Act): Madam Speaker, I have the pleasure of tabling both the

Annual Report of the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba and Appeal Commission for 1994, and the 1995 Five Year Operating Plan for the board.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Telephone Act): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to table the 1994 Annual Report of the Manitoba Telephone System.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the 1993-94 Annual Reports for Assiniboine Community College, Keewatin Community College and Red River Community College.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report of the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and the 1994 Report of the Public Utilities Board.

* (1335)

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw all members' attention to the public gallery, where we have this afternoon from Minnedosa Collegiate fourteen Grades 9 to 12 students under the direction of Mr. Pineo. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer).

Also, we have from Athlone School nine Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Prokopchuk. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine).

Also, we have seated in the public gallery from Ramah Hebrew School forty-one Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Pat Leclair. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe).

Also, we have thirty Grade 8 students from Leaf Rapids Education Centre. These students are under the direction of Mr. Tom Crawford. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen).

We also have thirty-five Grades 7 to 9 students from John Pritchard School under the direction of Miss Joan Duerksen. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Winnipeg Arena Investor Representatives

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the First Minister.

On May 24, in the House, in answers to questions we posed about why the Premier exceeded and broke his election promise of \$10 million that he repeatedly made during the last election campaign as the absolute limit for the new arena project, the Premier stated in this House that he was now dealing with a new group of private-sector purchasers led by Mr. Izzy Asper. Today, Madam Speaker, councillors have indicated that Mr. Asper is not involved in the negotiations.

I would like to ask the Premier, who is in charge of the private sector group that the Premier is allegedly dealing with in terms of the Jets?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, like any group of investors, there are representatives of the various parties at the table and there are representatives of the interests of major investors at the table, and those who are putting up the major portions of the money are there themselves and in some cases represented by legal counsel, in other cases by accountants. Certainly, Mr. Asper is represented at the table, if not by himself, by others who are there to look after his interests.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, that is quite a different answer than the Premier gave in the Chamber here just awhile ago when he said this group is being led by Mr. Asper.

I was asking the Premier and he did not answer the question of who is in charge. We are bequeathing \$111 million to a new facility. We are bequeathing revenue streams in terms of concessions, parking and all kinds of other public investments directly and indirectly in a massive public project that far exceeded the Premier's promise in the election campaign. Whom are we dealing with? Who is in charge of the group we are dealing with, and does the Premier have confidence in the people he is dealing with in terms of bequeathing that much of taxpayers' money to this unnamed group?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I hesitate to explain this once again to the Leader of the Opposition because he does not seem to understand it or choose to understand it. We are, as the public sector, committed to construct an entertainment complex to the value of \$111 million split amongst the three levels of government on the understanding that the private sector will commit to raising \$111 million to purchase the control of the NHL franchise for Winnipeg as well as provide a fund that will cover the losses, the imputed and potential losses for the foreseeable future.

There are various different people involved who have made commitments to invest in the team, and they are represented by legal counsel and in some cases accountants who are ensuring that their interests are protected. There will be a corporation that will be structured eventually from these negotiations, which are the negotiations for the sale of the franchise from the existing ownership led by Mr. Shenkarow to the new ownership which is more widespread and does include various names that he has referred to and others that have been referred to.

Those negotiations are ongoing, and should they reach an agreement for the purchase and control of the team and make their commitment in writing to us to raise the \$111 million, then we as a public sector are committed to construct a facility that will be an entertainment complex to facilitate hockey and various other entertainment in Winnipeg.

Public Equity

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, last week the Premier indicated that Mr. Benson and Mr. Bessey were involved on our behalf in these so-called negotiations. He also stated in Hansard in his Estimates that our share would be 9 percent of the new share structure. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) indicated yesterday in questions asked by the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) it would be 18 percent.

I would like to ask the Premier, in this \$111 million of so-called money being raised by the private sector, does that include the public equity that has been paid for by the taxpayers either at the 9 percent rate or the 18 percent rate?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, in fairness to the Leader of the Opposition, I did say to him that day in Estimates, that he quotes me later on in Hansard, that I did not have all of the facts available and I asked him not to hold me to the detail because I did not—[interjection]

Does the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) have a question? If so, she could ask her Leader whether she—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I am attempting to answer the question but being heckled from members opposite. [interjection] Now the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) is trying to get into it, Madam—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister, to quickly complete his response.

Mr. Filmon: I assure him that our equity remains preserved in the new arrangement. Obviously, the amount of public money is not part of the \$111 million. That is over and above.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the official opposition, for a second question.

Mr. Filmon: Yes, two questions, new question.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, I am glad the Premier says we are entitled to a question. I thought you were in the Chair, and I am very sorry that the Premier—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The Speaker was clearly seeking clarification as to whether the Leader of the official opposition was wishing to elect his option in having two full questions.

* (1345)

Auto Theft Increase

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I have a new question to the Premier.

I was extremely disappointed in the answers of the government yesterday dealing with a very, very unfortunate situation here in the province of Manitoba and the city of Winnipeg. We have had a 225 percent increase in the last two years of car thefts in the city of Winnipeg. We have had a 21 percent increase in the statistics that were just released or made available by the City of Winnipeg police force yesterday for 1994. We have had an increase of thousands of cases, according to the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, in the last three years while this government has been in office. I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon), why is it increasing?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to take another opportunity to explain the statistics which were from a leaked document yesterday by the opposition. The statistics which were revealed yesterday were to the end of 1994.

This government has taken very strong action, particularly in the area of auto theft. We have made amendments to The Highway Traffic Act. Those amendments were proclaimed January 1, 1995, so the actions that this government has taken, the very strong actions on a number of fronts, are not reflected in the early statistics the member raised.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, every year we hear the same answer from this minister and this government

that next year it will be better, next year it will be better.

I would like to ask the Premier, why have car thefts gone up in '91-92 from 2,400 across the province to 8,600 in the '94 MPIC year? It is one an hour in the city of Winnipeg. How many victims do we have of this car theft, and can the government explain why only 851 cases were resolved in 1993 and only 620 cases—[interjection] The Premier (Mr. Filmon) can answer the question—were solved in 1994? In other words, we have more cars being stolen and fewer car thefts being solved by the police and the City of Winnipeg, something the Premier, of course, promised to do something about.

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, this government has taken the whole issue of auto theft and auto vandalism very seriously.

We have instituted a number of actions which I am very happy to remind the opposition about; first of all, the changes to The Highway Traffic Act, proclaimed January 1, 1995, Madam Speaker, which we believe will deal with the behaviour; secondly, assist—and let me make it clear to the member of the opposition.

It is not one single action which will deal with our crime statistics. It does require a very comprehensive set of actions, which is why, also, Madam Speaker, this government has money on the table for 40 new police officers, \$2 million to the City of Winnipeg, and why we also have made a commitment to the people of Manitoba that we will be looking at ways to deal with restitution where there has been a property crime. [applause]

Mr. Doer: I am surprised that members opposite could be clapping when we have a situation where we have fewer cases solved and more car thefts taking place. I do not think that is a matter to clap for in a political way.

Crime Rate Reduction Strategy

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon), when will this

government come up with a comprehensive strategy to prevent crime, to have community responsibility to prevent crime, to have more recreational opportunities for our kids, more opportunities to go to some place besides 7-Elevens, to keep north end Ys open, to keep Kildonan drop-in centres, to get positive programs for kids to prevent crime, along with meaningful accountability when crimes are committed? When are we going to get a comprehensive approach across our province, Madam Speaker?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, again, I would say that every time this government has brought forward an initiative to deal both with prevention—the preventative initiative, No Need to Argue, was just totally dismissed by the opposition.

This government has put into place preventative action, Madam Speaker. This government has money on the table for more police officers. This government has moved legislatively to increase the consequences. It was raised the other day, a program operating out of the north end Y, which is operated through our youth probation. Money is on the table to continue that program, and we will continue to look for a facility, if by chance the board of the north end Y cannot resolve their difficulties.

So, Madam Speaker, this government, in a very comprehensive way, both from the preventative end, through the process of specialized courts, through policing and also in the Corrections end and legislatively has acted, and we really have seen no support from the other side.

* (1350)

Winnipeg Police Services Additional Officers

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, yesterday, the '94 crime statistics for Winnipeg also showed robberies up 17 percent and weapons offences up 30 percent—violent offences.

Several years too late, and only during the recent election, the government promised 40 more police

officers for Winnipeg at a cost of \$2 million, by the way, a promise made four days after the NDP committed \$2 million for community policing.

My question to the Minister of Justice: Would the minister explain why the offer of policing was not made before we ended up with, for example, 37,000 break-and-enter victims in the last three years, and has the minister decided the details of the election promise?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, the budget line for the 40 new police officers was contained in the budget passed in this House, so the member is completely wrong that this government made the promise lately. The promise was made through the budget that was passed in this House, voted against, Madam Speaker, by that side of the House—voted against by that side of the House.

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, would the minister now change what we understand is the nature of the offer to the city and use the \$2 million wisely and as a carrot by offering to cost-share with the city more officers which could secure not just 40 but up to 80 additional officers?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, the member again invites this government to break a promise, to change a promise, or the member on the other side chooses to raise the taxes of the people of the city of Winnipeg.

This government recognized a concern. We understood that it was important to have more police officers on the street, both for prevention and also to deal with the solving of criminal acts which have occurred, so this government did not wait for somebody else to match the offer. We moved directly in response to the interests of public safety for this province. It is always open, Madam Speaker, to the city or to anyone else to match the offer.

Mr. Mackintosh: For the smart use of this provincial money, would the minister also specifically earmark the funding, not just for traditional police officers or traditional policing, but for community-based policing so the officers will be on the streets and in the neighbourhoods?

Mrs. Vodrey: This government, in announcing the \$2 million to the City of Winnipeg police said to the Winnipeg police we were particularly concerned about auto theft and youth crime. However, we recognize that it is the chief of police who will be deploying the officers on the street, and it will be up to our chief of police for the city of Winnipeg to determine the work of those officers.

Sexual Assaults Bail Eligibility

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): My questions are also for the Minister of Justice.

On Saturday, June 23, a 26-year-old Winnipeg man was charged with sexually assaulting a nine-year-old boy who was a neighbour of the man. After being charged with sexual assault, forcible confinement, anal intercourse, sexual interference and invitation to sexual touching, the man was released on bail. My first question is, did the Crown oppose bail?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): As the members know, and I have told members of this House previously, where cases are before the court the Attorney General is unable to speak about that specific case. That still stands today. I am unable to speak about a case before the court.

Ms. McGifford: My second question: Has the minister instructed her department to appeal the judge's bail decision in this case?

Mrs. Vodrey: The answer remains the same. The member is right, in a general sense of course, that it is the court that determines whether or not bail will be granted. Regarding a specific case, this specific case, I am unable to speak about that case.

* (1355)

Ms. McGifford: Perhaps this question can be answered. To ensure public safety, has the minister instructed staff to oppose bail in similar cases?

Mrs. Vodrey: In a general sense and as it applies to all cases, we look at the facts of the case and included in

those facts we would also always be looking at issues of public safety and previous record and evidence and so on, but in the matter of this particular case, I am unable to make any comment.

Personal Care Homes Additional Beds

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

During the election campaign, the Premier promised more personal care home beds and more community-based care to the citizens of Manitoba. But of course that was during the election campaign, and we see something different now.

My question to the Premier: Can the Premier explain why this year there are fewer personal care home beds being budgeted for the province than there were last year?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, what I can tell the member opposite is that contrary to what was done under the New Democrats throughout the 1960s when there—[interjection] Throughout the 1980s, I should say. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for correcting me. Of course, it was the 1980s when the government of which he was a part did not add to the personal care beds in this province.

Contrary to that policy, we have added 700 personal care beds since we took office and have 500 more either committed or under construction, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Chomiak: The Premier did not answer the question.

Will the Premier explain why at the same time that they are cutting hospital beds and promise more community-based care, this government has 173 fewer personal care home beds this year than it did last year? Can the Premier explain that?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, what the honourable member says is very, very highly suspect, and I look forward, perhaps later

this afternoon during the examination of the Estimates of the Department of Health, to put the record straight on that.

As the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has pointed out, we have undergone a massive increase in the number of personal care spaces in our province in the last few years, and we intend to continue in that direction, creating better living circumstances for seniors and others and creating many, many health care jobs.

Mr. Chomiak: I direct the Premier and the Minister of Health to look at their own Supplementary Estimates book that indicates these very numbers, from the minister's own book that he handed out to this Legislature.

My question, again, to the Minister of Health and the Premier (Mr. Filmon), who promised 400 additional beds this year, why are there 173 fewer personal care home beds in this province this year than there was last year, despite their election promises? What has changed since the election and now, Madam Speaker?

Mr. McCrae: I will be interested later in the Estimates review process, Madam Speaker, to get a clearer understanding of the type of mathematics the honourable member is using.

Winnipeg Arena Contract

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): The Minister of Finance has indicated that the public sector is going to build the entertainment complex, arena, for a total of \$111 million and a fixed-price construction cost of \$75 million, using the Dominion Hunt consortium.

He indicated that the contract provided for any cost overruns to be paid for by the private sector, yet, last night, the minister stated that he had not read or even seen the contract. He was uncertain whether Mr. Bessey or Mr. Benson had read or seen the contract.

In the light of this revelation, Madam Speaker, how can the minister assure this House or the public about anything in regard to the contract?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Again, the member for Crescentwood intertwines two separate issues. As he knows full well, the discussions have been taking place with the private sector group that if a new facility is going to be built they would build it for an all-inclusive price of no more than \$111 million. If there were any costs over and above the \$111 million, they would be the responsibility of the new private sector investors.

That group which is part of the MEC group that has been working on this project for the last eight or nine months, as part of their work they went out for requests for proposals back in the fall, received three requests for proposals, did their analysis and have concluded that the best price and the best project is one with Dominion Hunt.

They have not entered into a legal binding agreement with that entity yet. They have come to agreement at this point in time, but they are awaiting concluding the binding agreement pending all of the discussions being finalized. Similarly, we are waiting to conclude an agreement with them pending all discussions being finalized, Madam Speaker.

* (1400)

Luxury Boxes

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Can the minister tell the House if the contract, as he understands it, provides for the public sector to pay for the construction of the luxury boxes?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): As I understand it, the facility will include the construction of approximately 40 luxury boxes, but the internal amenities within each individual luxury box will be the responsibility of individuals who acquire those boxes for their use. That is a common approach in facilities of this nature right across North America.

My understanding again is that is the approach. If somebody wants to put in a particular type of carpet, a particular type of wood panelling, those would be costs that those people will incur themselves in terms of,

effectively like a leasehold improvement in their luxury box.

Contract

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, the minister has indicated the contract exists. Will the minister immediately undertake to read the draft fixed-price agreement as has been supplied by Dominion Hunt to MEC under which assurances have been made to this House so that he can speak from some level of certainty instead of supposition to the House on the subject?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): I wish the member for Crescentwood would take his own advice and do some research and speak with some certainty on this entire issue instead of rumours, innuendoes, lack of information.

As I have indicated, if we get to the stage where a new arena, a new entertainment complex will be built in Winnipeg, we will enter into an agreement with the private sector investors. They will then enter into an agreement with Dominion Hunt for the construction of the facility.

All agreements will be reviewed before any signing on the part of government, on the part of the new private sector investors, as part of that due diligence process at that time. At this stage they have requests for proposal submissions from groups. Dominion Hunt has submitted a request for proposal which is deemed to be the best, and it is based on a \$75-million fixed price.

Civil Servants

Reduced Workweek Legislation

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): My question is for the Minister responsible for The Civil Service Act.

The government has issued its final offer to the membership of the Manitoba Government Employees Union. The offer freezes pay until the end of March of next year and requires employees of the government to take 10 days unpaid leave this year.

My question to the minister is: Is it the intention of this government to enforce this offer through legislation if in fact as requested from this government the membership at large does not accept it?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, as the member is aware, this offer is out to the members of the MGEU and that is the appropriate way of dealing with this issue at this time.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, does the minister not feel that there is a significant number of civil servants that are out there that believe this government will introduce legislation if they do not vote in favour of this? Is there anything he is prepared to say or do to make a commitment?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Inkster that his question is out of order. He is seeking an opinion.

Does the honourable member for Inkster wish to rephrase his question?

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Speaker. Can the minister tell us if the government intends to pursue a similar course of action with respect to future negotiations with our nurses and with our teachers?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, no, I cannot tell him that because that is not what we are going to be doing. We have indicated very clearly what we are doing in respect of the civil service and that is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Lamoureux: I am glad to hear they are not going to be introducing legislation—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Question, please.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, my question is: Can the minister tell us whether the government will refrain from making any layoffs for the duration of this agreement if it is accepted by the MGEU?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I believe we have only one Minister of Labour. The honourable Minister of Labour, to respond to the question.

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, I am not prepared to speculate in that manner.

Workforce 2000 Information Release

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, on December 19, 1994, I wrote to the Minister of Education asking for the annual update of the Workforce 2000 program, but to my surprise, I received nothing. On May 12 I repeated this request to the new minister but have not yet, almost a month later, received any information.

I want to ask the Minister of Education, since this program is one of the few initiatives in training of this government, why is the minister, why is this government so reluctant to release any public information on it?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I am not at all reluctant to discuss our excellent programs that we have such as Workforce 2000, and if there is a letter in my office requesting information on it, I will be only too pleased to respond. I will search that letter out when I return to my office, see what it asks and be pleased to respond to the member.

In the meantime, I am delighted to report that Workforce 2000 is working well, helping Manitobans in industry, helping Manitobans with training, and adding strength to our province.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, the minister will find that a letter was hand-delivered to her office on May 12 of this year.

Centra Gas

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Would the minister tell the House today, in the absence of such public information on Workforce 2000, whether Centra Gas is receiving from Workforce 2000 a refund of the Health

and Education levy at the same level as last year of approximately \$135,000. * (1410)

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I will check that amount and that particular rebate and get that information for the member.

I am pleased to indicate, however, that where we have incentives that we can put in place to help the workforce retrain and upgrade the qualifications of its staff so that they can advance in their workforce abilities, we are pleased to do that where we are able to.

I will get the specific detail on the Centra Gas situation and give that information to her.

Training Grants Monitoring Process

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, my final supplementary is for the Minister of Labour.

I would like the minister to tell the House whether it is the policy of his government to monitor public training grants to companies where there is a strike or a lockout to ensure that such grants are not used to train replacement workers.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I will take notice of that question.

Keewatin Community College Staffing Reduction

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): My questions are directed to the Minister of Education.

Yesterday, the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik), who is also responsible for aboriginal affairs, could not tell us how cutting more than 10 positions at KCC would do anything to establish and develop KCC as the co-ordinator of post-secondary education in the North, as his government promised before the election, Madam Speaker.

I would like to ask the Minister of Education whether she has any idea as to what these cuts mean to KCC and to aboriginal people.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, if I might, in answering the question from the member for The Pas, also respond to the other two questions that were given yesterday when I was away at the North End Women's Resource Centre—if I could give that information, those three responses to those questions taken as notice.

I should first of all indicate to the member that Keewatin Community College did experience federal transfer cuts, as he knows, and that the college in its ability to govern, because it does have self-governance now, decided that rather than cut programming, they would take a look at administrative cuts, which is something that the opposition has frequently said should be the way in which those kinds of transfer cuts are dealt with in any arena, and I presume that they would apply that to this same arena, as well.

The staff, in downsizing, of course, absolutely did in no way eliminate the aboriginal learning centre. They did not. They have reallocated people. They are bringing in an elder support counselling program, which if the member does not know about, he should learn about because bringing in elders from the community, community representation, to provide counselling on a flexible time pattern for students at KCC is something that I thought he would support, and I am surprised that he does not support it, given his protestations from his seat that this is not a good way to proceed. I believe an elder program is a very good way to proceed.

In terms of the other two questions, Madam Speaker—I just see the other two questions. One was they wanted to know what was done in terms of helping with northern education versus southern education.

I point out to the member something that I think they already know—if they want to ask more questions in Estimates today, I will be pleased to answer those—that we put more dollars per capita into northern post-secondary education than we do to other parts of the province to address the very issues that he claims to be concerned about.

I also indicate, Madam Speaker, that in terms of the question the Premier (Mr. Filmon) took as notice from the member, how will the public institutions there remain accountable to Manitobans, there are three basic ways, many more than that, but three basic ways, so as not to take up too much time. Of course, they have their college boards, self-governance, accountable to the people. They also present an annual report to government which is basically financial. In addition, they make an annual academic report, Madam Speaker.

I appreciate my time is up, so I will sit down now.

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Speaker, I do not know what to make of that response. Let me try a second question to the Minister of Education, and that is, is she aware that many of the positions being cut, such as the aboriginal centre and the demotion of the chair of trades to a co-ordinator, are key to the development of aboriginal people, who, incidentally, occupy the lowest rung of the socioeconomic ladder and also who comprise 50 percent of the student body at KCC? We need help, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, the member should be aware that I am aware of the efforts being made by Keewatin Community College to satisfy the needs of all northern students in the area, in the region, in which they service, particularly aboriginal students, and the very good efforts that they are putting in place to ensure aboriginal representation throughout the faculty, keeping in place the aboriginal learning centre, bringing in elder counselling services, redeploying some of the staff who were with the aboriginal centre into other areas of the college, recruiting aboriginal staff and people well versed in educational matters.

With self-governance, we have a college which is of the North, from the North, for the North, working to satisfy the needs of the students in the North. I would think—and I am surprised that this does not make him happy, since it is the type of thing we promised we would do in terms of making a northern centre for—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Lathlin: My last question is, how can this minister and her government justify cutting and

eliminating some of those programs at KCC in the face of the reports from Roblin, the Northern Economic Development Commission and others? How can she justify cutting those programs?

Mrs. McIntosh: I would suggest perhaps, Madam Speaker, that before the member asks such a question that could be embarrassing to him ultimately, that he either read the report for the first time or reread it carefully to see what it actually says, because Roblin says a number of things about colleges and one that he said is one that we have already acted upon, as the member knows, that Keewatin Community College is designated to be a co-ordinator for northern and post-secondary education.

We are currently, we being the province of Manitoba through the board of governors who are independent, searching for a new president. Once that president has been located through the process of a self-governing decision then that centre will indeed become the co-ordinating centre for the North. He also knows that colleges are self-governing, that they make the decisions not government—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, we have been very patient, but Beauchesne Citation 417 states very clearly that answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate.

I think we would appreciate it if the minister could respond to the very real questions asked by the member for The Pas about the future of KCC.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education, on the same point of order.

Mrs. McIntosh: On the same point of order, Madam Speaker, you may notice that I responded to three questions taken as notice yesterday and point by point to each point raised by the member for The Pas. If he

does not want a detailed answer, he should not ask a detailed question.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order by the honourable member for Thompson, I would remind members on both sides of the House that, indeed, brevity both in questions and answers is of great importance in Beuchesne 410.(7).

Indeed, we have adopted a few new rules in terms of guidelines and I did give the honourable Minister of Education some latitude in responding to questions taken as notice. However, the other responses were well within the time limits.

Parkland Region Distance Education Co-ordinator

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education as well.

For 10 years the Distance Education co-ordinator of Parkland Assiniboine Community College has given students the opportunity to access post-secondary education without having to leave the region. The position of co-ordinator will soon be terminated. This will have a negative impact on Distance Education for the whole Parkland area. Will the minister step in to provide funding so that the co-ordination of Distance Ed programs will continue?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I will be brief and just simply indicate that Distance Education is a priority of this government, of this department and of this minister. There is no way we will knowingly or willingly allow any initiatives in Distance Education to be in any way jeopardized or delayed.

* (1420)

Mr. Struthers: I appreciate the support and I will be expecting the funding to flow soon. Will the minister, given her party's election stance that distance from the source of education will not be an obstacle, explain how she plans to deal with the technological expansion of Distance Ed without a co-ordinator on staff?

Mrs. McIntosh: The member makes assumptions. Inherent in his statement are assumptions which he bases upon I know not what. I do indicate that we are having Estimates of expenditures right now. We leave this Chamber and go into them in four or five minutes. I invite him to come and perhaps he could ask those questions. We can delve into them in as much detail as he would like where time permits and protocol allows.

Mr. Struthers: Can the minister provide information as to how her government will offset the loss of yet another salaried position from the community of Dauphin?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, with respect, I did not hear the first portion of the member's question. I wonder if he would be good enough to repeat for me.

Mr. Struthers: Can the minister provide information as to how her government will offset the loss of yet another salaried position from the community of Dauphin?

Mrs. McIntosh: I say, my, my, I think we are into Estimates already, Madam Speaker.

Again, I would encourage any members who wish to participate in the Estimates process to do so in the committee room at the proper time and place scheduled for that event.

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

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

Philippine Heritage Week

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, respectfully, I request leave to make a nonpolitical statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Broadway have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Santos: Madam Speaker, the honourable Premier (Mr. Filmon) of the province of Manitoba has officially

proclaimed June 11 to June 18, 1995, as the Philippine Heritage Week. It is written, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies, and what you sow is not the body that shall be, but mere grain. Just as the seedling needs to crack the tough seed covering in order to germinate, so must a people liberate themselves from the bonds of slavery and oppression and achieve freedom and independence as a nation before the people can fully develop their own unique cultural heritage.

Therefore, it is appropriate that on this Friday, June 9, 1995, starting at 6 p.m. there will be a dinner and dance at the Airliner Inn, 1740 Ellice Avenue, corner of Century Street, to commemorate the 97th Celebration of Philippine Independence, which serves as a fitting precursor of the Philippine Heritage Week from June 11 to June 18, 1995.

On Sunday, June 11, 1995, at eight o'clock in the morning at the City Hall quadrangle at 510 Main Street, there will be an opening flag-raising ceremony attended by many different organizational groups displaying their respective banners, and at approximately 1:30 p.m., there will be some festivities at the Filipino seniors group hall at 49 Euclid Street.

On Monday, June 12, at 6:30 p.m., at the Philippine Centre located at 88 Juno Street, corner of McDermot Avenue, there will be interfaith religious services of the Philippine community.

On Wednesday, June 14, starting at 6:30 p.m., there will be a cultural presentation at Wellington School located at 690 Beverley Street, sponsored by the Manitoba Association of Filipino Teachers Incorporated.

On Thursday, June 15, 1995, at 6:30 p.m., there will be a Filcasa celebration at the Filcasa Housing Co-op at 442 William Avenue, corner of Gertie Street.

On Saturday, June 17, 1995, at 7 p.m., there will be a Pistahan Rondalla Ensemble musical presentation at the Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre at 340 Provencher Boulevard under the auspices of the Manitoba Association of Filipino Teachers Incorporated.

Finally, on Sunday, June 18, all hours of the day at Assiniboine Park, there will be a Philippine community picnic of the various organizations and groups. Everybody is invited. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, if I may have leave to make a nonpolitical statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the member for Inkster have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I, too, on behalf of the Liberal caucus, would like to join in with the member for Broadway and the comments that he has made with respect to the 97th celebration coming up between the 11th and the 18th of June, and to acknowledge and support what the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has done in terms of the proclamation for that particular week.

I am sure if members do decide, or do have some time to attend the many different events that are being hosted throughout that week from the Filipino community, as the member for Broadway has pointed out the calendar of events, they will find they are very enjoyable.

What you will see on numerous occasions is different forms of displays of culture and heritage from the Filipino community, and I have always, personally, found it to be very rewarding and always new to be able to participate in some degree in a number of the different events through the week.

I, too, as, I am sure, the member for Broadway, will be at the Independence Ball coming up this Friday—it is actually, as I believe he pointed out, at the Airliner—and look forward to seeing other members of the Chamber attend if they can. Suffice to say, I am sure, it would be very much appreciated from the community and all of us would benefit by having more people attending it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, do I have leave to make a few comments?

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable minister have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join colleagues from opposition parties to let members of the Chamber know of the celebrations within the Filipino community coming up within the next week.

Manitoba is home, of course, to many multicultural groups, and certainly, there are some 40,000 Filipino people living within the province of Manitoba who take an active part in the many groups that are organized within the province.

I, too, would encourage colleagues and the general public to avail themselves of the opportunity to join with the Filipino community in their celebration. Thank you.

Back 40 Folk Festival - Morden, Manitoba

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): A nonpolitical statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Pembina have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Dyck: Madam Speaker, on Sunday, June 4, I was privileged to attend the Back 40 Folk Festival in Morden, Manitoba.

For the sixth consecutive year, local and Manitoba artists came together to display their talents to provide very high quality entertainment and to educate the listening public in the roots of traditional music. I want to say that festivals like this give solid evidence of the great pool of talent and energy which resides in our local communities.

The Pembina constituency has not only been at the forefront of innovation and creativity in Manitoba agriculture and industry, it has also contributed greatly to the artistic life of this province. Not only were there musical artists present but also crafts people, children's entertainers and others interested in providing an excellent time for the whole family.

At this time, I would like to pay tribute to the organizers, volunteers and performers of the Back 40 Folk Festival and invite all of you to sample some excellent music next year, the first weekend in June in Morden, Manitoba.

Alzheimer Manitoba Memory Walk

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Also, on June 4 in Winkler, I was able to participate in the opening exercises of the third annual Memory Walk for Alzheimer Manitoba, the south-central region. Last year the Manitoba Memory Walk raised over \$60,000 and their goal is for \$93,000.

Alzheimer disease is a frightening and frustrating disorder for those who find themselves struck by this degenerative brain disease. It is also a disease that has a tremendous effect on families. Family members suffer from what can amount to the loss of a loved one in the latter stages of this disease. Whether it is the husband or wife who can no longer remember their spouse or children or the frustration that accompanies the inability to perform routine functions in life, it is a disease that robs its victims and their families of basic enjoyment of life. As we know, this is a disease that seems to know no barriers. It can strike any of us. That is why it is so important to rally our friends and neighbours to fight this disease.

Elmer Letterman said, and I quote: There is only one thing better than making a new friend; that is keeping an old one.

Let us make sure we do not lose any more old friends. Thank you.

* (1430)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mr. Gilleshammer), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty, with the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) in the Chair for the Department of Agriculture; the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) in the Chair for the Department of Education and Training; and the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Health.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply, meeting in Room 254, will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture.

When the committee last sat, it had been considering item 4.(d)(1) on page 17 of the Estimates book and on page 54 of the yellow supplement book. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Chairman, when we left this committee last night, we were having a discussion on irrigation and the minister was providing us with some information. One of the projects he spoke about was the Agassiz irrigation association, to which he indicated some \$800,000 in funding was provided, and a certain amount of that is coming from the Department of Agriculture through this branch, I believe he indicated.

Can the minister indicate whether there are any other groups in the province similar to the Agassiz irrigation association that are receiving funding from the department?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Chairman, as I indicated when last the committee met, there are no other specific irrigation projects as such being funded by the government. There are individual irrigation associations. I know there is the Manitoba irrigators association that from time to time receives

some support from this department as well as from the Department of Natural Resources under their water resources shop specifically to do monitoring of certain aquifers, to do testing.

The honourable member will recall, particularly a few years ago, when the issue of transferring some waters from the Carberry aquifer to the Plumas area. Generally speaking, there was considerable debate as to whether or not that should occur. Subsequently, the project was deferred, but that whole issue raised considerable concern. I can recall at that time as Minister of Natural Resources that I was certainly prepared to provide and add to our knowledge, data base, as to the condition, as to the quality, in other words, further ground water studies.

I know the Department of Natural Resources has an ongoing role to play in this area. I think, if I recall, it was funded to about some-hundred thousand dollars for a cataloguing, if you like, inventorying of ground water supplies throughout agri-Manitoba. Staff advises me that there are no specific programs or projects that could be described as directly involved in irrigation as such that are being supported currently by the department.

Ms. Wowchuk: I believe the minister indicated that the Manitoba irrigators association gets funds on an annual basis to do this cataloguing? I thought he said \$100,000, but can the minister indicate whether that is the amount that the Manitoba irrigators association gets on an annual basis from this department?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, my understanding is, from our department it is minimal support from time to time for specific areas for some further ground water studies.

Again, I am advised that it is more of the monitoring-management kind of studies. The kind of work that we are directly involved with is again through the Manitoba Crop Diversification Centre at Carberry that can be generally described as researching ground water conditions, ground water supplies.

I am going by memory, and I would invite the honourable member for Swan River to make a note to

ask my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger) more specifically about it. But at the time that I was Minister of Natural Resources, we had a group within Water Resources department or branch that studied ground water. They had a multiyear plan of test drilling and evaluation assessment determining size, capacity of aquifers, so that the Department of Agriculture, when asked, could make proper determinations as to how much water could be withdrawn from a specific aquifer when we received requests for irrigation purposes. That was an ongoing program of the value roughly of \$100,000 per annum that was spent.

It was not a grant to any organization. It was spent internally by the engineers, ground water experts, technicians, who built up this data base on ground water supplies throughout agri-Manitoba. It could not be correct to describe that as a grant to any outside agency or to any individual irrigator or groups of irrigators. This was an ongoing departmental expense under the Department of Natural Resources. To my knowledge, that is still ongoing, but again I speak just from memory, I would invite the member to make a note and request specific information from the responsible minister, the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger).

* (1440)

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister is saying that there is no direct funding from the Department of Agriculture to the Manitoba irrigators association to carry on their activities.

Mr. Enns: I believe that is correct, there is not. There are different types of conservation programs going on. We have a fairly significant program involving different local conservation organizations who access relatively small funds with which they do a number of projects. Some do monitoring with respect to fertilizer leeching down through the ground water to see what problems might occur. Others do a number of projects that involve water and agriculture. But again, this is generally a local area-wide group that wants further information. This is not the kind of support, I think, that the member is asking for where the department is directly funding a specific irrigation project or an

irrigator farmer or somebody who is going into irrigation.

Mr. Chairman, allow me simply while we are speaking with irrigation to clearly indicate to the honourable member and the committee that we are, as I have alluded to in some of my other comments, facing some very challenging and exciting demands for future requirements for irrigation coming principally at this time from the potato industry. We have been served notice. While this information is not generally in the public domain, we have been put on notice, if you like, by our two major processors, namely the McCain operation out of Portage la Prairie and the Nestle-Simplot operation at Carberry that would require significant expansion of our irrigation capacity. McCain's alone is looking, to meet their market obligations, at some additional 23,000 acres in potato production. Their request, quite frankly, is that all of that be irrigable.

In other words, they are prepared to offer to Manitoba producers this kind of an expansion in potato production if we can provide the extension work to encourage new entries into the potato growing field which, as I said earlier when we were discussing Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation's operations, requires significant capital on the part of the would-be potato farmer.

Of course, while we are dealing with the subject that we are discussing, irrigation, it is a challenge to both the Department of Natural Resources, principally their Water Resources staff, and the Department of Agriculture to cite and then to allocate the water for these additional acres that will be coming into production very shortly. The areas where the McCain expansion is expected to take place is in the general Portage plains area but also into the south central part of the province.

Therefore, there will be considerable pressure, if you like, on the Agassiz group to continue to provide water in the manner and the way they found it, by tapping surplus surface waters for irrigation purposes. It is estimated that in that area alone some 5,000 to 6,000 additional acres of potato contracts would be let if the water is available and if we can find entrepreneurial

farmers who are prepared to change, to diversify their farming operation to get into potato operation.

From an overall provincial economical point of view, it is good news. It is the kind of thing that in the post-WGTA era, whether it is potatoes, whether it is forage, whether it is 101 other specialty crops, every acre that we take out of cereal grain production in this manner, we lessen the impact of the excessive freight costs that our straight grain farming economy will face post-August 1st of this year, in other words, as we move into the new crop year.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister has raised some important issues that will face Manitobans as we face the changes of the WGTA, and one of the areas is the expansion of potato production. That certainly has been successful for farmers and certainly successful for McCain's and other companies in the area. As we look at this expansion, I think we have to look very carefully, and I would hope that the minister's department and this department is looking at the quality of the impact on the soil as we change the cropping patterns of the area, look at the availability of the water. The minister talks about ponding and that type of irrigation, and certainly we have to look in that direction in order that we are not using just ground water.

I think, first of all, above all we have to ensure that there is water available for communities, for human consumption, that that is not sacrificed for irrigation. First and foremost, there has to be a water supply for human consumption.

The minister talks about expansion of the irrigation capacity. I wonder whether the minister feels that there is a further role for government to play in providing the irrigation projects or whether he feels it should be at the expense of the benefactors, whether that be the producers or the company, because when we have limited resources, I would not want to see public money being put into irrigation projects. I think that there should be the technical services provided and loans being made available for people that want to expand, but I do not think that we should be spending public money on projects such as this. I would like to hear the minister's views on that, whether he feels that

the expansion of irrigation should be done at the expense of the public purse.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I take the advice offered by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) seriously, and she is quite correct. Water is an extremely valuable public resource and needs to be treated with a great deal of respect.

It was my privilege, as Minister of Natural Resources, for the first time in the province of Manitoba to institute a program that called for compulsory metering of all wells sourcing ground water for irrigation purposes. That is, in my opinion, the first step in bringing about a much tighter regime to the use of water.

While I do not want to unnecessarily alarm current users of irrigation waters, it is my personal view and a view that I have expressed to my government colleagues that some reasonable charge for the use of the water, if it in fact is demonstrably, as it is, providing specific benefit to the user of that water, in this case the production of higher-value specialty crops like potatoes, then I think we are moving and taking the necessary steps forward to introduce some cost recovery from those who are using this public resource for their own benefit.

I do not want to be that narrow about it. A profitable potato farmer, profitable firms like McCain or Nestle-Simplot that employ upwards to 1,200 people in rural Manitoba and are extremely beneficial to the province as a whole, but I concur with the honourable member in that I believe that, as we move particularly under this pressure to expand our irrigable acres, it will be a challenge to the departments, both those officials housed in Natural Resources and in Agriculture, to prudently devise the kind of regulatory framework that does two things: that allows us to use that resource in a sustainable way; and that allows us to ensure that we leave our other major resource, our rich and fertile soil resources in such a way that we can, with some confidence, pass them on to future generations of farmers and primary producers that will come after we are long gone from the scene.

* (1450)

I take this opportunity, though, to encourage the honourable member not to join the ecoterrorists or the militant environmentalists who are all too quick to attack governments or any proponents of the judicious use of these natural resources that the province has provided us with. Again, this spring we have experienced the fact that the water is there in abundant supply. The fact that we have not been able to manage it better is our problem, but we ought not to cloud the image to suggest that we hold back development in this very, very lucrative—for both the primary producer, for the industrial plants that are producing world-quality potato products in Manitoba. There are tremendous opportunities for further expansion, particularly for these rural communities and our rural people living in those areas.

Let us not cloud our image for the kind of alarmist preservation of this resource. It is there in bountiful supply, and I think it is appropriate, as regards those who are trusted from time to time to manage it or have stewardship over it, whether they are ministers or whatever government they represent, that they be constantly held accountable and questioned, that our experts that we hire in the various disciplines are challenged to look at it from a sustainable point of view.

Having met all those criteria, then let us get on with it, and let us provide the job opportunities in this province. So I seek the honourable member's support in this instance. She may wish to distance herself from some of her colleagues within her own group that from time to time tend to want to curtail this kind of legitimate human endeavour. It is noble, it is worthy, and she would do herself a favour politically if she, in this instance, joined me on this.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure what triggered that response from the minister. I was asking the minister—at no point did I say we should not be using irrigation.

I said that if we were going to expand irrigation it had to be done responsibly, that we had to be concerned about the quality of the soil and whether the types of soil where we were carrying on irrigation could be sustained, that we would not create problems,

that the water supply was there and always to be conscious of human consumption first.

But the question I was asking the minister was, does he believe that the expansion of irrigation into some of these areas should be at the expense of the public purse, or what does he see the public, the government, contributing? Is it technical services, or does the minister feel that there is a role for government to play in the expansion of irrigation services other than providing loans to those people who are farmers who are interested in expanding irrigation and technical services? What is this minister prepared—does he see his government responsible when it comes to expansion of irrigation in this particular kind of aspect?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I see it, due to the combination of things, not least of all our geography and our climate, and the fact that we often resolve several issues at the same time that it will be a combination of things. In the kind of situations that we have in Manitoba that we just experienced this spring again, water sourcing or water impounding measures have very often a greater public benefit in terms of flood protection.

Certainly the works that were done on our major dam and diversion works were for that reason and benefited either the 600,000 people in the city of Winnipeg, as the Winnipeg floodway does, the combination with the Portage Diversion and the Shellmouth Dam, but in doing so it also has enabled a significant number of acres to be irrigated in the Portage plains area using that slight impoundment of water that the Portage Diversion structure affords.

There have been suggestions, and they are entertained from time to time, that we could further expand the use of these structures, public structures that were built for multiple use or flooding use such as the Portage Diversion. Perhaps schemes have been entertained that we could contain some water in it during the summer growing season and allow irrigation waters to be drawn out of those kinds of facilities. So it would be a combination of both, but I certainly see a significant contribution coming from those who benefit, the private sector, the potato growers, indeed the companies involved.

Ms. Wowchuk: Considering the limited resources that we have in this province, or we hear the government speak about limited resources, I would prefer that if we are spending government dollars in expansion of water services, if we are expanding water for human consumption, I support government involvement in that.

If we are expanding services, in this case, for agricultural uses, I could see technical services, but I would not want to see large amounts of money put into the establishment of systems of irrigation services, considering, as the minister has said many times, we have very limited resources, and we have to think about human consumption and human services such as education, health care and those types of things.

I want to ask a question. He had talked a bit about the Roblin irrigation project, the test project there. Can the minister indicate what kind of funds are allocated for that project and what the costs are, whether there are provincial and federal dollars spent there and whether there is staff, full time, that is hired to man that project and a little bit of detail about what is happening in Roblin.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, my advice is that the funding in the Roblin area is part and parcel of the Manitoba Crop Diversification Centre's operation. The Crop Diversification Centre is essentially a federally funded operation. Our support is some additional staff that we have seconded to them.

The specific projects that are undertaken at a place like Roblin, in the first instance, there was again some funding through the Canada-Manitoba agreement for the infrastructural costs and setting up the operations at Roblin, but the actual funding is related to a specific project. Again, they would receive some modest funding through the Canada-Manitoba agricultural sustainable act or program. In the year before us, we see funding for the Roblin station being split \$66,700 by Canada; a similar amount, \$66,700 by Manitoba, for a total amount of \$133,400.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister indicate then is there full-time staff at Roblin or is it just handled out of the Carberry area?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that there is no full-time staff stationed at Roblin that is directly associated with the Crop Diversification Centre, but our ag rep office at Roblin and our soils specialist in that area take a leadership role working in conjunction with what I would consider to be probably the project managers who would come from the Carberry station, from the Crop Diversification Centre.

* (1500)

Ms. Wowchuk: Another program that runs out of this department, I believe, is the Farming for Tomorrow and that is also federal-provincial shared. Can the minister indicate how many years there are left in that program and the annual allocation of funds, how much the government puts into that program?

Mr. Enns: The joint program of the federal and provincial governments is a four-year program. We did really our first major series of programs throughout the province last year, and so we are now into our second year of this four-year program.

The amounts I will give you in a moment for the program. By the way, the Canada-Manitoba agreement on sustainable agriculture was signed on June 4, 1993. It was a program calling for a total of \$20.8 million to be, as I said, delivered over a four-year period. My understanding, and I would ask staff to correct me if I am wrong, is that a portion of that \$20.8 million is administered by the Department of Natural Resources as well. I recall them having about an \$8 million or \$9 million, \$7 million share in this program.

Ms. Wowchuk: I believe this is a follow-up to another federal-provincial agreement on conservation. I cannot remember the name of the previous program, but under that program and this one, we have an involvement from Ducks Unlimited, and there has been restoration of wildlife habitat and sloughs in an attempt to enhance the number of birds that are nesting here in this province.

I want to ask the minister: We have been able to enhance the number of birds, but can the minister indicate what the impact has been in farming in that—I have heard comments from farmers in certain parts of

the province indicating that along with enhancing the wildlife habitat, the bird habitat, we have also increased the amount of crop damage that comes under wildlife damage. Has there been any indication that is in fact true and we are seeing more waterfowl damage because of the increase in bird population in the areas?

Mr. Enns: Well, Mr. Chairman, I am delighted to be joined by my learned colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger), who now is personally responsible for all the ducks and the geese—

Ms. Wowchuk: But you are responsible for the farmers.

Mr. Enns: —and the elk and the deer and the beaver that wreak any havoc or damage on our fields, and I am sure that when his Estimates are up, you will be able to hold him fully accountable for Her Majesty's livestock that roam at will across our fair province.

Mr. Chairman, I am reminded with some pride and pleasure that signing the agreement that the member alludes to—it was a very ambitious program that is administered as part of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

In Manitoba we use an existing corporation that—I give the credit—the previous administration established, the Heritage Habitat Corporation that manages that plan or the portion of that plan for us in Manitoba. It is centrally designated in that southwestern portion of the province. Ducks Unlimited is a partner in that plan along with many other partners including Canada, including other private agencies. It receives through this plan about \$600,000 of provincial monies annually, \$645,000, unless my learned friend, Mr. Driedger, has reduced that program. He shakes his head, he has not. It is, from all indications, I think, a successful program.

Now, these programs are ambitious programs. When man, with all his faults, undertakes to try to correct some of the abuses that we have visited on the landscape, it will not be done in a year or two or simply by applying a bit of money. It calls for attitudinal change. It calls for agriculture and wildlife interests coming together and learning to live together in a much more compatible way.

I am pleased to report that that, in fact, is happening. I recall, and I am sure the current minister enjoys the opportunities when we have had field days and visitations in some of these areas, well attended, I might say, by local and participating land owners, both townspeople and farmers. I think we are making a difference. They have ambitious targets of X number of acres that they are trying to bring back under better, more wildlife-friendly habitat circumstances.

They are trying to attitudinally change the drive in agriculture to drain every last pothole that a farmer comes upon in that part of the country which is internationally famous for the prairie duck factory, if you like, for the entire North American continent. There is no question that Mother Nature has come along providentially to help and assist this program with the added moisture that we have had in the last few years.

In initial reports, and again, I speak outside of my jurisdiction, and the Minister of Natural Resources will have these figures more readily at hand when his estimates are under review, but indications certainly are that the populations of ducks are improving, that the habitat has improved noticeably for them and that the fundamental goals or objectives of the program are being achieved.

I find it laudable that in North America we can work co-operatively in this kind of program. We are getting significant, not quite as much as I would like, but significant American dollars to help us in this program, because we have viewed this, quite correctly, as a continental resource.

If we want to ensure that our grandchildren and great grandchildren will see and enjoy the flocks of geese and ducks flying on their spring and autumn migration routes, then we have to view this as a continental resource. The governments of Mexico, the governments of the United States, the governments of Canada are partners in this major conservation program.

Now, I, as Minister of Agriculture, quickly state and make the point that this is all laudable. I think that we as a society want to see a healthy wildlife population.

In this case we are talking about waterfowl, but it should not be done on the farmer's back. The farmer should not be charged with the entire feeding bill because of the late harvest or something like that—waterfowl descend on a farmer's unharvested crop and do considerable damage.

* (1510)

So we have, currently, again, working in co-operation with other departments, notably Natural Resources, a wildlife committee reviewing the waterfowl damage programs. Currently, the program pays about 80 percent, I believe, of the crop loss as assessed by the Crop Insurance people who are in the business of assessing crop loss, whether it is from hail or drought, or for other reasons, and 80 percent of the losses are being paid that a farmer loses as a result of crop degradation from waterfowl.

For my position, I would like to enhance that. I think that if we want to maintain that kind of enthusiasm and that co-operative support that I believe is there from Agriculture in a way that was not there 20 years ago or 50 years ago even, then we should be looking at full compensation, 100 percent compensation for crop loss that results from these circumstances. That is a personal objective that I state. Whether or not I can achieve it is open to conjecture.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister indicated that we received substantial amounts of money from across the border via Ducks Unlimited—

Mr. Enns: I wish to correct that.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable minister.

Mr. Enns: That is not quite correct. The American Congress, the American government voted in what I consider to be quite an historic bill; it passed an appropriation in excess of \$1 billion, of which a major portion of it was to be spent in a foreign country, in Canada. That is really—when you stop and think about it, would we be passing that kind of legislation that said we will vote, we will use \$1 billion of Canadian taxpayers' money to be spent in the United States for

wetland and soil and wildlife conservation projects? I do want to put that on record. The vehicle that is used, not the same vehicle by the way, in Manitoba the agency that is used to expend this American source of funding is Ducks Unlimited Canada.

Ms. Wowchuk: I thank the minister for that information, and I was accurate to say that into Manitoba that money comes through Ducks Unlimited. I have no trouble—in fact, I think we should be enhancing our wildlife habitat. It has been, partly due to farmers trying to make a living, that many of our wildlife sloughs and things like that have been damaged. They should be restored. I am pleased to see that the funding is there.

But where I have a little bit of difficulty—there are two things. I think that if they are going to put funding into improving the habitat, which will result in increased bird stocks, we also have to look at whether or not they are prepared to contribute to the compensation. As the minister indicated, farmers should not be solely responsible for feeding these birds when they come on the land.

What I do have difficulty with is that we restore our land and provide habitat and then those birds go back down south and they are used as an object of recreational targets. That is where I have a bit of difficulty. We in Canada give our land and we enjoy them, but I have a bit of problem with the end result when we see some of these videos and read in sports magazines about the quality of life of these birds when they go back for hunting purposes.

I think we should be looking at, as well, using American funds to improve the habitat for wildlife. There should be ways that they should also be looking at compensating for—making a contribution to the crop losses that result for farmers as the bird population increases. I wonder whether the minister would comment on that, whether he would think it is fair that they should also have to contribute to the compensation.

An Honourable Member: Maybe we should send Rock down there, so they would register their guns down there.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, my colleague reminds me we could turn this into a gun debate, I suppose, if the honourable member wishes gun registration.

Ms. Wowchuk: No, let us not.

Mr. Enns: Let me assure the honourable member, and again I do not pose as a wildlife biologist expert or anything, but I am aware of the fact that habitat loss, predator loss by coyotes, foxes something like that far outweigh the annual harvest taken by hunters.

The kind of self-discipline that has been imposed by various governments, state and provincial here that restrict bag limits—I read one stats just recently with respect to the anticipated production in the coming year, that of the increased duck production in this year. About 11.5 percent of them will be harvested, will be hunted, will meet their end in that manner. Many more are predatored by foxes and by skunks and by simply loss of habitat where there are not sufficient water resources to raise the duck populations.

But I will desist from getting into a philosophical argument with our honourable colleague about recreational hunting. I am a modest hunter myself. I can respect and appreciate those who choose not to hunt or indeed who find it offensive, but I would also ask that that similar respect be shown to those who over the ages and over the generations have enjoyed the recreational hunting that we can responsibly afford and manage in this province and indeed throughout most of North America.

I might also add that those who hunt pay dearly for that privilege through various user fees, not the least of them are the licences that we impose, the licence that we impose on nonresidents.

As such, just as the honourable member indicated a little while ago, if persons want to use water for irrigation purposes they ought to be paying something for that privilege, let me assure you that the hunting public pays significantly and substantially in the support of both private and governmental conservation programs, Ducks Unlimited, by the way, being one of the prime examples.

Ms. Wowchuk: Just to set the record straight, I want to assure the minister that these comments were not meant as objection to hunters, because I also happen to be a modest hunter and I enjoy wildlife. So I want to assure the minister that was not my objective. My objective was that if we are increasing the wildlife habitat and there is financial contribution from out of country to increase habitat, we should also be looking, if it is possible from these resources, to use them also to compensate farmers when it is their crop that happens to be the source of food for these birds. My comments have nothing to do with whether or not people should be hunting or not. I wanted to put that on the record.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, and I want to put on the record that in this instance my official critic and I are in total agreement that agricultural farmers should be fully and adequately compensated for the loss by wildlife, you know, under these circumstances. I thank her for that expression of opinion, and hopefully perhaps in the not-too-distant future she will have an opportunity to demonstrate support for that program if I bring forward a measure that would ensure that would take place. We are doing a reasonably adequate job of providing some relief and support when crop damage occurs, but I concur with the honourable member for Swan River, I think we can do better.

Ms. Wowchuk: Another question under the Canada-Manitoba Agreement, and again this is a follow-up program, a federal-provincial agreement. In the previous agreement there were funds that were set aside or were available for headwaters storage or water retention to protect farmland, and there was a project that was very near and dear to my heart, but under the other agreement or when this government came into power that particular project was scrapped; somehow the funding seemed to disappear along the way.

I want to ask the minister whether under this agreement there are any funds that are available or are there any studies being done on headwater storage or retention of water on rivers to protect farmland. The minister talks about diverting water for ponding, storing water with heavy run-off. In this agreement, are there funds available?

* (1520)

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I am well aware of the specific kinds of projects that the honourable member has alluded to, indeed the specific one that she alludes to. I can advise her that for those kinds of water storage or flood protection measures there are no funds available in this agreement. Under this agreement there are modest sums for small, localized conservation ponds.

We have different soil groups, one particular one comes to mind that has done quite a good job. The Pembina Escarpment and Deerwood Soil Association have in their local area built a number of two-foot, three-foot earthen dams that slow down the water after a heavy rain coming off the escarpment causing erosion on the land, backfills maybe five, ten acres of impoundment which some of them have been able to use for additional water supplies for cattle and so forth.

The kinds of projects that she is talking about, there is no specific funding under this agreement designated for that purpose. I take this occasion, because I know that my colleague who just left us, minister responsible for water resources, is very keen to develop and arrive at a new agreement that would in fact make it possible for the province, jointly with Canada, to consider the kinds of projects that are of the \$3 million, \$4 million, \$5 million, \$8 million order that would cover off the circumstances that I know are of continuing concern and importance to the honourable member for Swan River.

That is all, Mr. Chairman. I can carry on with a little more description of the kinds of conversation dams that I alluded to but these are what you would call the flatland dams in the chronic water-short areas of the south, the southwest where for very little investment, little coulees, little creeks can be slowed in their spring run-off and retain some relatively modest water-retention ponds.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister indicate then how this comes about? If there were that section in the previous agreement where there were funds available for major headwater storages and now there is another agreement that does not have those funds, is it the

responsibility of the government to negotiate those and, if so, why did his government decide when they were negotiating this agreement not to include the particular kind of projects which were included under the last Canada-Manitoba agreement?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, the information that I have been providing the committee is correct. The past agreement that the honourable member alludes to, there was a specific add-on, if you like, that covered specific projects, about half a dozen—Jackson Dam, the Stephenfield reservoir. There were about five or six that I recall. I recall the honourable member then lobbying me because her particular project, Duck Mountain project, was not on that list.

This agreement is of a much broader, general conservation-type agreement that, with respect to water and water impoundment—for instance, under the agreement they are expecting to build 60 dams, but they are all of 40 acre-feet and less, which is very little water. These are all little earthen structures built very often for three, four or five thousand dollars in place of getting a municipal piece of machinery in or even the local farmer working under the supervision of a conservation CMAAS district will concur, will approve of the spending of these projects dotted throughout the flatland areas of the southwest.

There are potentially some monies that could be available to the Dauphin Lake Advisory Board, because there are some specific, in my judgment, waterworks that have to occur on that basin as we, over the next decade, work to improve the overall environment of the lake and surrounding area.

By the way, that is an ambitious undertaking. I commend and congratulate the multiple organizations that are involved and that give of their time and energy to serve on the Dauphin Lake Advisory Board. I had some hand in developing it in its initial years.

It took many, many years to bring conflicting interests, cottage owners versus farmers and commercial fishermen versus sports fishermen and all these conflicting issues to have them serve together on the board was not done overnight. I commend those people who are working on that organization.

As I can recall stating in a meeting in Dauphin some years ago, when we had the first inaugural meeting, I am convinced that 10 years from now or 50 years from now, Lake Dauphin and surrounding area will have a better environment than it currently is. We will arrest the deterioration of siltation and other problems that affect the lake.

There are some significant project dollars that are required for channelization. There is the potential for a major wetland development there. In my opinion, the resolution to some of the flooding and water problems is, quite frankly, to encourage the government and/or other agencies—Habitat Heritage Corporation, for instance—to consider putting together a 5,000, 6,000-acre wetlands development in that region, that would, in my opinion, be the better management for some of those marginal and flood-prone lands in and around Lake Dauphin. That again takes money, and it takes a lot of consultation. But, if we could develop eventually to the point where we have some security in the knowledge that we have reduced the siltation coming into the lake by works on the streams that contributed, streams like where they come down from the escarpment that wash in the new heavy loads of siltation after very major rain or the spring runoffs, and if we can then improve the outlet stream out of Lake Dauphin so that we can effect some better management of the lake levels to levels that are mutually decided upon, both for recreational reasons and for flood protection reasons, you eventually end up with a much better environment.

We convince our farmers, agriculturalists, to back off from cultivating right next to the creeks and the little rivers that contribute to that watershed, but, in fact, put that down, put strips, put 10, 20, 30 meter strips of permanent cover in those areas to act as a filter before these streams keep getting loaded up with siltation. These are the kinds of programs that the Dauphin Lake Advisory Board is working on, and there are some funds, some dollars in this overall agreement, not modest, but it is done incrementally, \$28,000. I believe they have applied for an additional \$75,000. We are now looking this year, '94-95, at \$70,000 expenditures in that area. They are asking for that to be repeated in the years '95-96, '96-97, so we have in this one little program some \$210,000 earmarked for the Dauphin

Lake area for this type of conservation work, as I describe it.

I think these are commendable programs. The credit, quite frankly, has to be extended very much to the local people involved because without that willingness to concur in our work it was easier, quite frankly, for senior governments to do nothing and that is precisely what was done for many years. I do not fault any government for doing that. There needs to be the willingness at the local scene, at that local level, to have a game plan and then try to stick to it over a period of years.

* (1530)

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister indicated, I guess this agreement will run until 1996-97, somewhere in that range. I want to ask the minister, I am sure that there will be another agreement that will be ongoing from this one between the federal and provincial governments. Can the minister indicate whether it would be people from the Soils and Water Branch or who would be the people that would be negotiating that agreement?

The reason I ask that question is I am quite concerned with, as the minister has indicated, head water storage and the terrain along the Duck Mountains and in other areas of the province. There is need for a specific type of water control. The issues that the minister addressed that are being dealt with under this federal-provincial agreement will be addressing one type of problem. There are other problems, and we have to look at reserving the soil in other parts of the province, as well.

I am wanting to know if the minister can tell us whether it is under this branch, under the Soils and Water Branch, or who is it from the Department of Agriculture that would be doing the negotiating or drawing up the plan as to what goes into an agreement. Who negotiated to get this agreement put together on Manitoba's behalf?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I wish I could express the same certainty that the member for Swan River does that this agreement will be continued.

Ms. Wowchuk: I am hopeful; I am an optimist.

Mr. Enns: I would like to share that optimism. Certainly, there is a likelihood, I think, because it is multi-discipline that touches on environmental issues for which there seems to be a considerable amount of support, generally speaking, in the general population that we could look to some continuation of some kind of a program.

The kind of program that she speaks of in the future, I certainly would want the Department of Agriculture to be front, right and centre in leading the negotiations for that kind of an agreement, but I am a realist. I do not fool myself. That, quite frankly, I do not see in the current climate of fiscal restraint in Ottawa.

They are facing very difficult decisions and have forewarned us that they are reducing fundings in such high priority items like health and post-secondary education that we in Agriculture, as deserving as we are, will not necessarily have an opportunity to get into a multimillion dollar—it would have to be a multimillion dollar agreement, perhaps with an agency like PFRA, which, in my understanding, is struggling for its own survival within the scheme of things.

To speak with some degree of confidence that we have the political will in this nation, in this province, to generate the kind of funds that the honourable member alludes to, I am disappointed about that. I wonder at it sometimes. For instance, if it were deemed appropriate, and, quite frankly, if the government of Ontario had not backed out of a hydro deal that my Premier, my government, signed with the then-government, we would be likely spending \$2 billion to build a dam for hydro and general electric purposes.

Quite frankly, I am troubled why we cannot exert that same kind of political pressure to find \$500 million to resolve some of the longstanding issues that the honourable member alludes to—\$7 million or \$8 million for the Duck Mountain project and a few other projects.

So I share with the committee and the honourable member, you know, some of my disappointments in this regard, because I happen to again concur totally with her.

I think that we can—you see, and this is what I mentioned a little while ago—these projects always, always tend to have a multipurpose to them once they are in place. Lake of the Prairies, for instance, behind the Shellmouth Dam, has become one of our premier recreational areas.

On a July weekend, upwards to 3,000 anglers from all across the province and Saskatchewan vie for angling positions on that man-made body of water.

It is being used—it certainly is a guarantor of water supply for the cities of Brandon and Portage la Prairie that take their entire municipal water consumption out of those river flows. When the engineer at Brandon tells us that the municipal engineer, the city engineer tells him that he is getting a little concerned about the level of the Assiniboine in August because of the positioning of the intake pipes that the Brandon water system takes for the supplying for the city of Brandon's water, we turn up a little valve and let an extra 200 or 300 feet of water out of Shellmouth structure.

Most Manitobans do not understand to what extent that structure can be, and is, and has been used for the last twenty years.

When there was a tragic drowning at Portage La Prairie in the little reservoir that has formed just above the intake to the Portage diversion, and at the request from the RCMP and other law enforcement agencies who could not recover the body, they asked us to shut down the flow for a little while, which we did, and the body was recovered, for instance.

That is how sensitively the Assiniboine River can be managed. But, if you read Val Werier, of course, and the other militant environmentalists, this is way above them, and I always use this occasion to solicit support occasionally from my colleague from Swan River who, I know, deep down in her heart, is actually pretty supportive of the kinds of things that we are talking about.

She could use her growing seniority in the ranks of the official opposition to convince some of the neophytes, like the new member for Dauphin (Mr.

Struthers), before he gets corrupted by the other members within his group to the righteousness of certain courses of action.

(Mr. Frank Pitura, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chair, I have only one more question to ask on this area before I turn it over to my colleague. Part of the activities carried on by this department is investigation and demonstration of new field crops, and one of the crops that people have made some inquiries about—and I understand that Australia is now looking into it—is the production of hemp. As we look at the need for more fibre and alternate sources of fibre with the decrease in forest products and the harvesting that we have of the forest, there have been inquiries made.

I wonder whether the minister can indicate whether there has been any research done by this department. I realize that there is going to have to be work done to change some of the qualities of this product before it can be grown on a commercial scale. So can the minister indicate whether any work has been done on it and what the possibility is of this at some point becoming a commercial crop that can be used, as I understand, for several products—for oil, but most importantly for fibre?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, the honourable member is absolutely correct. Hemp is, of course, perhaps one of the oldest crops known to man, and there are some very interesting data coming out of current possibilities for the use that are available to us from the production of hemp.

Soils and Crops branch and the regional staff have consulted with two specific Manitoba groups and have applied for research grants. It is a crop in which experimentation has to be done with considerable sensitivity.

The bureau of dangerous drugs has issued, however, five permits for the evaluation of fibre hemp in Manitoba, and these are in conjunction with a particular Manitoba hemp alliance group, an association, a group of enthusiasts who would like to see the department carry out some trials and some experimentation to

confirm whether it is a crop that would be suitable for our environment and our climate. Without getting too far ahead of the horses or, for that matter, the cart, to that extent the department is actively pursuing the opportunities with respect to growing of this crop.

* (1540)

I would seek some advice from my honourable friend the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), in this attempt of mine throughout these Estimates to develop alliances and bridges with Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

There is, as I said, some sensitivity about the crop. The variety that is now being made available should not be confused with the marijuana product that causes the concern in the general public. In fact, it has been reported to me that, in certain areas of the States, law enforcement officers use this genetic variety of the hemp plant as a means of control in the sense that when it cross-pollinates with the illegal plants it debases their hallucinatory value and such. It takes away the value from the marijuana plants that are grown illegally in different parts of the planet and different parts of this province as well.

Should we develop this area of new crop production further, I would look for understanding and support from the honourable member that this is, in my opinion, a very worthwhile alternative cropping method. I am advised that potential cash yields equal that of potatoes and higher if suitable markets can be developed, both in the fabric industry, which is very attracted to the fibres that are available from the hemp plant, as well as some of the extra specialty products in the health food business that can be made out of the crushing of the hemp seed, various oils and other products that could be made, along with paper and along with twine of different kinds.

I have had some inquiries from ranchers who repeatedly get tired of the use of plastic twine on our bales, the degradability problems with it, whether or not a suitable alternative could not be found. It could lie in affordable twine coming from a product like hemp. I do not know, but I am satisfied that there is a wide range of potential uses for the plant.

I am looking forward to the special crops section under the direction of Dr. Barry Todd, to work with these people who are showing some interest in this area, to have—I think we were talking several—roughly three or four small test plot areas that would be undertaken in the coming crop year under the direct supervision of the branch.

Ms. Wowchuk: I thank the minister for that information. I am pleased to hear that the research is going on, because there has been a fair amount of interest. In fact, there are clothes that are made out of the product right now. If it is a diversification, then we would be very supportive.

The minister indicated that there was money applied for research grants, or research grants provided to several people to do some work. Can the minister indicate how much has been set aside for research? Is there a specific amount?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, final approval has yet to be granted, but there is a modest request for some \$20,000 to \$25,000 before the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, that seems to be the suitable kind of fund. We did not have it within the regular appropriations of Agriculture. We are currently before the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund for I believe it is in the order of \$25,000 that would help essentially to purchase the seed, for instance.

This is rather expensive seed, I am advised. Is it imported from Europe? [interjection] I am advised essentially mainly from Poland.

It is to provide the kind of additional costs—the department had not planned on this as part of their work—and to cover some of the actual monitoring and the supervision of the plots.

Ms. Wowchuk: Just for clarification, can the minister indicate, will those test plots be done this year, or is this just in preparation and you have applied for permits, and, if permits are obtained, it will be done next year?

Mr. Enns: The intention is—we have done a fair bit of advanced work in terms of getting the necessary permits from Ottawa, procuring the seed—that we

would be in a position, pending final approval, that we could proceed this year, this coming crop year. Apparently the seeding deadline times are still available to us to do it on a modest scale. I am talking test plots only.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): I want to begin by complimenting the minister on his perceptiveness. I do feel that I am being corrupted by my fellow New Democrats in the caucus. I get this feeling that I am sinking into a spirit of teamwork, co-operation, a whole room of common sense, but I am sure that if I start slipping too far I can come and knock on his door anytime and he will bring me back down to earth. I appreciate your help there.

I also want to congratulate the minister on identifying the problems surrounding the Dauphin Lake Advisory Board. I want to also recognize his part that he played in the construction of that board and the work that went into bringing together the interests of the Dauphin Lake Advisory Board and all the people who have leisure or recreation income and other activities that are associated with that board. I am glad that there will be some type of move towards addressing the concerns of these groups in the future.

I want to ask some questions that lead out of some questions that I asked last night about irrigation. Last night, we talked about a total of around \$800,000 going towards irrigation. I want to be a little more specific and ask how much of that \$800,000 is going towards the southwest irrigators, the irrigation groups that are drawing from the Oak Lake aquifer.

* (1550)

Mr. Enns: Senior staff advise me that none of that funding, none of that \$800,000 the member refers to is available to any project other than the Agassiz group that is in the south-central part of the province, the Morden-Winkler area, and these are specific project identified. These are the group that, as we talked last night, are building what I call these enlarged dugouts to capture surface run-off in the spring and in fact are also available to some auxiliary pumping, when the water is available, into these dugouts for water. But all of the \$800,000, that \$800,000, I think, represents, if I recall,

a provincial government contribution to the \$2.8 million or something in that range that the projected development costs of these enlarged dugouts for irrigation purposes will cost. I am going by memory.

I used to know the organization better when I was with Natural Resources and I had the occasion to meet with them on occasion, but I know that there is a fairly heavy subscription, personal commitment on the part of the farmers involved, I believe in the order of \$50,000. Most of the dugouts are being built, of course, on farms on private land, it is my understanding. There is not, in that area, Crown or public land available so it is a combination.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

However, they have formed themselves into a formal organization called Agassiz irrigation association. They are incorporated. They deal as an incorporated entity that can formally administer the ongoing supervision and management of these ponds. Certainly, as I recall from an ongoing concern, particularly as expressed by some of the senior management people in the department of Water Resources, the positioning and the availability of water, even in this case mostly surface water, is critical.

You know if somebody has invested his dollars and his efforts, \$100,000, \$200,000 in building his large pond and then a neighbour builds one a half mile upstream from him and captures the water before his can fill in, we are concerned about the ongoing management of these ponds, that we do not end up with water wars of some kind developing.

To date, they seem to be a fairly aggressive and progressive organization that have availed themselves of the engineering advice from organizations like PFRA who are, by the way, also contributors as I understand.

So when you have organizations like PFRA, who have a long history in water management in the Prairies in the province of Manitoba, and our own Department of Natural Resources water resources people involved, you have some comfort level that they know what they are doing.

To answer directly, the monies refer to specifically that project and there is no spillover to any other project.

Mr. Struthers: Maybe in the late hours of last night I misunderstood what was going on with this program, and that part of it comes from Rural Development, part of that \$800,000, and part of it does come from your department.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I can just again for purpose of clarity specifically break down the \$800,000. I want to indicate that the rationale for public participation in the program is as much for demonstration purposes. We want to, and our water engineers and soils people want to, collect the kind of data to understand whether this kind of water entrapment, which is relatively low cost and considerably less intrusive on the landscape than say, for instance, building dams, we would like to have a better understanding about whether or not they will work satisfactory over the long term.

I know my colleague the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) does not think they will and he argues with me about them from time to time. But it is an open book. PFRA engineers or water resources engineers want to get a better handle on how to manage these kind of water impoundments under those kind of soil conditions.

So that is a big part of the rationale for government, the public supporting it. Any concerns can be laid to rest if they are proving to be working effectively and efficiently for the intended purpose, then we could expect to see and we with confidence could advise and counsel individual farmers or groups of farmers to proceed on their own in further development of these down the road.

But the actual \$800,000 in question that the Agassiz irrigator group are receiving this year, the \$200,000 comes from the Manitoba Crop Diversification Centre and that is essentially the federal contribution. Then there is a further joint Canada-Manitoba agreement under the agriculture sustainability account for \$210,000. Then there is the contribution from my colleague the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) in their Rural Economic Development Initiative, another \$300,000 contribution. So that is a

totally provincial contribution, \$300,000. Then there is a contribution from the Manitoba Natural Resources Branch, my colleague Mr. Driedger's department, for \$100,000.

The Manitoba Department of Agriculture has no money in it other than the kind of money that we associate ourselves with when we talk about the Manitoba Crop Diversification Centre, but our contribution to the Carberry centre is in kind in staff and it is seconded staff not money. So those dollars that I initially said are in fact federal dollars as well. That makes up the \$800,000.

Mr. Struthers: Your department then has nothing to do with the southwest irrigators, no money, no technical advice that is passed on to them. Is there any relationship at all with your department and the southwest irrigators?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, the honourable member refers to another organization. Now we are talking about the southwest group, which has a satellite irrigation centre, a spin-off from the Carberry Diversification Centre. That group will receive this year a hundred thousand dollars from the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, not from Agriculture, but it is Manitoba, it is government of Manitoba money to establish and set up the satellite operation that will hopefully encourage what has been a modest start to potato production, irrigation in that portion of the province.

I can indicate to you as I indicated to the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) that as Minister of Agriculture I am pleased to see the economic opportunities of expanded production in a crop like potatoes to be expanded to different parts of the province, certainly the southwestern part of the province, which by and large, because of its rainfall, because of its soil and other conditions has not been able to diversify to the same degree as the south-central, the Morden, Winkler, Altona triangle has or the kind of diversification that you have seen take place on the Portage plains.

It is the hope that this kind of initiative will be the kind of starting gun to help that area that has had

chronic water shortages over the years. With this kind of experimental work in finding out what supplementary water can provide and what kind of crops can be grown in that area, it is my hope that that part of the province will too begin to blossom.

Quite frankly it is part of the problem that is perhaps the most serious concern to us. The rate of depopulation is the highest of anywhere in the province of Manitoba. I think it is a specific responsibility on Agriculture to provide some sustaining and new opportunities in agriculture that will help change that curve, that depopulating curve.

* (1600)

Mr. Struthers: Certainly the area that we talk about is one of the drier parts of the province. I am sure the producers in that area are looking very much towards the future and towards becoming more productive than what they already are. One of the concerns that we need to consider when we talk about irrigation is soil degradation. Have there been any reports or any specific cases brought to the attention of you or your department in terms of specific areas of soil degradation?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, my director of Soils and Crops reassures me that very concern has been a focus of a good deal of their activity in their soil management. They focus on those areas that have had irrigation over the last number of years, but partly because of the degree of irrigation they require.

As I said earlier, we are fortunate in Manitoba that we are not Imperial Valley in California or other areas or the Middle East where crops are only grown because of constant irrigation. We require just supplemental application of, in some years, very little additional water.

I have asked the director specifically, could I take the member to a site that, for instance, has been under fairly regular irrigation management for the last 15 or 20 years. Could we visit a site on an acre, a section or quarter section, that has suffered soil degradation? The response is that we really do not have that kind of situation in Manitoba.

That should not lead us into complacency, and particularly as it is the intention if I am given the opportunity to pursue it, to intensify the opportunities for irrigation in Manitoba, responding to the kind of market initiative signals that we are getting, particularly from the potato and some other special crop areas. We have to maintain our vigilance in ensuring that in fact what the member is concerned about does not happen.

I would be the first to want to respond to any reports that come forward to my office about that being the case, that is anybody reporting other than the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), because he reports to my office on an all too regular and frequent basis as it is.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Chairperson, certainly I would never turn down a chance to go on a road trip with the Minister for the Department of Agriculture. Maybe we could co-ordinate on the same day that I talk to him, once I feel myself slipping too far into the clutches of the NDP caucus, as he mentioned before. We could kill two birds with one stone that way.

In relation to the irrigation that is taking place on the Oak Lake aquifer by the southwest irrigation group, were there any public hearings held before the group began drawing water from the aquifer?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, not to avoid the question, but simply to advise, for absolute correctness in the reply, that question should be asked to my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger), who is, among other things, the licensing agency for irrigators' applications.

The information we have in the Department of Agriculture, that particular operation does not draw on ground water or from the aquifer, but from the Souris River. The member's question may still be the same, but to my knowledge there has been no call for, no demand for public hearings in this instance, but the source of the water that is being used in this instance is what we would call from a renewable stream.

I might just as an adjunct and as an acknowledgement to a former Minister of Natural Resources that I have a great deal of respect for and despite what I put on the record about his persistence,

the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), I can recall that the honourable member for Emerson was criticized in some quarters for not standing up more vociferously against the then government of Saskatchewan who had the audacity to build the kind of structures that the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) has been asking me to build, a good portion of this afternoon, up in her part of the region. I am referring to the Rafferty-Alameda dam. Well, you can recall—[interjection]

Well, no, to be fair to the member for Dauphin, he was not here, but the honourable member for Swan River was here when all dire predictions were made the Souris River would never see water again. Now we are irrigating from the Souris River water and I suspect, and I know as a matter of fact, that we will have a more dependable supply on the Souris River water that will enable farmers to irrigate their potato crops to the economic well-being of this province, but again the ecoterrorists of the time engaged in the most damaging and harmful accusations about what was happening to the landscape. My colleague carried part of the brunt of it at that particular time.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 4. Agricultural Development and Marketing (d) Soils and Crops (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,312,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$677,100—pass.

4.(e) Marketing and Farm Business Management (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,543,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,105,300—pass; (3) Grant Assistance \$440,700—pass.

4.(f) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations (\$47,200)—pass.

Resolution 3.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$10,592,600 for Agriculture, Agricultural Development and Marketing, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1996.

5. Regional Agricultural Services (a) Northwest Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,936,000.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I do not have very many questions to ask under Regional Agricultural

Services. However there is one project that I am particularly interested in and that is the 4-H projects across the province which have been very useful in educational clubs and have been supported by the Department of Agriculture, although there was some cutback in funding in supports for 4-H over the past few years.

* (1610)

I do not think there have been any changes, but I understand that the department had looked at setting up some different types of technology to communicate with and set up teleconferencing, to work with 4-H leaders. It is a new project, and I wonder if the minister can indicate how successful that was, what the participation was like and whether or not it is something that will be continued, or was there not an interest in this as far as 4-H clubs go?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, staff advises me that the honourable member's memory is correct. We were the recipients of a one-time-only grant, \$10,000, from the Esso people, petroleum people. We used that to run a long-distance type program, focusing on food production, safety of food production, and so forth. It was well received, and well over 200 participants worked on this satellite hookup that demonstrated, among other things, the wonders of modern communications and how we could, by using out of a central station, reach out to, in this instance, some 14 sites and over 200 participants in the program. Regrettably, it was just that, a one-shot effort, but it was received with considerable enthusiasm.

It is our intention, just as they are in education, for instance, to pursue the opportunities that this new technology makes available to us and often helps offset tighter budgets nonetheless to provide programming of interest to our 4-H organizations throughout the province of Manitoba that, under current budget restrictions, are more difficult to carry on, when even such things as travel and availability of staff are an issue.

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, I am pleased to hear that it was a success. As the minister indicates, there are many parts of the province that it is difficult for children to

access, especially if there are activities held in a central location. It emphasizes the importance that we have to put on distance education, and I hope the minister will encourage his colleagues to further enhance that.

Can the minister indicate that this was a success? Has his department budgeted to have a conference like this again this year?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I am advised, now that we have had a bit of experience with technology we know that we can develop a program and make it even more attractive and more accessible to our 4-H'ers across the province. It is our intention to again apply for similar funding or perhaps somewhat increased funding to the Canadian 4-H Council from which this original funding—I identified it as coming directly from Esso but it came through the Canadian 4-H Council. It is our hope that kind of funding will once again be available to us.

Mr. Chairman, just while I am here allow me to introduce another member of our senior staff, Mr. Roger Chychota, who is a senior Agriculture person, director of the Northwest Region stationed in Dauphin.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister indicated that this project was offered at 14 sites. Are those the only sites that were accessible to distance education, or are those the areas where there was interest from 4-H clubs?

Mr. Enns: It was a combination where, first of all, we had the interest in the local 4-H groups to participate, and also there were some technological barriers in the sense that in instances we did not have the two-way communication capacity, just the one-way receiving, and so the specific 14 sites were chosen as much for that reason than any other reason.

The technology, the network of interconnected computer capacity, information highway capacity is forever expanding, and certainly our capacity in providing this kind of technology to different parts of the province will increase from year to year.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Chairman, I am really pleased to hear that the honourable minister is so intent on ensuring that the viability of the agricultural

industry in this province will be maintained, and not only maintained but enhanced, and that the diversification process is a priority in his department.

It is extremely important, in my view, to note that since the event of the dissolution of the Crow benefit there will be some very detrimental effects to the grain industry in many parts of this province and therefore will cause many of the people that have been dependent on grain production as such to look at other means of income and securing more stable income for their farms. That of course will lead to a greater need by the Department of Agriculture to look at different ways of doing business out in the landscape. I think the role of the support staff in many of the regions of this province will be significantly enhanced in that manner; therefore, their presence will be required, maybe even to a much greater degree than what we have today.

I say this, Mr. Minister, in regard to the fact that in my region we have had an ag rep that has been seconded or moved to another part of the department for a while, and that office still remains empty in the Altona area.

The Altona area, of course, has always been noted as being in the front of crop diversification and development of new crops, new crop varieties, new crops grown.

I note that simply because the watermelon crop in our area just went in, and some people might smile to hear me say that the watermelon crop just went in a couple of weeks ago, and it is doing very well, by the way. There are, I believe, some 20 acres of commercial watermelons grown in the province of Manitoba and they are all grown within 10 miles of where I live. There is a small portion of them that are being irrigated; some are being grown without irrigation. But that crop has been shown to be a very economically viable crop to grow in the southern part of this province in most years.

I think we could expand that crop very significantly if we had the will and if we had people that had significantly more knowledge of that crop, as other crops, such as saskatoons. There are a number of commercial operators now growing saskatoons within

20 or 30 miles of where I live, raspberries, strawberries. Mechanical harvesting of raspberries is proving to be a viable option of harvesting instead of hand-picking.

So all those kinds of things are being experimented with by individual farmers, and I think the significance of bringing a new person into the ag rep's office is of a great deal of importance, especially somebody who would have the ability and the knowledge in some of those areas or the will to go out and learn what all this entailed in this new kind of direction that is going to be required.

* (1620)

I bring that to the attention of the minister and this committee because we have a much greater need now or will have a much greater need now to look at that kind of approach right across this province. That is not to say we can grow watermelons or saskatoons or raspberries or strawberries or monarda or dill commercially in all parts of this province, but it does lead us to rethink where we are and how we strategically station staff and how knowledgeable those staff should be in other areas than what we have become accustomed to, such as livestock production, grain production and those kinds of specialty crops production, specifically such as canola, sunflowers and the traditional crops such as sugar beets.

I think there is a real need to search out and bring a new person on staff in the Altona area as quickly as possible. My question to the minister is, what actions has he or his department taken to ensure that that position will be filled and filled soon because we are really missing that void there.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I thank the honourable member for those comments, and I believe very sincerely that the senior staff appreciates hearing directly from a member of the Legislature and an active primary producer like yourself that the services we provide from time to time throughout agri-Manitoba are required and are appreciated.

You touched on my Achilles' heel. I do not know whether it is a compliment, I would like to think it is a compliment to the calibre of staff that we generally

have in the Department of Agriculture that persons keep getting hired away from us. Maybe it has something to do about the pay freeze that we put on them for the last three years. Some of them even get elected to public office, and we are empty again of an ag rep's office, so currently I acknowledge that it is something that needs to be addressed.

The specific issue at Altona that the member alludes to, while it is not quite official yet, but we have designated a person, gentleman by the name of Kevin Johnson who will be filling in that position initially in a term position, but the office will be filled very shortly. What does very shortly mean? He is one of mine, and I cannot string him along, I have got to have the straight goods. Ten days, I am advised by my assistant deputy minister, Mr. Les Baseraba.

Mr. Penner: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, and I certainly appreciate the candidness with which your staff deals with these matters. I also want to compliment the staff and the department and those that have consistently supported agriculture the way they have in your department. The agricultural community, specifically in my constituency—and I want to address only my constituency, because I know the agricultural community is much broader than that. My constituency certainly has a tremendous amount to offer. There are some tremendous opportunities that are going to avail themselves, and there are discussions currently going on to expanding very dramatically our feeder cattle capacity within our province, specifically within our region. How that is done I think is going to be of extreme importance to this province.

It has always been the farming community's view that we missed a number years ago, under previous administrations, an opportunity to keep a slaughter industry very active in this province. We missed it. There was a very significant amount of economic involvement by other provinces to entice that industry out of this province.

It is many people's view today that under the new terms and conditions that are going to be relegated upon us by the federal government in doing away with the Crow benefit, that those economics will again return to the province of Manitoba, and it will be much

more difficult this time around to put enough money into place in other provinces to relegate us noncompetitive in the processing industry. It would be my view that within a decade or so we might well see the movement back to this province of that industry.

I think there are those primary producers now that are looking at those kinds of opportunities and seeing, being futuristic enough in their visioning, that they are actually contemplating feeding out cattle and finishing them here. Similarly in the hog production sector and other livestock sectors, I think there are some tremendous opportunities here which will, in my view, put into jeopardy some of the traditional mechanisms that we have held dear for many times. Supply management might be one of them. It might well put ourselves and our producers in this province in a very competitive-type of a position vis-à-vis the export competitiveness with our American friends and/or others in such countries as the Pacific Rim countries and those kinds of things, if we only allow ourselves to think positively enough and far enough ahead to see the opportunities.

My question to the minister is, have people within your department had those kinds of discussions contemplating these kinds of opportunities, and what is being done within your department to look at those kinds of opportunities from a trade perspective? Are we analysing properly what the Americans are doing with their programs such as the Export Enhancement Program, their soil conservation programs, their loans programs, their transportation assistance program and all those kinds of things? Are we analyzing properly, are we keeping proper tabs on ensuring that we have full knowledge of what some of the decisions are contemplated to be in the next budgetary process in the U.S., and specifically their farm bill? I will let you answer that question before I go on to the next one.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I again thank the honourable member for Emerson for his words of support for agriculture in general and for the department in general. I never miss the opportunity of reminding either my own colleagues or my own cabinet and caucus on any public platform from time to time, and I quite frankly like to do it on occasion in front of my staff because it needs to be said from time to time.

Agriculture continues to be the driving economic engine of this province despite, you know, the advances of the information age and the information highways and secondary manufacturing, but that simply is a case not in dispute.

I offer this not in a way of argument or condemnation of what has happened but simply stating it as a fact. When I was first privileged to be the Minister of Agriculture for the Department of Agriculture in the Province of Manitoba that department received the respect and, more importantly, the money, totalling 6 percent of the total tax revenues generated by the province. Six percent of the total tax revenues generated by the province went to the Department of Agriculture when I was first privileged to be its minister. Today, some 29 years later, with the tremendous challenges that the member just alluded to—diverse nature of agriculture, competitive world that we live in, major trading partners engaged in subsidy wars—this department received a half of 1 percent of the total tax revenues of the province to meet its obligations.

So this department and agriculture generally needs friends, allies and support from whatever quarter at all times. It is part of the price that we pay for having become such a minority group. The fact that modern agriculture has made it possible that 4 percent or 5 percent of the population can provide ample food stocks, safe food stocks, for not only our own population but to make it profitable to provide it for export around the world, you know, has brought us into that political situation.

* (1630)

I make that statement not in a partisan way. I am a democrat. I understand that most or the majority of the members of the Legislature that we serve on come from the city of Winnipeg and are engrossed in the problems that big city living brings with it—crime, social problems, all the other issues that come when people tend to congregate in such manner. The price tag to agriculture, in my opinion, has been that we have to fight harder, be smarter, strategically ally ourselves with wherever alliances can be formed in the entire agri field to ensure that we get the reasonable kind of

attention by legislators and policy makers of whatever political description from time to time. So I welcome those general remarks made by the member for Emerson.

I have been busy building bridges with my colleague from Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). I have even reached out to the new member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) in the hopes that I could subtly subvert him to the cause of support of agriculture, and I think he will be a supporter of agriculture. The honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), although I always had doubts about him because his two brothers farm just kitty-corner from me and I occasionally buy feeder cattle from them, I know that I can always reach him when I really have to. Excuse me, I am not making light of the remarks I set out to make.

To more directly answer your question, yes, we are occupying a great deal of our time in trying to respond to those very kinds of issues, the ongoing kind of trade talks that are taking place with our biggest trading partner. I am encouraged by reports that the international commission that was studying the grains question seems to have come at least to an agreement among themselves as to what they are going to recommend to their respective governments. I read that as a bit of a plus. I read that perhaps that we may not see another cap placed on importations of Canadian grain into the American market. That would be my most sincere hope. Even if it was only for a temporary period of time it would certainly give us some relief as we make some of that transition period that is being forced on us by the elimination of the Crow.

The challenge to the department is going to be just as you have said, that we broaden our focus. We have tended to look at Manitoba in the diversification field at fairly specific areas of the province. You know, the Portage plains area, the Morden-Winkler-Altona area, they have been kind the identified areas where diversification has advanced at a considerable pace, but the challenge now will be that we look at all other parts of the province, and as you say, not that we can grow watermelons or should we grow watermelons in all parts of the province. Whatever we can do in different parts of the province, how can we utilize and optimize our opportunities? That will be, I think, a challenge

that the professionals in the department will accept with some degree of enthusiasm.

Just prior to your coming into the committee room we had a slight discussion about the possible reintroduction of an age-old crop like hemp and its possibilities for an alternative cash crop for some of our producers. I think we have to unblinker ourselves, and that means looking at our institutions that were very often established with rules that were set in place to deal with the problems of 1960 or even 1970, but this is now 1995. The day August 1, 1995 will be a very important, historical date in agriculture in the prairie regions. The longest agricultural support program that agriculture has seen in Canada comes to an end, totally and finally, on that date.

I think this is an exciting time for all of us in agriculture, and I look for the continued support from the members at this committee to help us devise those kinds of programs that can most adequately position our producers to come up with the challenges that we know are there for them. The biggest challenge is, of course—by far, the biggest challenge—the realization, and this again—I say this in a nonpartisan way, but the simple fact of the matter is that for too long, too many of our producers of different commodities have relied on different percentage levels but are as high as up to 35 and some cases 40 percent of their income coming from government sources or government programs. In other words, not coming from the market.

The writing is on the wall. We are seeing it from Minister Goodale in Ottawa. We are seeing it from our own provincial ministries across this land. Our producers have to be directed to essentially getting their incomes from the market. That means, in some instances, adjusting the way we do business. Those kinds of fiscal resources are simply not going to be there. The general public has decided that they are earmarked for other items. I do not have to describe them. We hear them described every day in the Legislature, health, education, social services.

Mr. Penner: I have two other items that I want to raise with you. One of them, of course, and the trade discussion is leading into this, is our sugar beet industry in this province. I am gravely concerned that the

actions that the Americans have taken limiting the flow of sugar into the United States and Canada not doing anything in retaliation in regards to creating a proper balance of the flows of sweetener and sweetened goods or products, in regard to that, I wonder whether it would be possible, Mr. Minister, or maybe feasible, if we as a province directly had some discussion with our American friends in Washington to lay before them our concerns from the Manitoba perspective on this issue.

I think it is noteworthy that the Americans are allowed free access, virtually, to our sweetener market in this province and in this country, and that the Americans have a system whereby they support, through the implementation of tariffs, up to 16 cents a pound on sugar and sugar products coming into their country and to a certain amount of levee at the same time paying back the refiners that 16 cent tariff if and when they process and export those sugars.

I think it would be advantageous if we had a dialogue with the Americans on their turf about the impact of that and whether it would be possible for them to support the initiation of a similar type of program in Canada of tariffication at the same levels and utilizing the NAFTA agreement and the terms under NAFTA under a North American trade pact and that they be applied to sweetened goods and sweetened products and sugars similarly in Canada as they are in the United States. I wonder what your department and your thinking is along those lines to ensure that we not only retain the sugar beet industry and the sugar refining industry in this province but that we could actually build upon it and expand it.

* (1640)

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, just let me begin by responding in the following manner, that the member and other members of the committee are aware that I will be speaking directly to the committee on grain and grain transportation, standing committee of the House of Commons, on Thursday. I also have a meeting with Minister Goodale that same morning, but in my presentation I make the simple statement that the quotas imposed on exports of refined white sugar of Canadian origin must be removed. There is no justification for the United States restrictions on the

import of Canadian beet sugar. That is simply adding into, taking the opportunity to indicate, because it is part of the WGTA process.

Partly, I am appearing before the committee, I am being asked how are Manitoban farmers, how are we going to respond in the removal of the WGTA? What opportunities, what actions can the federal government take? Well, they can help us in this particular instance. I suspect that there will be little action taken by the federal government on this issue until the overall question that the member himself alluded to of supply management, which, as the member is well aware, is a matter of major concern in the trade talks between us and the United States, is resolved to some extent.

I concur wholeheartedly that we ought not to sit back and await, doing nothing in the meantime. We also ought not to allow our fate to be entirely settled in the hands of the owners of the sugar plant in the province of Manitoba, whose interests are not necessarily Manitoba's first. They have plants in other parts of the province. They rely on a good portion of their product, importation of various forms of sugar. I have asked for, and we are striking a committee, a sugar task force, that will be meeting with Mr. Bob Bergland, who was Secretary of Agriculture under President Carter, to discuss the problem. We are in fact under the Economic Development Committee of Cabinet forming a little task force to do much of what the member requests.

I think we should be talking bilaterally with our American friends. We are aware, for instance, of some very basic facts, that there is not a surplus of sugar being produced by the American farmers or by Canadian farmers. We produce 8 or 9 percent of our domestic requirements, I understand, and the American farmers not much better. The fact is that the American sugarbeet grower has, quite frankly, a legitimate trade grievance, when Third World countries are using Canada to access the American market in a backdoor fashion. And I do applaud Minister Goodale and the federal government that, after considerable plodding, there are, as the member would be aware of, discussions underway right now. We are taking the Americans, examining our situation. We are looking at possible dumping violations taking place with respect

to some of this Third World sugar that is coming into Canada and then finding its way to the U.S. market; that is triggering this response by the Americans.

In any event, we should be associating ourselves with what I like to loosely call the Red River Valley sugar beet producers. Indications have it, some pretty credible economic studies have indicated that we are among the lowest-cost sugar producers in the world, with the possible exception of Chile. Surely, under these circumstances, you know, we are not asking our fellow taxpayers to bale out a high-cost, inefficient industry. We are asking for action to be taken that costs no public money, no tax money, simply some regulatory enforcement of the type set—perhaps the honourable member suggested we should be examining the opportunities and provisions offered to us under new trade agreements, NAFTA.

I am not satisfied that we Canadians—you know, we sit back and gripe at the Americans when they read all the fine print in the agreements. But these are the same agreements and these same provisions are available to us if we address them with the same aggressive style.

I would like to perhaps, particularly in view of the honourable member's personal background in sugar beet production, invite him to be a part of that task force and let us see what we can do in preserving that industry. It is an industry, quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, that should see a doubling, a tripling of acreage. We are planting in the order of 27,000, 28,000 acres now, have come close to 30,000 acres in good years.

It is not only the actual people involved in the planting of sugar beets, I am advised that much of the special equipment is manufactured right here in Manitoba, not the heavy motive, but much of the kind of specialized equipment used in the harvesting of sugar beets, not to speak of that we have the refinery operation operating here. It is the kind of classic example of where we should be at in agriculture. I mean, that is where we should be with durum wheat. Our durum wheat should be produced profitably by our farmers. It should not leave our province. It should go into a pasta-producing plant, and it should only leave our province at full retail price levels as a fully processed product.

We are doing that with sugar and it is a tragedy that we are in jeopardy of losing that. So I welcome that kind of advice from the honourable member, and I think we should—you know, we seem to have a two-year peace in the sense of at least planting intentions, in the sense I think there is a two-year contract that has been offered to the sugar growers. Let us utilize the next 18 months as best we can to try to sort out a more stable future for the sugar beet industry in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Penner: One final question, Mr. Chairman, and it pertains to our GRIP program and crop insurance. It appears that the federal government in their budgetary considerations are going to be moving away from the kind of support mechanisms that we have been used to. Not only does it appear, it is very evident that they are. It would appear that programs such as GRIP and a few others are going to be history within the very near future.

I would ask, Mr. Minister, whether you are giving any consideration to adding something to crop insurance, whether you call it a top-up type of provision within crop insurance to allow for expanded crop insurance coverage levels with adequate premiums and a compensatory mechanism initiated within that program that would allow for farmers to make the choice to both secure through an insurance program price as well as volume of production as a replacement to what we have known as the GRIP program.

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

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, the honourable member, understandably, as we all are moving around to different committees, was not present when we had an excellent discussion on that very subject with the senior management of the Crop Insurance executive, the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and some other committee members.

I make the assertion that it would be my objective to make our crop insurance program the primary safety net program for our producers. I acknowledge that for whatever reasons, although it is an adequate program in many senses, the participation rate is not where I would like it to be. I would like to enhance the crop insurance

program so that it becomes so attractive to our producers that virtually all of them will want to be enrolled in the program.

I am challenging the Crop Insurance Corporation to—in fact, before we lose a handle on some of those GRIP premium monies that we have for the last five and perhaps six years, if we go around for another year, committed to the GRIP program, which I remind honourable members of the committee are significant—they are of the order of \$34 million, \$36 millions of dollars annually—that is provincial share—if we took some of those dollars—I do not fool myself—I suspect the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) will be looking for some of them if that program terminates. I want to indicate to the member that I am 10 steps ahead of him in having challenged the Crop Insurance Corporation that before we lose a handle on those monies, let us see what we can do with some of those monies in putting the icing on the current crop insurance program that offers some more attractive alternatives to the purchasers.

I, quite frankly, would like to just about be able to bring the crop insurance program to a level of acceptability that would enable me to do what some of the American people are talking about doing in making crop insurance compulsory with respect to participation in other agri-programs. Now that can only be done if the crop insurance program is designed in such a way that it is of that kind of universal acceptance.

To answer your question directly, it is very much my intention and crop insurance is well advanced in the planning stages for that.

Now a decision to withdraw from GRIP is yet to be made. You are well aware that we, last year, took the sunset clause that would have eliminated GRIP out, but we did that for good reasons, so that we could have this extra year or two without undue high premium increases to bring the account into a revenue situation, and that is very close to being accomplished, a very significant portion of a very significant debt that the program was under as a result of the difficult harvest year of '93 has been met.

* (1650)

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Penner): Item 3.5 Regional Agricultural Services (a) Northwest Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,936,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$635,500—pass.

3.5(b) Southwest Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,977,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$457,300—pass.

3.5(c) Central Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,055,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$523,600—pass.

3.5(d) Eastern/Interlake Region (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,438,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$722,200—pass.

3.5(e) Agricultural Crown Lands (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, over the last couple of days we have been discussing the diversification of the farming economy because of the changes to the WGTA and expansion into cattle and other livestock, and, of course, with the expansion there is going to be more interest in Crown land. I am sure that there will be more applications.

I understand there have been some changes made in the policy of this department and that being up until now you could not have a value attached to—when an individual who had private land and Crown land, when he was selling his private land, he or she could not put a value on their Crown land. When they were selling that, that was appraised, so there was a clear indication of whether they were inflating their prices to cover the Crown land, but there has been a change in policy and now that assessment is no longer there. There is the opportunity now for individuals who had been leasing land to now profit from the transfer of that land, so they can increase the price accordingly.

I would like to ask the minister what the rationale was behind that decision to change and thus put a value on Crown lands that are being released?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I have come to that conclusion to some extent of my background

experience as being Minister of the Department of Natural Resources. We find ourselves in those circumstances, not in any way inhibiting or penalizing or restricting persons who enjoy tenancy on Crown land, and who, for instance, have built a summer cottage at a lake site on one of our many fine lakes that we have, over 4,000 summer cottages, and winter cottages I might add, scattered throughout our recreational land. The value of the land really has not changed or appreciated much, but I will tell you the difference between being on a desirable lakefront lot and being in the hinterland can be the difference of \$20,000 and \$30,000 to a modest cottage in the Whiteshell. You can call that personal gain from the person or the party that is selling that kind of property.

I am also aware of a policy that we used to have in the Department of Natural Resources with selling Crown land for recreational purposes, particularly where we had a deliberate clause in there that prohibited a potential land developer from purchasing Crown land for recreational purposes. I acknowledge that not a great deal of land is moved or transferred in this way, but it has. Particularly in the last decade, there has been more recreational land sold, principally in the eastern part of the province.

There was a provision that was in the selling of Crown land under these circumstances that would call for restriction on the owner—I believe it was five years—that he could not turn around and resell it at a profit. That was deemed to be speculating with a Crown asset or something like that, but that is all it was. If eight years down the road or 10 years down the road, there were no penalties or no restrictions placed on that kind of activity, I take no offence to the fact that what we are attempting to do is maintain economic cattle farming, livestock production units.

There are only two circumstances that apply. Number one, the aim of the land is to maintain the economic livestock operation which includes the land base, and that can only be transferred to an incoming legitimate cattle producer. If that is the case, if the existing owner derives some benefit out of the fact that he has packaged together, along together with Crown lands, along with his private lands and somebody wishes to place a higher value on his own private land

as a result of that, I have some trouble with the state wanting to interfere in that kind of transaction.

Ms. Wowchuk: I do not know why the minister would have a problem with the state interfering if the state owns the land, because the person who is leasing—

Mr. Enns: We are not selling the state's land. There is no question of selling the Crown land being involved. We are talking about private land.

If I have a quarter section of private land that somebody wants to offer me \$100 for it, I call it interference when the state says, no, Mr. Enns, you can only get \$75 for it, because I happen to have two-quarters of Crown land beside it.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chair, I would like the minister to clarify then: the individual who has that land should be free to sell his own land. It should not be tied to the Crown land, because in my opinion what this does is—the minister talks about people expanding into agriculture, diversifying.

We hope that there will be young farmers who will be getting started, and of course it is the young farmers who are going to have the most difficulty in raising assets. By allowing a value to be put on the Crown land and tied into the private land, we are going to see that the majority of that land is going to be in all likelihood taken up by well-established farmers and will hinder the ability for young farmers who do not have the resources to start up and pay high prices for land.

I want to put it on the record that I think the move this minister and his government has made, in this case, allowing the price of the private land to be inflated to such a level that it will actually put a value on the Crown land is wrong.

I am just telling the minister that if he is sincere about helping young farmers get established and those young farmers who are in need of acquiring land to expand their herds, I do not think that this move by the department in this instance will be beneficial to those people who are trying to get started in the livestock industry.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, allow me, as has been my custom to continue introducing senior staff as they arrive, let me introduce Mr. Bert Fleming, who is chief of the Field Services Section of the Agriculture Crown Lands branch that we are now discussing. Welcome Bert.

I respect the honourable member for Swan River's point of view on this issue. In the first instance, there are conditions that have to be met. We have, in a deliberate policy way, made it more acceptable and more possible for the kind of orderly transfer, if you like, of livestock units and the land base surrounding that, that provides some stability to that.

* (1700)

It is not a given, by any chance, that the Crown land stays forever married to that particular parcel of private land that is involved in the sale. For different reasons, that Crown land can be, and from time to time is, taken away from lessees for various violations or different circumstances that appear.

I choose to take the attitude that the stability that this action brings to the livestock operations ensures for a greater opportunity of successful transfers, that is, if we want to see a healthy, growing and successful expansion of our cattle and livestock opportunities in this province. That will come from the people who are equipped and who can in fact access the finances to do it in a significant substantive way.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister indicate, with the growth in the livestock industry and cattle and the PMU industry, what kind of an increase of demand there has been for Crown lands? Are there a lot of people who are on waiting lists to acquire land, or are there a lot of people in competition for the same pieces of land?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, while staff will provide me with some specific information, just on a general basis here are these few comments. I am pleased as the minister to be able to report to the committee that it would appear likely that this is the first year that we will be setting an all-time record number of beef cattle in the province of Manitoba. That in itself is not all

that great. It means we are just catching up to where we were in 1974. We had virtually two decades of declining cattle numbers and now over the last eight or nine years a slow but steady climb back up. This year I am advised that we will have a beef herd in excess of 600,000, and that is certainly adding some additional pressures to Crown lands. In addition, we maintain a very substantial horse herd in the province that are competing for very often the same kind of pasture land and grazing land.

Members earlier on in the deliberations of these Estimates heard me refer to the small but nonetheless growing number of bison producers that we have in the province, now numbering in the order of 50 with some 5,000 head. All of this undoubtedly is putting some additional pressure on the Crown Lands branch.

We have for instance advertised some 300 parcels of Crown land that were vacant the last year, 118 of which were not applied for. There still is not that kind of extreme pressure on the land base that would leave well over a hundred parcels of land not applied for.

On the earlier questions—and I am not going to pursue that particularly—but I did want to acknowledge that the branch really has not received any significant number of complaints with respect to that change in sales policy. My Assistant Deputy Minister Mr. Baseraba informs me in fact one of the last particular instances where we had a sale of this kind crossing our desk, the evaluation of the property was \$20,000 below what we had evaluated. In other words, if we would have insisted on our evaluation of it then the party would have had to pay \$20,000 more. It leads me to believe that there will not be the kind of abuse—I am sensitive to what the honourable member is referring to taking place.

I would simply think though that—I was visiting my brother, the judge, at the Big Whiteshell Lake. He has a modest little cottage. I asked him, John, what do you think this cottage sells for, and well, he had it appraised the other day for \$110,000. It was just a little shack, but it happened to be perched on a lovely rock outcrop on Big Whiteshell Lake, the sun setting, and a fine staff of Natural Resources provincial parks people looking after his property and ploughing his road and picking

up his garbage. He will sell that property for \$90,000 that would be hard-pressed to sell for \$25,000 in terms of the building value. But we do not impose that kind of state intervention on that kind of a transaction.

If the honourable member is asking me is it fair, well, the world is not really meant to be fair at all times.

Ms. Wowchuk: It should be.

Mr. Chair, I think that the minister compares his brother who happens to be fortunate enough to own a very substantial cottage on some Crown land at some lake, and that is fine, he is very fortunate, but my concern with this is that we are putting pressure on farmers who in many cases have much less means than judges do to acquire property. I am concerned about the young farmers, again, who are trying to get themselves established. I do not agree with this policy is what I am telling the minister, and I am hoping that his department will monitor. The minister has indicated that up to this point there has not been a change, and it has not inflated the value of land, and the value of the leased land has not been built in up to this point. This is only a new policy. It has not been in place for a year I do not believe.

So I would ask if the minister would direct his staff to monitor the situation, and should we see that there is an inflation in value and it is going to hinder the ability of some of our more modest farmers in their ability to acquire land, then that this be followed and consideration be given to changing the policy.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, that is an imminently fair request, and staff is present. I would ask them to do precisely that. I think, having been specifically asked for that, we will be prepared when next the department appears before this committee and specifically respond to that.

Just a little bit of further information on the Crown lands question. For instance, in 1993, there were some 49 transfers involving 232 individual parcels of land. That compares to 38 transfers in '94 involving 178 transfers. Unit transfers—I do not know precisely what that means—17 transfers, 27 transfers. In 1993, we advertised 237 parcels; in 1994, 336 parcels. It seems

that every year there are a certain number of parcels that remain vacant for the lack of applicants: 77 in '93; 118, as I stated earlier, this year.

* (1710)

There are reasons for cancellations. There were six cancellations of leases in '93 for reasons of nonpayment. One cancellation was for reasons of nonuse, the land was not used on the condition of lease. In '94 there were some further cancellations, 11 cancellations of the lease for nonpayment and another one for nonuse. This kind of movement does take place, although in the overall out of an inventory of some 1.6 million acres of land that indicates to me a fairly stable regime out there with the lessees that are occupying this land.

Ms. Wowchuk: There was a policy, an attempt being made by the department I guess in conjunction with Natural Resources, there was the exchanges made of lands, there was land close to—I think this is a Natural Resources question. I am in the wrong committee. I will leave that question. I just realized that I am in the wrong department. That is fine.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Penner): Item 5. Regional Agricultural Services (e) Agricultural Crown Lands (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,231,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$558,300—pass.

5.(f) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations \$653,100—pass.

Resolution 3.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$11,882,300 for Agriculture, Regional Agricultural Services, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1996.

Item 6. Policy and Economics (a) Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$124,500—(pass).

6.(a)(2) Other Expenditures.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I have several questions under Policy and Economics. I wonder if it would be all right if we asked a few of them and then pass the lines along.

The first area that I want to ask questions on is under Boards and Commissions, if that would be suitable.

One of the boards and commissions that I have questions on is the Milk Prices Review Commission. I want to ask the minister, and I hope I am in the right department, there is concern that has been raised in my part of my constituency, and I know it is a concern in other rural areas, in the pricing of milk products. These are not the same in all parts of the province. Milk being what one would call almost an essential product, this causes some concern. I wonder if the minister, through his staff, could indicate what the policy is and why there is such a discrepancy in pricing.

I know the particular businessperson that brought it to my attention is very frustrated because he was concerned that milk that was being brought to his establishment was much more expensive. This is just a corner store where there is higher pricing in a corner store than in some of the larger stores. He was also concerned at the price of milk just across the Saskatchewan border, so that is a concern. I was led to believe prior to this that there was a standard price for milk and it was equal pricing across the province. If the minister, here this afternoon, can say what the policy is, and whether there is any way we can address that issue that has been raised by some people in the public.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, it is not quite that straightforward in terms of having a uniform price across the province. The member will recall we used to have a fairly rigid system controlling both maximum and minimum prices, and that prevented retailers, from time to time, that would want to sell milk at considerably lower prices than the regulations provided for. It was a constant case of agitation for the removal of the minimum requirement. There was some understanding on the part of governments wishing to regulate the maximum allowable price for the milk, but why should we stand in the way if somebody wants to sell milk cheaper?

So some three or four years ago, I believe in '88, the minimum benchmark was removed, but we have and we continue to maintain the maximum. There are conditions attached to it that apply to, for instance, the

large volumes that are sold in the supermarket-type settings compared to the smaller volumes, but who provide considerable greater service at all hours of the day perhaps that enables for that price to be somewhat higher. I am advised the zones area depending on the distance from the milk plant supplying the milk that allows for some graduation of price.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

I appreciate the fact that the circles around which the Swan River people, for instance, in the valley are served with their food/milk requirements. From the Brandon area your pricing is in effect some 6 cents or 7 cents a litre higher than it would be in Brandon, so there is not uniformity of price across the province, but it is still a regulated process which the member can take issue with. We have a prices review commission that reviews the milk pricing structure not only for the retailers but also for the processors, as well as for the producers. On a regular basis, an annual basis, it reviews the cost of production. It reviews cost increases that processors are faced, for instance, in the containers and the products that are going into the containers for milk and then establishes these price ranges.

Let me at this time, as has been the practice, introduce some further additional senior members of staff: Mr. Gord MacKenzie, immediately to my Assistant Deputy Minister Craig Lee's left; Mr. Lorne Martin, chief Policy section; Mr. Greg Fearn, director of economic branch. Of course, Mr. Donaghy has been introduced before.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister clarify, was there always a variation in the prices across the province, or did this variation come about as [inaudible] came with the minimum pricing? Did the change to the minimum pricing have an impact on the prices of milk, at the [inaudible] of milk?

Mr. Enns: No, Mr. Chairman, senior staff advises that it had no such impact. The only action that was taken in '88 was the removal of the minimum pricing mechanism and it, by itself, did not impact on the varied price structure that had been established prior to

and was in existence while that provision was also part of the pricing structure.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, is it accurate to say that the elimination of the minimum pricing enabled the discounts that we now have when larger operations buy a volume and that has put the small corner stores at a disadvantage? Is that one of the impacts of the changing to minimum pricing?

Mr. Enns: Well, Mr. Chairman, I am being advised that we had a situation that originally initiated the need for the government of the day to introduce a minimum pricing mechanism into the business of selling of milk because of a unique situation where we had a very serious price war going on, the kind that it was obvious to the policymakers of the day that what was at stake here was predatory pricing to drive somebody, quite frankly, right out of business.

* (1720)

It was deemed under those circumstances by those involved—it was not my government at the time—to introduce the regulation for regulating the minimum price of milk.

When that situation no longer prevailed among the large-volume producers of milk, the supermarkets, the Safeways, the SuperValu stores, the need for the minimum pricing mechanism disappeared. Quite frankly its removal has worked pretty satisfactorily. We have not returned to that price-cutting, predatory type of activity on the part of either of the major chains. That has made the price of milk relatively stable in the supermarkets.

I suspect, I look for advice, that there is some advantage to buying in the large volumes that is being passed on by the processors to the large-volume buyers that is not available to the corner grocery store that buys very small volumes, but that pricing differential is simply a fact of real life. It is not necessarily saying that party that is charging six or seven cents more for a litre of milk is making any more for that litre of milk than the supermarket that sells for six or seven cents less.

Ms. Wowchuk: In fact that corner store owner is probably making less because of the hours it stays open and things like that. I want to move on. I have a question on the Agriculture Producers organization certification.

Mr. Enns: I thought you would ask a question like that.

Ms. Wowchuk: It is my understanding that in the past year there has been more than one organization that has applied for certification. There has been at least one other organization that applied for certification here in Manitoba and was denied. Can the minister indicate which other organization applied, and what was the reason for denying?

Mr. Enns: The honourable member's information is correct. There was an additional application that is additional to the one that is currently accredited, the Keystone Agricultural Producers organization. We did receive an application for certification by a group calling themselves Manitoba Independent Agricultural Producers.

Now the committee that oversees and makes the decision as to which group to accredit or appropriate to receive the checked-off funds, as is their practice, wrote to both organizations asking for their membership list. The information that Mr. McKenzie provides me is that the Manitoba Independent Agricultural Producers never responded to that request, which was an understandable request on the part of the department to find out who they were, required by the act, I am advised.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can the minister indicate the act required that a total list of membership was recorded, or does it require the executive make this attempt?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I am advised—and I must confess that I myself am not all that personally knowledgeable about the act. I was not the minister involved in the passing of the original legislation, but my Assistant Deputy Minister Mr. Lee tells me it is a requirement of the act that the total membership list has to be reported and that the committee makes the determination based quite frankly on the group. If two or three organizations make application for certification

they are asked to supply the membership list. The organization with the largest membership list is certified.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairperson, I understand that the minister will be making some amendments to that act. We have heard first reading of it in the House. In the interest of time I am not going to spend too much time because if we are going to be discussing amendments to a bill, we will have lots of opportunity to discuss the minister's reasons for making the amendments. I am not going to take too much time to discuss that particular issue, but I am sure we are going to have a lengthy discussion on the minister's reasons for changing the act. We will open up much discussion.

Mr. Enns: I just want to put on the record, the actual act, The Agricultural Producers' Organization Funding Act, reads that the organization, as a certifying organization, which in the opinion of the agency represents the greatest number of producers in Manitoba. It is written right in the act.

There is a little room for leeway on the part of that group of Manitobans that sit on that committee that makes that determination. They study the validity of the application. I suspect if there is a dispute they try to determine the validity of the membership and the membership list as being reported. Other than that the certification is fairly straightforward.

It is also that same committee—I just wanted to say this thing pertaining to the amended change of the act. It makes it possible for other commodity organizations, like the canola growers, to approach the certification committee and request the cheque of funds to be directed to them as a group of canola producers for the purposes that they deem fit for their organization.

Quite frankly, the urgency and some of the pressure that I am under for making the amendments to the act is to accommodate precisely the canola growers that I am most vitally interested in.

We have a proud history in the development of canola in this province. A lot of it has been through the kind of research support that we and the private sector have provided to our own people, the Faculty of

Agriculture campus at the University of Manitoba. We are currently pleased to house the Institute of Canola in Manitoba in Winnipeg, but we are under subtle but increasing pressure to have that institute moved out of Manitoba to Saskatoon, partially because we are quite frankly not carrying our weight.

Both Alberta and Saskatchewan, larger canola producing provinces than we are, and Ontario have the kind of check-off legislation that is required that can enable the industry to help finance, help contribute to some of their own affairs and their business but most importantly also help to leverage the kind of dollars out of the federal government for ongoing research opportunities that that particular crop requires.

* (1730)

I know that the people at the campus are extremely concerned about losing those research dollars. The federal government has changed its funding mechanism for research. They have put \$35 million on the table and said to organizations like the wheat growers, the barley growers, sugarbeet growers, canola growers, here, if you can match it, if you put up a million dollars of your money for research, we will put up a million dollars. But if you have not got the million dollars you cannot attach the federal research dollars. Alberta can, Saskatchewan can, Manitoba can.

So I do appeal to the honourable member to take very seriously the problems that the canola growers find themselves in in this instance and give some consideration to passage of that act.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister on his canola growers was leading me into another question that I wanted to ask. But I want to revert just to the agricultural producers agency and the act that makes possible the Keystone Agriculture Producers to be the organization representing farmers.

Can the minister indicate whether there are, through this act, and I am sure that I can going to familiarize myself with it very soon when the amendments start to come forward, is there any provision for government to provide funds to an organization other than the funds that they collect themselves from the membership?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I do not suspect, I do not believe that there is anything in the act that makes that possible, nor should there be. But as an organization like any other organization, it has every access to various different government programs, programs that the different development programs may offer from time to time if they wish to pursue a particular area of research.

Ms. Wowchuk: The next area the minister talked about, the research that the canola growers want to do and the value of the canola crop in this province, we talk about the whole area of diversification, and many times through these Estimates we have talked about the need to diversify and the changes that we are going to have to face in this province and in western Canada because of the changes to the WGTA. For those changes to take place, there is going to have to be much more done as far as research goes, and the minister talked about private funding for research and the cutbacks to agriculture research by the federal government.

I also think that the provincial government has a major role to play in the research for the farmers of this province, and I know that the minister is going to get into the funding that they have spent upgrading the buildings at the university. It is fine to upgrade buildings, but we also have to have people working in those buildings and we have to do research there.

I question, at a time when we have this great change coming about, why the government did not see fit to raise the amount of money that is going to research. I do not expect the provincial government to be able to pick up all of the offsets of the federal government, but I do think that they have room to move.

The minister indicated that at the present time the agricultural budget is minimal, not even 1 percent of the total revenues. I would ask that he give consideration and give some explanation as to why there is not being more money put into research.

There are a few specific areas that I would like to address, but on the whole I think that it is a responsibility of this department to do that and show the leadership. I believe this is one area that we could

have seen an increase in spending in this department, and I would ask the minister's views on that.

Mr. Enns: Well, Mr. Chairman, on the straightforward expression of concern that there is not more money being provided for research, I quite frankly cannot take issue with the honourable member. I share with her there is probably no more urgent time than right now where those of us engaged in policymaking, and that includes all of our senior staff in the department and others, we are making speeches about diversification encouraging farmers to divert into many new and innovative crops, and we quite frankly could use a great deal more sound research data in the hopes that when we give counsel, when we develop policies that steer producers in certain directions, that it is done with the best of academic research, research with integrity to it that we at least feel absolutely comfortable with as policymakers in devising these kind of new directions for agriculture as we move into the year 2000.

Mr. Chairman, when you have to administer a department that at the same time is being asked to do with less—and when I mean less I mean throughout the departments—you look at the staff components that the department had eight or nine years ago. They are all working with less.

Even though in the aggregate some of the agricultural budgets, agriculture seems reasonably well served, that is only because of the inclusion of the very substantial safety net programs like the GRIP programs or the former tripartite programs and the NISA-type programs that appear to make the overall agricultural budget look not too hard done by. But when you strip down and look at the actual operating functions among the staff people who we have in this division here in the policymaking sections, we are short. You can say that about every division throughout the branch.

When you are imposing that kind of discipline on the department—and if you ask my senior managers, they are, even under these circumstances, being pressured by Treasury Board to operate with higher than usual vacancy rates—we do not rush in to fill a job every time a job is vacant, partially because it is our ongoing contribution, if you like, to the total effort to bring

about a balanced budget situation in the province of Manitoba.

I as an individual minister am not particularly enthusiastic about it, but I accept it—that is part of my job—but then it is difficult to sort out a particular area, like the research grant going to the Faculty of Agriculture, and that is where the principal amount of it goes, the \$784,000. It is difficult to single out one section, one activity of the department, for perhaps a bumped-up 5, 10 or 15 percent grant which they may well be worthy of, but under those circumstances if you do not do it you find, quite frankly, it is easier to maintain morale in the department if at least we—I hate to say this, Mr. Chair, will you strike it from the record after I have said it?—spread the misery equally, not showing favouritism to one section or one division of the department.

I do not particularly like administrating that way, because there always ought to be times for recognizing priorities within a department when a particular section should be getting more funds, and we try to do that and we will challenge our managers to do more of that, but in the main it was for that reason that we could not and did not single out greater research dollars in this particular budget.

There are additional monies that could be attached to research that are spent through the Sustainable Development Fund through the Canada-Manitoba agreements. There is, for instance, \$443,000 that come under what we call the conservation agreements, the CMASS agreements that are, in effect, research programs that are scattered throughout the landscape of the province of Manitoba. There is another additional one to what we call the Prairie Agriculture Machinery Institute; there is our contribution to that organization, which essentially does research into machinery development most applicable to the prairie agriculture scene, so other research dollars are being done at this time. But in the main that is the situation, and we have to live with it.

* (1740)

Ms. Wowchuk: One of the changes in Manitoba, and as I indicated, the change to the Crow benefit will have

a tremendous impact on agriculture and on the people of this province. Has the department directed or is anybody in the Department of Agriculture research doing the research on the impacts on Manitoba and on the Crow benefit and the impacts, from their suggestions, about the future of Manitoba?

I think this is very important when you consider the changes, positive or negative, that are going to happen because of it, but we do have to have some work done and some preparation and some information for the department on how they should be dealing with it. I would like to know whether anybody has been designated to do that work?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I can attest to the fact that a considerable amount of additional workload on staff, particularly senior staff, at this time is directly related to the WGTA and its removal.

We have been meeting and conferencing with other provinces in this regard. We are looking to the future shape of some of our safety-net programs in the post-WGTA era. We have an ongoing relationship with our colleagues in Highways and Transportation, because transportation becomes an issue involved here in terms of the changed circumstances that will see grain move in the province.

We have a specific task force set up within the department to deal with, bring together the WGTA concerns in the removal of that program. Its concerns, I recall my Assistant Deputy Mr. Baseraba just indicated to me a little while ago.

Some of the specific things that we are concerned about are the ongoing expansion in the hog industry as a result of the lower feed costs and looking at that point of view. We are looking at any increase in the backgrounding or in the feeding of beef. There has been a very steady and noticeable increase in recovering the beef-feeding industry again in the province of Manitoba.

Shifts to higher-value crop and rotation, increased interest on farm value-added diversification activities, the increased movement of trucks by grain. There will be a considerably different movement of grain within

the province. Particularly, if the federal government is successful in removing the cap on the access to the American border, then you will see that catchment area that extends for different crops in quite an area, and you will see that grain essentially moving by truck in most instances.

I also hold out that you will see quite a different movement in the catchment area, if all things are going right, to a potential far greater utilization of the Port of Churchill.

Anyway, these are some of the specific issues of the task force that we have established. The group consists of our Farm Management people. We have regional representatives from the various regions on it. We have Policy; Soils and Crops; Animal Industry people. At Crown Lands we have picked out senior people from within the department to work. They have had their first meeting on May 2 and are now receiving confirmation that regional and other representatives are beginning to identify what the needs are in their areas.

They are specifically working under the two co-chairs of Mr. Irvin Wiebe and Allen Sturko who have been assigned the task of kind of addressing the department's talents and the talents of other departments wherever we can co-op them to how we can better equip ourselves to provide the kind of policy directions in the post-WGTA era.

Ms. Wowchuk: I think this is a very important section of the department, and I think that there is an important role for government to play in funding research. The minister indicated that there were various organizations, chemical companies and the like, that contribute money to research, but there is a need for research to be done by the public sector. I would hope that the minister would look at this and ensure that we do have the necessary research done to put supports in place, so that we can adjust and have the resources and the information there for farmers to make the adjustments to the changes.

There are many opportunities. There is our food processing industry. There is the value-added jobs that we could hope to get from the production of ethanol. But in the interest of time, I am sure that if we have

additional questions in these areas that the minister will avail his staff to us so that we can deal with them at another time. I just want to emphasize what we feel is very important, and that is that there be research done by the public sector that is for the benefit of all people in the province and in the country. With that, we are prepared to pass this section.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 6. Policy and Economics (a) Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$124,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$24,100—pass.

6.(b) Economics (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$806,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$195,500—pass.

6.(c) Boards and Commissions Support Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$247,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$191,800—pass.

6.(d) Agricultural Research - Grant to the University of Manitoba \$784,000—pass.

6.(e) Manitoba Farm Mediation Board (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$194,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$359,100—pass.

6.(f) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations (\$94,300)—pass.

Resolution 3.6: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,832,800 for Agriculture, Policy and Economics, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1996.

7. Canada-Manitoba Agreement on Agricultural Sustainability \$1,040,000—pass.

Resolution 3.7: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,040,000 for Agriculture, Canada-Manitoba Agreement on Agricultural Sustainability, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1996.

8. Income Insurance and Support Program (a) Administration—pass; (b) Tripartite Cattle Stabilization Plan \$208,500—pass; (c) Tripartite Hog Stabilization Plan—pass; (d) Tripartite Sugar Beet Stabilization Plan

\$674,700—pass; (e) Tripartite Lamb Stabilization Plan—pass; (f) Tripartite Honey Stabilization Plan—pass.

8.(g) Net Income Stabilization Account \$16,106,900.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, again, I realize we want to pass this in a very short time, but I just want to raise a couple of issues on the Income Stabilization program, that being the fact that again a program like this is set up for those who have resources, and those who have very little income are having difficulty accessing the funds.

If the minister could indicate for information how many accounts there are in the NISA account and how many of those accounts have funds in them less than a thousand dollars—let us go less than \$2,000.

* (1750)

Mr. Enns: As of April 7, 1995, we have some 6,565 contracts or 39 percent that are less than \$2,000; then we move up, 2,690 accounts that are between \$2,000 and \$4,000; and we have 1,700 accounts, \$4,000 and \$6,000; another 2,000 just about, 1,993, that are \$6,000 to \$10,000; another 2,000 that are in the \$10,000 to \$20,000 bracket; and we have 1,162 that have accounts in excess of \$20,000.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister indicates in excess of \$20,000. Can the minister indicate what the top end of the scale of accounts are?

Mr. Enns: We do not have that information at this point. I suppose perhaps the program is too young.

Ms. Wowchuk: When you look at the numbers, you can see that the majority of the accounts have the lowest resources or the amounts in them. Whereas if you compare the dollars, the majority of the funds are concentrated in the accounts of fewer people. This is a concern, because I have talked to many young farmers who are busy trying to pay off their bank loans and their fertilizer bills and their chemical bills and they do not have the ability to put money away. I think this is a problem, and I believe it is an issue that has to be addressed.

If this is the kind of program that we are going to have in place for farmers, then we have to look at a way to distribute the funds better. When we talk about having limited government resources, I do believe that we have to look at capping the amount that will go into a particular account and distribute the funds more equally. That is something that I believe has to be addressed.

All in all, I think that what the department and government should be working for is helping farmers earn a better income from the workplace, from the commodities that they produce so that then they do have the ability to set some money aside. Also, as the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) indicated, we do have to work towards developing a better crop insurance program so that there is the support for farmers.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, the member correctly identifies the weakness in this program, an otherwise good program. I have a lot of respect for the NISA program. I think it is basically a good program. I like the focus of the program on the individual farm units, the discipline within the program that it is the individual farmer that—where government's money often gets wasted when we provide help on a regional basis and all the situations where parties then are receiving dollars that had quite a good year.

There is discipline built in to the NISA-type program that I appreciate, at the same time providing this kind of focused assistance. But it has troubled us, it has troubled the ministers when we have talked about it, the entry, the young farmer, the start-up farmer. They are, I can indicate to the honourable member, looking at ways of enhancing that first introduction or first year or two.

Whether or not when we move out of other safety programs like the GRIP program, if we can maybe allocate some of those dollars on the part of the federal government and our provincial governments to help in that first entering a program, make that a little bit more attractive, or perhaps, as the member indicates, providing caps at the other end of the program, using some of those dollars that would otherwise accrue to the costs there and transfer them over to help the entry

farmer into it. That is a concern of the program and it continues to receive attention.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 8. Income Insurance and Support Program (g) Net Income Stabilization Account \$16,106,900—pass.

Resolution 3.8: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$16,990,100 for Agriculture, Income Insurance and Support Program, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1996.

9. Lotteries Funded Programs (a) Agricultural Societies Grant Assistance (1) Operating \$274,900—pass; (2) \$99,000—pass.

9.(b) Keystone Centre Grant Assistance \$150,000—pass.

Resolution 3.9: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$523,900 for Agriculture, Lotteries Funded Programs, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1996.

The last item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture is 1. Administration and Finance (a) Minister's Salary \$22,800.

At this point we request the minister's staff leave the table for the consideration of this item.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I just want to state briefly that I want to thank the minister and his staff for the co-operation we have had at these committee hearings. I think the minister has been very open with information. There are many areas that in the interest of time we have not been able to cover. I hope when we look for that information the minister will avail his staff to us.

It is often the tradition to ask for a reduction in the Minister's Salary. We are not going to bother with that. We do want to say to the minister that we would encourage him to prevail on his cabinet colleagues the importance of agriculture to the economy of this province and look for resources that are available to help to enhance the equality of agriculture. I want to wish the minister well at his presentation in Ottawa. I

hope he will take a strong stand and ensure that Manitobans get the best possible deal that they can—that we are forced into because of decisions made by the federal government.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, allow me to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to all members of the committee, particularly to the critic of the opposition. I know that staff derives considerable assistance in hearing a different point of view, a point of view that they know, nonetheless, is spoken directly and sincerely from people that have elected her in the great agricultural community and constituency of Swan River. I have a lot of respect for the credentials that you bring to the table. I say that very directly and honestly.

I welcome the contribution made by other members, the member for Dauphin, to these Estimates. I pass at least some empathy on to you. You have a lot of responsibility on the shoulders of yourselves and a few others in terms of persons who have direct and some immediate agricultural background and experience. I have the other problem. I have a wealth of agriculturists and people who know a great deal more about agriculture in my caucus in my cabinet, and I have to be able to work with them as best I can from time to time.

I do express my appreciation for this exercise. I apologize to the members of the committee if on occasion I have injected a note of levity into these discussions, but next June it will be nigh on 30 years that I have been doing this and if I do not make that break occasionally I begin to question my own sanity about all of this. Thank you very much.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 1.(a) Minister's Salary \$22,800—pass.

Resolution 3.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$2,557,700 for Agriculture, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March 1996.

This completes the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture. The next Estimates that will be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply are the

Estimates of the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

* (1440)

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training.

When the committee last met we were considering item 1.(c)(1) on page 37 of the Estimates book.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Chairman, just for the record, as a matter of procedure, at the end of last time, we were talking about the Council of Ministers of Education and their agenda, and I had asked the minister, although we did not have time to finish it, what she intended to bring to the Council of Ministers and what her agenda would be as a representative of Manitoba in those discussions over the next few years.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Chairman, just before I answer that question, the member had raised a question yesterday and we said we would get the information for her. I have got it back. Would it be appropriate to provide that now before we get into details on other issues?

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Agreed? [agreed]

Mrs. McIntosh: The question was raised on adjustments to voted amounts contained in the '93-94 Annual Report of the Department of Education and Training, the '94-95 Supplementary Information for Legislative Review and the current '95-96 Supplement.

I have got something I could table here if it would be appropriate. It was a copy of the changes for Executive Support subappropriation 16.l(b) and we have summarized them and have them ready for tabling.

Just as a brief overview, the major adjustments affecting the department's '93-94 printed vote were the inclusion of employee benefits in the departmental salary lines, and that was some \$2,500,000; the transfer of the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Management Development Plan to the UGC from Industry, Trade and Tourism was \$998,000; the allocation of the general salary increase for \$554,000; and grants in lieu of taxes transferred from Rural Development to the UGC was \$267,000.00.

Those supplements do contain a reconciliation between the printed main Estimates of expenditures and adjusted Estimates on page 8 and a definition of Estimates of expenditures adjusted on page 157, but the reconciliation does not reflect the internal transfers within the department, such as the shift of Paul Goyan from I, T and T from Training and Advanced Education into Executive Support. That position for Mr. Goyan was originally from I, T and T and it was a vacant position there which was classified as a regional co-ordinator at the salary level of \$58,000. That line was increased by \$38,000, I mentioned yesterday, to bring it in line to that of a deputy minister, plus employee benefits and workweek reduction.

You know we can provide explanations for the adjustments to the voted amounts for the '94-95 subappropriation throughout the review, but explanations for adjustments to prior years may take us a little longer to retrieve. We can obtain them, but we do not necessarily have all those previous years here.

That information that has just been passed around contains the detail on that brief overview I have just given you.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the minister bringing that and tabling the information which I am sure will be helpful. I think the question I had asked or that I was puzzling over was a little more limited than that. It was the difference between the annual report estimates and the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review Estimates on the 16.1 (b) line.

Mrs. McIntosh: The annual report reflects what the estimates were at the time of printing and the adjustments of course reflect subsequent changes. I

believe the detailed paper that you have been handed contains the information you are seeking. If you take a look at the handout that was passed around you will see the '93-94 printed vote and the adjusted vote. Then you will see the '94-95 printed vote followed by the adjusted vote. I think the information you are seeking is contained in those particular figures.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, is there anywhere where the adjusted vote is normally recorded? For example, I assume there are two different dates of publication here. The annual report numbers would have been available—I just got the annual report last week. I assume it would have been printed and available probably about a month before that at the very minimum. It lists the estimate for '93-94 as 370.5. When was the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review available, and why does it offer a different number? You are saying there is a time lapse there where you had different numbers available. If that was so, why would they not be recorded?

Mrs. McIntosh: The annual report is an explanation of the expenditures for that fiscal year. That is why it was the printed budget. For '94-95 and '95-96 we are comparing the resource allocations, and therefore we adjust the prior year's figures to adjust to reflect program changes. So what I read out to you were the major changes for the '93-94 fiscal year, and if you look on page 8 in your book you will see the adjusted vote changes for the whole department, and you will note that there is a transfer there to Family Services, for example, for some staff year funding of some \$47,000 at the bottom of page 8. So you will see some of that detail emerging. Just a further detail on that, that transfer was the Intervention Manitoba transfer to Family Services. So it was a program.

Ms. Friesen: Do I understand then that this is unavoidable and always happens?

* (1450)

Mrs. McIntosh: This is a recurring type of situation. It has historically happened throughout government. It happens whenever things cross departments. It is not unusual. It is following guidelines that are set down to try to simplify the day-to-day workings of departments

with each other and government running its departments. You try to make it so that you are comparing apples to apples instead of apples to oranges.

Ms. Friesen: I understand that from the perspective of the Supplementary Estimates. What does seem odd is that those connections are not to me made clear in the annual report which is where one can make those kinds of explanations clear, as the department does when it lists both the Estimates and actual which is very helpful.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the guidelines for this type of reporting are set by the Department of Finance, but I understand what the member is saying is she would like to see a more user-friendly approach to reporting. I could certainly pass on the desire to have them be more easily read and understood by people who are not versed in them or working with them on a daily or annual basis. I think the question is you are saying could it be more user friendly so that it is easier for you to decipher some of this information year to year.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, that is partly it. Partly, it is not so much the ease, it is ensuring that there is a reflection of changes made by the department after Supplementary Estimates have been passed. We are presented with Supplementary Estimates. We pass those Estimates or vote against them, depending. It does not seem to me that is necessarily fully reflected in the annual report, and the annual report is where that kind of compilation can be made. It may be that there is simply a half page or a page that needs to be added-on process explaining that there may be discrepancies between x and y and here is why, and here is where the process takes place.

Mrs. McIntosh: I thank the member for that positive and constructive critique and perhaps a clarification of how the reporting occurs might be of assistance to members reading through the reports. I will certainly pass it on to the Finance department for their consideration. I did not mean to take us off topic, but I did want to answer that, and you had asked a question starting off this session which I will turn to now and your question regarding the Council of Ministers of Education.

We did start in on a discussion on this last night, and I do not have my agenda, my personal agenda, fully fleshed out for a meeting with them, but I did touch on a couple of items last night that are ones that are important to me that I understand are also important to other ministers that I would like to pursue and mobility, portability, mobility of labour as well as portability of credentials and transferability of credits between Canadian institutions of higher learning. We are talking now about articulation between various levels, and I would like to see that taking place wherever possible between provincial jurisdictions as well as within the province and within our own institutions.

Again, we have the education indicators project moving ahead in a pan-Canadian perspective which is exciting, and I would like very much to hear what the other ministers of Education have to say on the topic and to explore with them in dialogue some of their views and ideas and thoughts on that particular topic. Teacher education is another issue that I think is one that is worth discussing. We have teachers who qualify in one province but not in another and different methods of training teachers from province to province so that portability there again is difficult for teachers moving from one jurisdiction to another.

I would like again with the nongovernment stakeholders some idea of their input, some form of consultation to gather ideas across the nation to see what nationally people are thinking and saying about education. We have a pretty good idea here provincially. In fact, we have a very good idea here provincially because we have conducted a number of forums and we have also just been through a provincial election where we discussed education in-depth with groups of people, with individuals at doors, in town halls and we got a very clear impression from the people here in Manitoba what they are thinking about education at this juncture in history.

I would be interested to know how the people of Canada feel. I think we are starting to see reports coming out of The Globe and Mail, Financial Post, any of the reputable newspapers across Canada that reflect letters to the editor, articles, initiatives by other government, statements, press releases by other ministries indicating certain desires for measurable

standards, for example. I would like to know just how far those reported perceptions and impressions extend, because that will help us, I think, as we pursue the process and the agreement on joint Pan-Canadian curriculum development, again, thinking in terms of working with colleagues across the country in joint work on information-sharing on distance education, for example, because we talk about the things we can do here in our province with distance education, fostering partnerships, identifying barriers to the fostering of partnerships and distance education.

Certainly those are items that could have national connotations and national benefits because technology does not know an arbitrary line drawn on a map. Those are just a few of the types of issues. I am certain that the other ministers, as they identify items for the agenda, will add to that very brief list of ideas that I have just presented, items of their own, items they may have been working with in their own provinces that have particular interest to them that they feel could have national scope, that would be of benefit to other ministers to explore.

* (1500)

I am also very receptive to see what other ministers are putting on the agenda for discussion and more than willing to discuss any topic they care to present, because only by talking and sharing can we move collectively for the benefit of this nation of Canada.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, the SAIP project, the standards testing, could the minister give us a summary of where the department is on this, what programs have been in place, what the results have been, what the plan is for the next two or three years and where this fits with the government's own intentions for indicator testing?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the member has probably recognized by now that we fully support the SAIP for a number of reasons. It avoids duplication. It fits in with our own thrust. The results of the SAIP mathematics assessment were released in December '93, as she is probably aware. Language assessments administered last April were released in December '94.

The reading and writing language assessments were the second component of the program. One of the outcomes of the release of the language results was the collaboration of Francophone divisions. That was significant because there were Francophone divisions in Manitoba and Ontario. They were right across the country, New Brunswick, places where they have populations of Francophones engaged in their own education and on the strategies to respond to the differences between the achievement results for students assessed in French and the results of other students that are not being assessed in French but rather in English.

The third component, science, is currently under way. That is scheduled to be administered in April of '96, about a year from now. That will be the first phase of the SAIP, that particular one.

Work has begun on the second phase as well, but we take it one step at a time. The second phase will be mathematics assessment. That is scheduled to be administered the year after that which would be '97, in the spring in all likelihood.

Ms. Friesen: How does this fit with the government's own program and timetable for testing?

Mrs. McIntosh: I think fundamentally the one thing the member needs to know and understand where we are coming from and that is that the participation in the national SAIP is not in lieu of our own actions here in Manitoba. It is a parallel process. That is a national thing that is going on that we fully support and in which we are active participants. At the same time we are developing down our own path.

Now we will find of course that there will be times and moments when, just as departments interact and cross over so too will we have these two initiatives as the legal parallel to each other touching and maybe taking a pause in our own work while we check out what is going on nationally and so on. But one is not in lieu of the other. We are not doing SAIP instead of our own. We are proceeding on our own, bearing in mind that we have to be conscious that we are complimentary, not at odds with other initiatives that

we are taking on with other jurisdictions. I do not know if that answers your question or not.

Ms. Friesen: Well, it is a start. I understand what the minister is saying with parallel process. What I am interested in is timetable. The minister suggests that there may be some crossing. How will the Manitoba timetable parallel the SAIP timetable? For example, the next two SAIP tests to be administered will be science in April '96 and a further math test in '97. Is that right?

Mrs. McIntosh: '96 and '97.

Ms. Friesen: Should I repeat the question? My question was, the timetable for the government's own testing, how it is going to parallel and where it will intersect with the SAIP program?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I was just wanting to check where they, as you say, intersect in terms of testing. We are on target with our own initial testing which will be Grade 3. That will be Grade 3 mathematics and that will be June '97.

At that same time with SAIP there will be science testing for 13- and 16-year-olds. So you will see two sets of tests going on at about the same moment, one for Grade 3s in mathematics, the other for 13- and 16-year-olds in science; the first being provincial, the second being pan-Canadian.

Similarly, we will see initial pilot testing for science provincially for Grades 3, 6 and what I used to call 9 but which is now called Senior 1 in June of '97.

So you will see a SAIP test in mathematics occurring in June of '98, and again that will be for students in Grades 9 and 12.

Those will be randomly selected; those national tests will be random in scope. It is a sample. So it will not be everybody in the same grade, not everybody in the same subject. While we will see testing going on about the same moment, you will not see it going on in the same grade or the same subject with the same age. So you are not going to see any group of students overburdened with excessive testing.

* (1510)

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, that was part of my concern as to how much time was coming out of the school year for testing for any one year. I assume we can also work out from this schedule the subsequent years which will take us over the year 2000.

I wonder if the minister could give us a sense of what she anticipates the government will learn and parents will learn from the two types of testing. As I understand it, the SAIP testing—and I stand to be corrected on this—is more like SAT or LSAT, that is they are standard tests which are not related to a specific curriculum and that the information is conveyed to governments rather than to schools and parents; compared to the Manitoba testing which presumably will be related much more closely to curriculum and which will be conveyed to certainly parents in the reporting card, to principals, and then I want to follow up a little further with what the government intends to do with those results beyond that.

So am I looking at the right kind of distinctions? What does the government anticipate that it is going to learn from the two types of testing?

Mrs. McIntosh: The SAIP testing is systems information. It is done to provide a sense to various jurisdictions as to how well the students in their area are doing compared to other parts of the nation. It does not have marks attached to it. It is not a mark that goes to the student. It is not used for promotion purposes. It is used to access the degree of knowledge absorbed and understood and the ability to communicate that knowledge out to some observer. That then can help the provinces engaged in the testing assess where they stand vis-à-vis the other provinces and where they as a nation need to introduce different types of technologies, for example, if they are testing in those kinds of areas, et cetera.

Provincially, the tests have a different purpose altogether, because provincially we do want an ability to be able to alert parents as to how their students are doing, to help teachers do an assessment of their students progress, to permit diagnosing any areas that

still need to be worked upon or some skill that the student has not been able to absorb or some piece of knowledge that has not been clearly understood, particularly getting at the early years, can do some early intervention using it almost like a diagnostic tool, in fact, using it as a diagnostic tool to be able to go back.

If, for example, they were working on multiplication and the questions in the tests reveal that the student has not really understood the concept of multiplication, how to apply it, how to use it, how to make it work for them in problem solving and in any number of examples that might be put before them, then the teacher has an ability to go back and say, all right, clearly I need with particular student A to help them understand the whole concept behind multiplication.

Perhaps the tests will reveal that a student may have some indication of certain areas of a particular piece of knowledge but that they have not, for whatever reason, been able to absorb another portion of that same body of knowledge. So the parents will then have a better understanding of how their student is doing and whether or not that parent then needs to spend time themselves with the student and/or the teacher to learn what they can do to assist or to inspire greater opportunity for that knowledge to be acquired.

Teachers can use it as diagnostic tools, school divisions can use it to assess how well their schools are doing on a comparative basis with other schools in the province or around the nation. Do they need to put in extra things to bring the standards in a particular school up so that no one school is disadvantaged, so the students in one particular school are not disadvantaged. Is there some other thing that boards and teachers and parents need to do to assist a student? So they are used then to inform, to assess, to determine whether a student is ready to move on to to another level of learning. Have they acquired the prerequisite information necessary for the next step of learning so that no student is put in the very unfortunate situation which so often occurs in our modern society where students end up advancing to a secondary level of learning without ever having acquired the prerequisite knowledge upon which to build that second phase of learning.

That is something that no educator, no parent, no school trustee, no responsible MLA would ever want to see happen to students charged to our collective care.

So they can support student growth, student achievement. The test results at Grade 4 will be mainly summative in nature, but they will continue to support students as lifelong learners. They will be able to assess the performance of the system. They will also be able to indicate what a Manitoba Grade 12 certificate stands for ultimately when you get to that level.

All of us involved in education know that depending upon where the student has been educated, the Grade 12 certificate can mean one thing in some places and something else in another. Of course, we know we hear the universities telling us that all the time, and we know we hear certain university professors asking for entrance exams because they are not quite certain where some of the Grade 12 students have ended their learning and their acquisition of knowledge.

* (1520)

So this will assist greatly in addressing some of those dilemmas that are repeatedly given to us by experts out in the field and by those who are familiar with and working in education.

Ms. Friesen: There are a number of issues that arise from that. I am curious if the minister indicated that the SAIP or the provincial tests rather would be of use to first of all teachers and then she looked at issues of parents and of school divisions. I am curious as to whether the minister really believes that in a class of even 30 that a teacher would not know that there are students who cannot do multiplication for example.

I can understand the discussion of being able to demonstrate to parents, but if the minister believes that there are teachers who are not aware of that level of inability or that teachers have not been diagnosing such elementary skills on a regular basis, I wonder perhaps if there are other remedies for that as well.

Mrs. McIntosh: We are talking here about comparability to a standard. We are talking about

enhancements, enrichments to a system. The member has indicated to me that all teachers know what all their students know, and I think that is a rather wonderful thing to say. I unfortunately could not put her in touch with any number of parents who do not feel that their classroom teacher knows exactly what their child knows, but then perhaps the parents are wrong because they are not in the same level of understanding that the honourable member is.

I feel that when the member asks the question and says, do I honestly believe, with her voice dripping with sarcasm, that a teacher would not know every problem every child in this class of 30 has, I can say to you categorically, talk to any teacher who cares deeply for her or his students, and they will tell you. They will tell you—because they are in the classroom, and they are experiencing the day-to-day working with 25 or 30 students—that they wish—and many did tell me at the doors in the recent election—they had some other vehicle so they could accurately know whether Mary who sits in the corner and nods yes, yes, yes to everything but really does not understand, has memorized the multiplication tables for example, since that is the example we are using, but does not really understand the concept behind them. That teacher would love to be able to get inside that child's brain or assess in some way the depth of understanding that really does occur with the concept. Caring teachers will tell you that, because they care, and they are honest in their assessment of the tools they have been given.

The member wants to make a general statement that all teachers know exactly what all of their students understand about the given concept of multiplication, and I say I wish that could be so, because I know teachers would like that to be the way it is.

What I found fascinating—I am sure the member found the same thing, because I am sure that during the election that recently occurred she also went door to door—was the number of educators who indicated to me that they felt it would be very, very helpful to them to be able to have measurable standards against which they could assess the understanding of their students against a measurable standard that would be very helpful for them as educators to know.

Having been a classroom teacher—and I understand the member teaches at the university level—and having sat in elementary school classrooms with other classroom teachers who were teaching children of 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and perhaps if you would—if you have a conversation there that you would like to share with me, please do.

Sitting around staff room tables as I have done I think I have some understanding of the needs of teachers as well as the needs of students. You asked me do I honestly believe that teachers would not know what 30 children in their class do not know. I say to you that I honestly believe that there would be some teachers who would like to know more than they know, and this could be a tool to help them. I am optimistic that the member will see the merit in that, having measurable standards to assist both teachers and students in developing maximum potential against immeasurable standard.

The questions on these tests are going to have an emphasis on thinking, on problem solving, so that teachers can analyze is Mary just writing down from memory the answers to the multiplication tables or does Mary understand what multiplication is all about.

You see problem solving, you see thinking, the use and the ability to interpret information and use information rather than just being able to recall previously learned facts which you can get in a classroom unless you test for depth of understanding. A student can get through without testing by just memorizing, but you get a probing test that asks to have information acquired, used and interpreted properly, you can get beyond just previously-learned facts.

That feedback on performance in relation to standards is something that educators right across this nation are discussing as a needed tool to help bring Canada back up to a good place in terms of a reputation for education in the western world. We cannot afford to have our children behind because the processes we have in place do not give teachers the tools they need or parents the information they require to help the student. I mean, the bottom line is the student.

Ms. Friesen: I resent the personal attacks and comments on my voice.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I do not want to go back and rehash things that were said last night, but when you talk about some of the things you talked about last night in your opening remarks about us using anxiety and doing all of these things and the colorful language that you used last night, then I ask that if you exact standards of behaviour from me that you apply them to yourself as well, and we will get along just fine.

You started off last night rudely, sarcastically to me. I will be polite to you so long as you are polite to me.

Ms. Friesen: I think the minister misunderstands political discussion for personal discussion. I do not think I have ever commented on anything personal about the minister. My remarks last night dealt with government policies and the kind of emotions that I felt government policies had dealt with and the emotions that parents felt. I think there is a considerable difference, and I wanted to draw that difference to the minister's attention.

* (1530)

Mrs. McIntosh: With all due respect, the member is incorrect in her assessment of the tone that she took last night when she talked about us creating anxieties and then exploiting those anxieties to her own ends. I am sorry, that is not talking about policy. That is a personal attack on the integrity of the government. Let there be no mistake and let the records show that people understand what she says and what she says she says are two different things.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: I would remind the committee and all honourable members that we are discussing line 1.(c) and remarks should be centred around that area. We are proceeding line by line, and I would hope that we can stay to the order of the Estimates book. So I would recognize the honourable member for Wolseley.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, thank you for your direction. The question I was previously asking the

minister was about classroom teaching and the value of tests. We were using the example of elementary and, I assume, Grade 3 multiplication tests.

As I said in my introduction to my remarks, I can see the use of tests at that level—the Manitoba test is what we are talking about—for parents, for school divisions, for comparability. But I am concerned that there would be teachers, or the minister would anticipate that there will be some teachers who would learn things from those tests that they did not already know.

Is it not the case that teachers in Manitoba are constantly examining their students not just for memory but for understanding, that the kind of problems that the minister is suggesting would be placed in these tests would not be part of the daily life and daily work of a classroom teacher?

If that is not the case, and the minister seems to indicate that that greater level of understanding is not being sought in the classroom, then presumably there are additional and other methods of dealing with it. I believe that was how I phrased the question at the time.

Mrs. McIntosh: I just want to clarify for the member's understanding that by no means did I mean to imply nor did I state that certain student attributes were not being sought by the teacher. On the contrary. The good teachers who care about the students in Manitoba are constantly seeking out these pieces of information and doing these diagnostic tests. So I want to make it absolutely clear that I did not in any way imply by anything I said that good teachers are not currently seeking out that kind of information, because they are.

What I am saying is that I have had many conversations with teachers who tell me that with certain kinds of students they wish they could have some extra tools such as these to assist them in being able to draw out more information about the ability of their students to understand. Because some students are very shy, some students have all different kinds of communication abilities or expertise, a measurable standard testing can assist the teachers in their ongoing efforts to seek out that kind of information, in assessing behaviour, attitudes, human relationships, self-esteem, those types of things. Those are ongoing parts of

teaching. Those are things that teachers do. They are also things that testing can assist you with.

We know that in the absence of testing, where students are not tested teachers can bring a student along because they are sort of doing their own internal measuring all the time. They have no ability to measure them against a set external standard, however, unless one is there for them, because they have no access to that information about other schools, other divisions, other jurisdictions and that opportunity is denied those teachers and those students. We see what happens to certain students who have never written a test if they do end up at university, and the panic that they experience when they first have to sit down and write a university exam, because they have never been through the written test procedure.

It is a disservice to a student in that situation, and we know many of them. I am sure you know many. I know many who got to university and were faced with that process of examination and with no experience to back them up had a terrible time trying to get through that process.

I guess in all of the things and all of the questions that I have been asked here today or on other occasions, I have never had anybody tell me that giving the education system—parents, teachers, students, trustees, Department of Education people—the opportunity to do these kinds of assessments is not a good thing. I guess I would have a question which would be—I guess I am not here to ask questions, I am here to answer them, but I have a question I would like to ask, because I have never been given an answer really from people who ask questions about testing. A good assessment properly done, is it bad?

Ms. Friesen: I think that is what we call a tautology, a good assessment done badly. It is an unusual question.

Could I ask the minister—what I am really trying to get at is what the exams will do, particularly at the Grade 3 level, that is not being accomplished at the moment. As I indicated, the information for parents and the information across school divisions could be helpful for some circumstances. The classroom I am

less convinced of, particularly at the Grade 3 level. I wondered where in Manitoba such examinations are already going on. I know there have been some efforts to try and develop some proposals for testing at the Grade 3 level, but I wonder which school divisions are already doing this. Are there any? Have we had any experience with testing at that level in Manitoba?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, not with provincial testing. There has not been provincial testing. There is testing in school divisions at a divisional level. [interjection] Okay, well, this would be provincial we are talking about bringing in here.

Just for clarification. There are divisions that have tests. They are not the provincial tests set to the standards that we will be setting ours to, but they do have the experience of testing and the testing is used in much the same way I have said. I do not know all of the divisions. I know that St. James-Assiniboia School Division has testing, because I was on the board when testing came in over a decade ago.

The results of that testing, if you are interested in the knowing the results, that particular division, and I am not current, but five years ago that particular division had some 60 percent to 70 percent of its high school graduating component going on to post-secondary education compared to the then provincial norm of about 17 percent to 20 percent. Yet a high, high percentage of those students are doing extremely well in their chosen fields of endeavour.

You had large numbers of those students very comfortable with the processes they encountered at post-secondary levels in terms of testing and writing examinations. Their ability to recall and to apply the information that they recall and to apply information to have content acquisition which is necessary, those will be components of the test that we bring forward to assess recall, which is incredibly important.

* (1540)

One only has to listen to the ad that was on the radio not long ago with this chap who was advertising his school. He said, for only \$1,500 you can come to me and I will teach you really good recall. I will improve

your memory skills. I will give you all of these skills. People pay to go because ask any person who has an Alzheimer victim in their family what the ability to recall is all about, a very important skill. Those are two extreme examples, of course, but let there be no mistake, the ability to recall is not something that should be scorned.

I have heard people say one of the things they do not like about testing is that students will be having to recall, and they will be taught information for the purposes of having to recall it. What do you do here? What do I do here? We attempt to recall information. You attempt to recall information right now that you can bring forward to see if you can present a fact that I would have to address on your behalf. I try to recall from my experience the answers so that I can give them to you. These are important skills and not to be mocked or scorned or made light of, and that is one component of testing.

The other thing that happens with divisional testing is that it is possible then to assess on a divisional basis if schools are able to respond to a division-wide standard. It is not a provincial standard, but it does give parents, educators, all those accountable to that child some ability to assess that child's performance on a comparative level and to ask the question if the comparative level is low, what can be done to assist that child in bringing him up or her up so that they on a comparative level will be on a relatively level playing field in terms of their opportunities to participate in a wide variety of life situations.

When children go out at the end of their schooling into the workforce, their employers are not going to say I am going to give you this job even though your standards are at a lower level because that is just what I am going to do for a variety of reasons. Normally the employer will ask for the person who can measure up to the employer's standards. The employer will not show the forgiveness that we would like to have people be able to get from life.

If children know how to measure up to a standard before they leave school, faced with employers who insist that their standards be measured up to, they will have a better ability to cope, adjust and succeed. We

do want them to succeed. I think it is very important. So it is not inappropriate to seek solutions. Those divisions where they gather information on externally set standards—external, I mean outside the classroom—provide a local assessment, and those students seem to perform well when they finish their particular schooling.

I know the member may say, well, that is fine for St. James-Assiniboia because they are middle class, socioeconomic, basically Caucasian, Irish, Scottish, English, German descent, people of middle incomes, and therefore they probably are already at an advantage, but if you tried the same thing some place else it would not work. Well, the member is wrong.

For starters, not everybody in the St. James-Assiniboia School Division is in that income bracket. One only has to look at the statements that were made by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) yesterday about—or not yesterday but a couple of days ago about her constituents who live in the Brooklands area and their needs and concerns about the school division Boundaries Review to know that they are not all in a certain socioeconomic, ethnocultural, economic, homogeneous arena.

Similarly I think the member might be very interested in some of the things that have happened in some of the big American cities like Chicago, for example, where you have schools where they have taken children, who would be called disadvantaged when they start off by anybody's standards, put into a rigorous academic setting by teachers who care and love them and devote hours and hours to them and have them very early and quickly in their career reading Shakespeare, writing exams, rigorous discipline, academic training and watch them blossom under that kind of tutelage, careful attention and deep, deep concern for the future of the child who has to go out into a world. That kind of dedicated teacher does not want to see any child enter that adult world and that world of work disadvantaged in any way.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, my question was, which divisions in Manitoba are employing testing? St. James was one that I had heard of. I am glad to hear the minister's additional comments, some of which I agree

with and some of which I think have other circumstances surrounding them which might need to be elaborated on. But which other divisions in Manitoba have had experience of testing, which of them have been testing at the Grade 3 level, and what have been the results?

Mrs. McIntosh: We do not have an inventory of all of the divisions that do testing. We would have to do an inventory. We could get that information. We would have to do an inventory check to do that.

We do know that over half of the divisions in the province, however, have indicated that they would like very much to participate in testing at the high school level, at the division level, like division-wide testing.

Over half of the divisions have said that they would like very much to participate in having some division-wide testing at the secondary level and have indicated their desire to work with us to do that. I do not have the names of all the school divisions here that do testing and we do not believe that there are too many that do it at the Grade 3 level division-wide.

* (1550)

Nonetheless that interest is there for at least more than half of the divisions to work with the province to have standardized testing division-wide in their divisions. I guess the one thing that when you talk about measurable standards, without an external measurable standard the best that the classroom teacher can do in terms of trying to evaluate her students on a comparative level is to apply it against the classroom standard. That is the only standard that the classroom teacher has available to him or her.

In today's world of very mobile children and in later life in the labour force, we have to know whether a division or regional achievement standard would be preferable, would be appropriate to just measure against a classroom, if not to seek solutions to some of those issues I talked about earlier in terms of just what kind of in-depth program can we do to assess just how well Mary does understand the concept of multiplication which means you need to test with problem solving and all of those things.

But to complement local assessments, when you start talking about provincial standards and then you start hearing across the country, ministers of Education start talking about national standards, you ultimately then have a comparable standard that can be measured internationally at universities in other countries, much like the International Baccalaureate program which is a rigorous academic program. It is an isolated one, but it has an international standard.

That international standard is known. It is the same. Whether you are in France, whether you are Germany, whether you are in Canada, you write the same exam. It is a measurable standard. So students graduating from that kind of program, going to university, the university entrance people know immediately against which standard they can assess that student's ability to succeed in any given course at university.

I do not know if that answers a little bit what you are trying to ask.

Ms. Friesen: My concerns are the testing at the Grade 3 level and what can be gained from that and what we already know about testing at Grade 3 level, either nationally, internationally or in Manitoba. So I began with Manitoba, and I wondered if the minister would undertake to provide a list of schools or divisions where standardized testing or comparable testing is undertaken in Manitoba, and what the Manitoba experience has been of those tests. What has been gained, what has been learned, what kind of evaluations have been done formally or informally?

Mrs. McIntosh: Perhaps I did not make myself clear enough or explain it properly in terms of indicating that the divisional tests that do exist, some teachers will have little tests inside the classroom—classroom standard. Other teachers will have access to divisional tests. Those are not the types of tests to which we are referring. We are talking about a provincial test based on Manitoba curriculum and outcomes. So we do not have any available information on that because we have not done it yet.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, the question I am asking is about Grade 3 standardized testing in Manitoba, not provincial testing. The minister said earlier that St.

James-Assiniboia had used division-wide testing, that is a test which offers comparability across schools and classrooms. That is what I am asking for evidence of, experience of in Manitoba at the Grade 3 level. Would the minister undertake to provide a list of divisions which have undertaken that kind of comparable testing across schools and across classrooms, and if there are any indications of their evaluation of such programs, if she could make those available as well.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, what we are looking for is an early report to parents on how their children are doing. So we are looking at a curriculum that is Manitoba set, measured against Manitoba standards. We currently do not have such a thing in existence.

You can have local testing in local schools and you can have local testing in local school divisions, but if you are wanting to use that as a basis to compare against what we are doing, we are doing something different. I am trying to get through to you that local tests, including classroom tests, cannot provide a measurable standard against the provincial curricula, so the whole purpose of testing in terms of trying to assess where the province is cannot be done with just a few groups of schools. So if the member is asking us to write to every division and get samples of all of their tests to provide them for her so that she can make some statement on our provincial curricula testing, I am telling her that it is a different type of testing that we are talking about, and it is not a straight comparison.

What is the comparison, and no matter what the kinds of tests are, what is the comparison is the ability of the student to learn how to be tested and of the teacher to have another tool in the classroom to assist the teacher in furthering the development of the child.

I can send my staff on all kinds of errands that will take them away from their work if the member wishes me to do that, but it will not achieve what I think she is implying she can achieve by making that request.

* (1600)

Ms. Friesen: My question was, I thought, relatively simple. Which schools in Manitoba, which divisions have done testing at the Grade 3 level across a division-

wide basis? The minister believes that testing at the Grade 3 level, as she just said, adds to the ability of the student to learn how to be tested. Now, that is an interesting goal for Grade 3 testing. If that is one of the goals of the minister, what has been the experience at divisional levels in testing at Grade 3 in the students' ability to learn to be tested, for example? That is not the only skill or behaviour, I am sure, that the government would be looking for, and far from asking the minister's staff to be taken away from the duties which the minister would direct them to, what I was asking for, did the minister have that kind of information, and what kind of divisions do testing?

Now this is a government which is proposing to move into an area of quite large-scale testing. We are looking at a line which deals with policy and planning and co-ordination, and my questions are directed at what has been the Manitoba experience of testing at the Grade 3 level. If the minister does not have readily available information on divisions other than St. James—and I gather, although we are not sure of the up-to-date information, that St. James does not necessarily test at Grade 3—my next question would then be: What experience, what policy, what information, what research has gone on to anticipate the programs for the Grade 3 testing that the minister proposes to begin? I am also emphasizing these because these are the first ones to be undertaken.

Mrs. McIntosh: I indicated to the member when she first asked the question, and I have tried to answer it in a number of ways. I will go back to answering it the way I answered it the first time. Maybe I did not say it well enough, but the staff does not have here today the information that she asked for as to which schools in Manitoba do testing. They would have to do an inventory search to acquire that information which, if she wishes me to have them do, I will have them do. But I say to the member as well that that will not provide her with the comparable situation she is looking to do.

Other provinces have testing at Grades 3, 6, 9 and 12. Indeed, her own counterparts in Ontario are looking at, as we are, bringing in testing at 3, 6, 9, and 12. So it is not something that is unusual or something that is an idea that fell out the heavens. Some may say it is

divine inspiration, but I do not think it fell out of the sky. It is time proven. The member is an historian; the member is a professor. The member surely must have some knowledge of how people learn and acquire knowledge. The member must also be aware, even though she has not been a public schoolteacher, must have some awareness of—oh, the member has been a public schoolteacher, pardon me. Well, she did not say it one way or the other.

It is irrelevant, I suppose, because the point that is relevant is that over the span of time of human learning, the past 20 years has seen western civilization children's learning change in terms of the way in which they are taught, the expectations that are given them, the skills with which they complete their schooling, and it has changed. I am not blaming any one person or any one group of people. I am just saying it has changed, and the result of that change is that you now have ministers of Education from coast to coast to coast looking at bringing in measurable standards. You see, for example, British Columbia offering to work on developing curricula with other provinces to try and achieve some sort of national pan-Canadian objective.

Now, it is clear that the party to which the member belongs does not believe in standardized testing of any sort. It is clear. That was obvious. It was obvious in the election. It is obvious by the questioning that testing children for measurable standards across the province is not something that the opposition critics and their party believe in. That is their right and the right of their members and the right of their supporters to support that perspective. In terms of what testing goes on, you know there are reference tests like CTBS and those types of tests, but they are not based on Manitoba curricula.

We get to Assessment and Evaluation in our Estimates and we could maybe bring forward research which we have which is what I think you are really asking for, research and support for the position we are taking for the belief that students, especially when no mark is attached, are emotionally and physically and intellectually able to write tests and would benefit from them even at the Grade 3 level. We do have research. We do have support.

When we get to that line, Assessment and Evaluation, we will be more than pleased to bring forward our research which I think is what you are asking for on this line when you ask, which divisions test at Grade 3 and how do their results compare and all of the other questions you have asked about a generalized statement that I made which was that some divisions do test, in particular one with which I was associated and used as an example the student success rate, which is high.

I cannot do that for all 57 divisions in the province without going back and doing an inventory and asking the staff to survey the divisions and bringing you back the kind of detail that you would like. If that is how you would like to see them spending their time when it does not compare in an apples to apples versus comparison to curricula set by the province and tested by the province—I guess what I find interesting, and the member had very interesting body language and facial expression when I indicated that a good test properly done—I asked the question if a good test properly administered was bad, and the member, with body language and facial gestures and muttered something to her partner beside her, gave me the impression that she did not think there was any such thing as a good test properly administered and refused to answer the question.

I am sorry, we put up with this from you year after year. You are getting back what you give. [interjection] I am answering the question in the detail the member is looking for.

* (1610)

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Chairperson, I think it might help the process of the committee if we could deal with some of the questions raised rather than dealing with body language and what the minister assumes—

Mrs. McIntosh: You should have been here for the earlier conversations, Steve. You are feeding right into what she said.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson, on a point of order.

Mr. Ashton: I am just wondering if the minister could perhaps deal with the issue raised. I think she is getting into other issues. I really believe it may be more helpful to—if the minister will provide the information that is requested, I think that will end the matter. The request has been made. I do not think it is going to be withdrawn. I really do not believe that it is appropriate to get into extensive discussions about body language and what the minister assumes that two members of the committee are saying in their private conversations. We are not going to assume what the minister says in her private conversations or comment on the minister's body language. While we may occasionally refer to that on the spur of the moment in the House, even then I do not think it is all that appropriate.

I would just ask that you ask the minister to come to order and at least deal with the matters raised.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: I want to thank the honourable member for Thompson for his comments. The honourable member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: I would remind the honourable members of the committee that we are on line 1.(c), and I would hope that the committee would be able to stay on line with that. I would like to make the comment that we seem to be in a bit of a logjam over this 1.(c). Is the will of the committee to persist with the line of questioning on line (c), or would we like to move on to another area of questioning and maybe come back to this at a further time?

Is it the will of the committee to continue or to move on?

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I understand that there is a section dealing with assessment later on, and we will be asking some more questions under that. My impression of the questions I was asking were ones which dealt with Manitoba experience of testing at the

Grade 3 level. What I did ask the minister to undertake to provide was a list of the divisions where Grade 3 testing had occurred, and if there were any evaluations of that testing, that that could be provided as well.

I understood from the minister's earlier comments that there were not many divisions in Manitoba who did division-wide testing, but there were some, and so I did not assume that it was an extensive task for the staff to do that.

What I am looking for—I understand the point the minister is making between the kind of Manitoba testing which she is proposing, which the government is proposing and the kind of division-wide testing that may or may not have gone on at the Grade 3 level, but I am interested in what experience Manitoba teachers and parents and school divisions and superintendents have had with division-wide testing and comparability across classrooms and of the ability of Grade 3 children or the levels at which those children can accept and benefit from testing, and so that is where I was going.

I do want to add some comments on some of the comments the minister chose to make about the policy of the party I represent on testing, and I think she made a number of assumptions, which are probably not warranted, and it would be better, I think, if I stuck to our policy and the minister stuck to their policy, and then at least we would have the lines clear.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member for Wolseley, if I just may for the benefit of the committee bring to the awareness of the committee, the minister is not required to answer the question as put forth by the honourable member, and I think we are in a bit of a logjam on this, and I would like the committee to consider whether or not they want to pursue with this line of questioning.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, my staff will phone all of the school divisions and indicate that in Estimates this question has come up. They will get detailed information for you on testing that goes on in Manitoba schools, and I trust that you will not object if any of the other things that we are doing are somewhat delayed while we conduct that survey. We will bring you back that information.

I stress, again, however, for your information that when we talk about in-school testing or in-division testing that we are not talking about the same kind of testing that we are when we start talking about provincial testing or pan-Canadian testing; just so the member knows that difference.

I apologize to the member if I misinterpreted the position that I thought I heard members of her party stating recently, that they opposed testing in schools, and if what I am hearing then is that you do support this type of testing in schools, then it would be good that that impression the public has been corrected for their information. I also want to indicate in light of the line of questioning—because as the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) indicated, I am responding to the questions and to the implications that are obvious in the questions, and in that way then, you fully answer. You answer both the question and the implication in the question which I think is important for the record.

We are not talking about three-hour high pressure examinations, pass/fail, on your whole year's work here. I believe the member knows that, and I would like that to be made part of the record, as well, so that there can be no misinterpretation from the wording of the question that there is anything other than what we really are intent on doing here with other educators across the nation.

But we will get that information for you, even though it is not directly relevant in the way that I think you may feel it will be.

Ms. Friesen: I would like to ask the minister about some issues of social studies testing at the Grade 3 level, which the minister's plan does intend to proceed with, I think. Maybe, first of all, we should say, does the minister intend to proceed with social studies testing at the Grade 3 level?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister indicate when that testing will begin, and will there be pilot testing beforehand?

Mrs. McIntosh: Pilot test in June of '97.

Ms. Friesen: I understand that this will be curriculum related. Now, will this be a new curriculum to be brought in through, as I think the former minister used to say, the Western Canadian Protocol, or will this be the existing curriculum that will be tested?

Mrs. McIntosh: We intend to have the curricula ready for that test. If our involvement with Western Canadian Protocol has developmental time lines change, then that might hold it up somewhat, but at this present time, we anticipate that with the new curricula, that will be our target date for the initial pilot.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister just elaborate on the time lines for that. When will the curricula be available to teachers? Which fall will it be brought into the classroom, and when will the testing begin?

Mrs. McIntosh: Because we are increasingly dovetailing all our efforts with both the Council of Ministers of Education and the Western Canadian Protocol, you know, we may find that we need to adjust the time line slightly, but at the present time, we are anticipating that we will be ready for June '97, and, of course, we will have the curricula ready well in advance of doing any assessment on it.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, for the curriculum to be in schools for an examination in June '97, we would have to be looking at, presumably, the very latest, fall '96.

Mrs. McIntosh: That is correct.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, so essentially, a year from now, the curriculum will be available to be introduced into Manitoba schools.

Could the minister tell me, does the minister have any sense yet of whether there will be a marked difference between the new curriculum and the existing curriculum? Are we looking at dramatic changes, or is it simply modification?

* (1620)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the one caveat I put on the statement the member made just before she

asked this question, in terms of the exact date that we are going to begin, I have indicated what our expectation is, but I keep the caveat that depending on our work with the Western Protocol we may need to alter that time line somewhat.

In terms of the answer to the question she has just put forward, we will be meeting again in September. As you know, the Council of Ministers meet in September. The working group has been carrying on with its efforts. We will be working in collaboration with the Western Protocol, and inasmuch as we have not yet heard back from the working group, I cannot give her a definitive, exact answer on what the content of the curriculum will end up being. I do know, and I can tell you that we are looking at Canadian content, Canadian history, increased rigour, higher standards of excellence both in content and in terms of the understanding of Canada as a nation, its people, geography, that type of thing.

The specifics, if it ends up being a Western Protocol, of course, will be arrived at through consensus with the other western provinces. As you know, British Columbia has been one that is keenly interested in this social studies aspect, science, history, that type of thing. We have a variety of steps we will have to go through before curriculum is ready, and, of course, you have the curriculum development team which is at work right now and that is the working group. They are doing research and all of those things that need to be done, working with exemplary classroom teachers, master teachers, because we feel they are a great wealth of experience. The master teacher is a good ingredient in all of this preparation of curricula, scholars, historians, et cetera.

Then they will have review panels who will be selected representatives from educational partners who will be reviewing draft curricula and providing feedback on that. You will have field validation. You will have selected classroom teachers who field-test curricula in classrooms so that necessary improvements can be made based on their input.

You know that when we ask for input and people suggest constructive, positive change, we are most willing to accept and appreciative of constructive,

positive feedback, much like you just saw when we adjusted some of the criteria for advisory councils with schools. People were good enough to give us feedback. Some of that feedback made good sense to us, and where it made good sense to us we were willing to accept it and act upon those good recommendations that came from people who were in the field.

We will continue to do that and that field validation will be an important component. We do not just say we listen and react to what people give us. We have proven it by being willing to make adjustments, for example, to advisory councils. We do not just give verbal commitments. We actually do listen, and then we will have authorized use to all teachers of that subject area in all schools where that curriculum will be taught.

Then, of course, we will continue to update because no curricula should be static or inflexible. It should be constantly—particularly in science and history, particularly in the social studies which are dynamic and living and breathing subject matters. They do not remain static, inflexible, unchanging. There is no status quo. Some might like to impose a status quo, in terms of curriculum development, on dynamic and ever-evolving subject areas such as history and science, but we certainly do not, nor do our other counterparts in education in the other provinces. So I do not know if that answers—we will be doing standards tests for technical committees and learning resource selection committees and those types of things as we go through. There is a wide variety of activity taking place in each of those different levels that have to be gone through to properly develop curricula. The member maybe has some knowledge of curricula development and could recognize those steps that I have just identified.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, the minister talked about the new Grade 3 curriculum as dealing with Canada as a nation, and I wonder if that is not a rather dramatic change. The Grade 3 students generally are spoken of as dealing with the community, that the level of recognition that they have of social institutions is at that level of neighbourhood and community. So rather than perhaps me misunderstanding the minister, was she perhaps thinking of higher levels rather than the Grade 3 curriculum?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to clarify for the member my comments in that regard.

Of course, at the elementary or primary school level, there are various degrees in which you help children learn about the world around them, and when I say Canada and Canadian history I do not mean that at that level, you are going to sit down and write and have a heavy text on the way to discourse on Canada and its peoples and its geography and all of those things in that kind of detail.

But the member talks about community and the world around. The immediate world around the elementary school child, the primary school child in particular, takes place in the context of a setting. So you live in a community here and there are certain things happening in your community here which would be vastly different from things happening in a community say in Iran, and, you know, just the innate appreciation for the types of things that can happen in Canadian communities is what I was meaning. I realized when I started talking about history and I started thinking ahead to what I visualize a student be ultimately graduating with out of Canadian schools, I do not mean that would apply or that is all going to be taught in Grade 3. But looking ahead, you build a foundation for that learning to come.

Ms. Friesen: The direction of my concerns are about the changes that are going to be required of teachers and students in a new curriculum. So my original question dealt with, are there going to be dramatic changes in the curriculum or will it be similar to the kinds of ideas and concepts that have been taught in the past? I gather the minister does recognize the level of neighbourhood and community as the issues which are dealt with at that level. But I wonder, given that, what goals the government has. What is it actually testing when it looks to test understanding of community?

Mrs. McIntosh: I am sorry, could the member repeat that question, please?

Ms. Friesen: I am concerned about what it is the government anticipates it will learn and be able to communicate to parents and to trustees and

superintendents about the level of understanding of community at the Grade 3 level?

It is true that other jurisdictions across the country are looking at diagnostic tests, for example as Ontario is and I believe as British Columbia may do in reading, but the idea of testing social studies at the Grade 3 level particularly in a province where as the minister in a way has indicated just now there are enormous differences in experience between, say Pukatawagan, Point Douglas and south St. Vital in this concept of neighbourhood and community, I am wondering what it is the government is seeking to learn and to communicate to parents and trustees with this kind of testing.

* (1630)

Mrs. McIntosh: You know, I just want to start off by saying that the member and I will not be sitting here today writing the curricula for Grade 3 history and social studies, but in answer to her question, sort of almost an axiomatic answer, I think it is self-evident but I will go through it, anyhow.

Are you looking for outcomes? If a student is looking at neighbourhood, to use the example that the member has brought forward, clearly someone from Pukatawagan is going to have a different experience than someone from St. Vital—clearly, obviously. Both of those experiences will be vastly different from someone in Ethiopia, or Rawanda, or Iran, or something like that.

The member says maybe. Well, okay, so maybe the life experience in Pakatawagan is identical to a life experience of someone on the Ethiopian desert, I do not know. To me there will always be some variation. There will always be some slight difference between communities, and there would always be some slight difference between communities in Canada and communities in totalitarian countries of other dictatorships or other regimes.

However, let me say that maybe I am alone in that view, that maybe I do not think that communities in Canada would have some little element about them that would distinguish them from communities in other

places in the world, and in that, I may be in grievous error. But a student talking about his or her community in terms of an outcome should be able to articulate the concept of community, should be able to indicate the meaning of a community, in terms of the interaction of peoples, the needs that are met, the give and take of trade, commerce, social interaction, law and order, and, hopefully, might be able even to distinguish the difference between his community or her community and a community that is a neighbouring community.

I mean, I could go on and on and on, but I do not think that you want me to because the member for Thompson made it very clear that I should keep my answers very, very devoid of that kind of detail. So we will be looking for outcomes to show understanding, and then we will be looking to measure those outcomes against a standard. I know, regardless of what the member says, that she and the members of her party have great difficulty with the measuring of standards. It was said over and over; during the recent election, it has been implied over and over. In the questions that have come today, and, I am sorry, but we just do not have a problem with measurable standards. On that, maybe we will just have to agree to disagree.

We think that having measurable standards on a wide basis, where you examine a student's knowledge of outcomes, we would look at the outcomes, and we can make a comparison of those outcomes in any one particular area against another area. We do not think that that is a bad thing. We think that, ultimately, that has great benefit to students who have to go out into a world where they are told by employers, if you want to work for me, you had better measure up. If we send them out ill equipped to measure up, we do them no favours.

We come back, everything we do—we talk about our four foundation skill areas, and, at the risk of repeating myself and alienating forever the good will of the member for Thompson, I will say again—I am repeating myself—literacy and communication, problem solving, human relations, technology, the four foundations for the new millennium for our students to go out and compete with the world and not be seen where they are right now, on the international scale, in terms of standards.

Ms. Friesen: I would reiterate, as I did before, I think it would be more straightforward and more helpful for the record if the minister stuck with her government's policy, and I doubt, with approaches to testing rather than having, perhaps, misleading issues dealt with by the minister.

I wanted to ask the minister about the curriculum development team that she says is in place now. How does this connect to the Western Protocol? Is Manitoba the lead province in developing the social studies curriculum? I did read the Western Protocol, and I could not see any mention in the copy I had of social studies curriculum.

Mrs. McIntosh: With all respect to the member, we can carry on in this vein if she wishes, but she is really off target in terms of being on the correct line in the Estimates book. I know there is a habit of jumping back and forth all over, but it, I think, would be helpful if we could follow the sequence of order in the book. We would get to all of these in the proper line and deal with the lines we are supposed to be dealing with today.

Ms. Friesen: I can understand that the minister would want to have her staff with her at the right line.

Mrs. McIntosh: I have the staff here that I need. Carolyn Loeppky is here and she can answer these questions.

I am just saying that I also have staff here that I do not want to have to bring back another time because you are not going on their line. I do have staff sitting there, and this happens every Estimates and I think it is time it got put on the record, that staff are brought down, we go through the books supposedly in sequence but because the member consistently goes out of sequence, staff has to come down all the time.

We have work to do up there, and I do not appreciate having to have them sit there all afternoon in case we decide to go off topic like we normally do.

So I have the staff here that can answer your questions, but if we can deal with the lines that are appropriate for now, then maybe some staff would be

able to be freed and able to carry on with their very important work servicing the students of Manitoba rather than sitting, X number of them, in a hot room in case they happen to get a question that is off topic.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: I would remind the committee that we are going line by line and that, as requested by the rules, I would hope that we would be able to stay in line with the Estimates book, line 1(c) Planning and Policy Co-ordination, unless there is some other will of the committee that would like to alter that line-by-line process. Is it the will of the committee to go line by line?

Ms. Friesen: It is my desire to go line by line. This is however, a Planning and Policy Co-ordination line and it does, unfortunately, of necessity, involve a wide range of activities.

I am glad to hear that the appropriate people are here to answer the questions. This is the time that we do have to discuss departmental issues. It is not an excessively long time for a department which is of great importance and I appreciate the staff being here. I think that this has been dealt with in every department on a number of occasions.

Could I ask on this particular line whether the curriculum development team, which is what I was just asking about, has contracts that come under this line?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, and I just want to clarify, because I do hate to have inaccuracies on the record, I would just like to clarify in response to the member's introductory statement here that she was off the line. It is one thing to talk about why, which is appropriate for this line; it is quite another to get into the details of the program, which is not appropriate for that line.

So I would just like to correct the record because it is not nice to have things incorrect on the record even though they are well intentioned and may be genuinely, honestly and sincerely misunderstood by the member. I would indicate that the curriculum development is being done by the staff and teachers who have been gratefully freed by the divisions to join our team.

Ms. Friesen: My questions over the last few times have been related to curriculum development, and the minister has put on the record the method by which the curriculum development teams are going about, over the next two years, putting into place the social studies curriculum. So I assume that it is appropriate to ask about the curriculum development teams on this line since those who are under contract are on this line.

I am glad to have on the record the method of procedure. I wonder if we could just get the connection with the Western Canadian Protocol. I did ask, and again, in reference to this line, this is the section of the department which looks at interprovincial issues, and I assume this is the area where we should be asking about the Western Canadian Protocol.

So those two parts of my question, the curriculum development teams and the Western Canadian Protocol and the method of the development of curriculum, I genuinely believed were part of this particular line.

Mrs. McIntosh: Just once again, just to start off by correcting the little error, curriculum development, the asking of the details of programs, comes under school divisions program, and that is school divisions program questioning, not the area under the line that we are currently on. I do not mind. We will answer the question, but let us make it clear that you are off topic.

Nonetheless, here is the answer to your question. Under school division program, which is what you are asking, we can talk about, actually, School Program division, pardon me. You can talk about the curricula frameworks initiative being part of a broader six-year education renewal initiative, which has a purpose to develop a vision of kindergarten to Senior 4 curricula for use in Manitoba classrooms.

That defines provincial expectations, provincial outcomes, standards, student evaluations, requirements for English, Français, the French Immersion programs, and the initial step is in the frameworks initiative, which is the development of common student learning outcomes. It is occurring in collaboration with other provincial education jurisdictions under the Western Canadian Protocol for collaboration in basic education in K to Senior 4.

We have the K to Senior 4 mathematics curricula frameworks, which has a Western Protocol status right now. Kindergarten to Senior 1, the general and specific outcomes and illustrative examples are drafted. Senior 2 to Senior 4, the general outcomes are drafted. The Manitoba status for those particular K to S4 mathematics curricula frameworks outcomes are under review here locally by Manitoba. The 3, 6, Senior 1 and Senior 4, the old 9 and 12, standards development are scheduled for soon. They are underway.

We have English arts curriculum frameworks. Manitoba is the lead province there for the western English language arts program, which was initiated in January of this year, '95.

The teacher Curriculum Frameworks development team for outcomes will begin writing outcomes right about now and should have a draft ready by the fall of '95.

The Manitoba ELA Curriculum Development has been aligned with the work of the western consortium, so there is dovetailing there.

The science, kindergarten to Senior 4 curriculum frameworks, science K-12 is the first curriculum area identified for the pan-Canadian collaborators. That is one they have all agreed to and that has been agreed to already.

Social studies, K to Senior 4 curriculum frameworks, the Yukon Territory has agreed recently to lead a western social studies project.

It is interesting, I mentioned the Yukon Territory agreeing to play a lead role there, and I refer again to the fact that this is the first time in history we have all 10 provinces and both territories coming to consensus on major educational reform and renewal, something unparalleled in the history of this nation, a very exciting, thrilling enterprise that governments of all stripes, New Democrats, Liberals, Conservatives are all opting into, are all eager to be participants in. I am hoping that right across the nation, governments, which is every government, will get the support of the opposition parties in their provinces to carry on these major works on behalf of Canadian students.

I should indicate as well that our frameworks are developed collaboratively, and we do not out source them. These are true partnerships.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, my questioning was proceeding along the line of the government's new policy, and we are on the line of Planning and Policy Co-ordination. It was the new policy of testing at the Grade 3 level which some people have some concerns and some enquiries about. That is where I have been proceeding from. We talked about the math curriculum, and then I went on to look at when the social studies curriculum would be introduced and how it was being developed and what the timing was for the relationship between the curriculum and the testing upon which it would be based.

My last question dealt with the social studies curriculum and its relationship to the western Canada protocol. I am still not sure of the answer on that one. The Yukon, I gather, is developing the social studies curriculum. Will it be the Yukon, or will it be the Yukon and Manitoba, or will it be Manitoba alone which develops the curriculum which will be the basis for the first round of testing possibly in '97, give or take some adjustments?

*(1650)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the member has asked, will the Yukon write the curricula. I think maybe the answer is clear. When you talk about a collaboration—I do not have the definition here—but it usually means you do something together as opposed to alone. What you have when you have Yukon taking the lead is you have the Yukon calling the meetings, preparing the agenda, taking the minutes, compiling the reports. Collaborative means that you do something in collaboration with somebody, you do not do it alone.

We, in Manitoba, are developing our own outcomes, our own curricula and at the same time working in collaboration and co-operation with the Western Protocol, the other provinces and the territories. In the final analysis what it will all boil down to is this: We will end up with a curricula available that has been put together in a co-operative fashion by the people in the West. If Manitoba finds that it fits our own desires, our

own curricula standards, then we will sign the agreement and we will use the joint curriculum. We certainly are not going to be having something that does not meet our needs, and we are confident that by working together, all of us sharing our expertise, that we will have something that is eminently and mutually agreeable.

It is like anything. You do not have change just for the sake of change. You do not agree to something before you see the final—until I see a final curriculum in front of me, I cannot tell you for certain that we will be having a Western Protocol. I believe we will.

I do not know if that answers your question or not. If not, I would be pleased to try to answer further on your next question.

Ms. Friesen: Earlier on this line of questioning, Mr. Chairman, the minister spoke of the process of curriculum development in Manitoba under the new policy with draft curriculums, review panels, field evaluation, et cetera. I am wondering at what point the parents, for example, will be able to have an opportunity of examining the curriculum.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, as indicated before, I think the member may recall me going down and outlining the various steps that will be taken in the development of new material for the classroom. You saw in there an indication of an opportunity for feedback. That is the point at which, in answer to your question, people will have opportunity to react.

There are a number of official groups around such as the Association of Parent Councils, which is the former home and schools. The member may know they have changed their name. They, incidentally, just wholeheartedly and absolutely endorse all of the steps and measures that we are taking here, and that is very encouraging to see parents so supportive of our thrusts, particularly of the official organizations. That type of organization composed of parents could be asked to participate in providing feedback to decision makers on the new material, as well.

The member knows this very well. Some teachers are parents and some of the teachers working on this

curriculum are indeed parents, so they have a perspective that they can add. Of course, this we know because this was the point of the whole other subject that we talked about in terms of the advisory councils, where we said some teachers are parents and included them at that level, and here again, the double hat can be very useful and helpful.

So, in answer to your question, as I indicated when I answered the question originally, that is the point at which we would obtain feedback from those interested in seeing a curriculum that is to their liking.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, I am glad to see that parents will have the opportunity to examine the curriculum and the materials and to offer some feedback, but I understand the minister made reference, for example, to the former Home and School Federation. I understand they do not represent the majority of schools, they represent some schools.

Does the minister have any plans in this policy and planning co-ordination group to involve parents on a broader basis or a more systematic basis, perhaps?

Mrs. McIntosh: We have parents represented on our interorganizational committee for the big ideas. We intend to bring parents in wherever we possibly can, recognizing the value of their input and recognizing as well our particular thrust.

I am pleased to hear the member asking the question because we believe in allowing parents to have input into their children's education. I mean that is fundamental to the type of process we envision, and the opposition in the past has been highly critical of that, saying that certain members of the opposition have indicated concern that perhaps plain parents may not have the depth of knowledge say that a trained educator would, for example. So I am very pleased with the question because we have great faith in parents and we trust their ability to offer opinion.

That comment, of course, has been made quite clearly and plainly during the election by—I am quoting from, I could probably get the quote if you are interested in it, which you may not be if I get it, but we would involve parents wherever we possibly can,

particularly in subjects where we could be certain they would have some real clear ability to comment—social studies, history, geography, those types of things. If we are getting into doing calculus or something of that nature, we may find that our ability to include all parents could be somewhat limited because not all would be versed, say, in a higher mathematical function ability. But wherever we can use them, we would like to use them. Their input is valued. We believe parents have a stake in their students' education. We believe that in a way that no government before us has ever done, that parents have a right to be involved in a meaningful way in the education of their children.

So to answer your question, we will be bringing them in in other ways than just through the Association of Parent Councils.

* (1700)

Ms. Friesen: I would be interested in the minister providing the examples and quotations from opposition members who have said that parents are not qualified and should not be involved in their children's education. I find that very unusual, and I would like to hear the quote.

Mrs. McIntosh: For clarification, I am talking about candidates in the election, not those who got elected to opposition but those who were running for the party that is now in opposition. I will provide those to you.

Ms. Friesen: I look forward to that.

I want to ask about some of the professional fees in this appropriation. I notice that there is a change from 71.5 to 43.7. I wonder if the minister could give us an idea of what the professional fees were used for last time, why the decline this year and what is anticipated they will be used for this year.

Mrs. McIntosh: That is a result of the ending of the Boundaries Review—not quite over yet, but of that particular piece of work. It is winding down.

Ms. Friesen: Is the minister saying that that 71.5 was entirely for the Boundaries Review, and if that is so, how—no, we will stop there.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, all of the items under that particular section called Other Expenditures are connected with the Boundaries Review. We do have a breakdown, if you would like it, of the total budget for that. I will provide you with this particular document which has the variance on it which I think might be helpful for you.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: For the committee record, the Planning and Policy Co-ordination description of expenditure variances that the minister is tabling.

Ms. Friesen: While the Clerk is xeroxing that, I am not sure if the variance is what I was asking. I was asking, first of all, what was that 71.5 spent on in 1994?

Mrs. McIntosh: Those are the professional fees that were expended last year and we expect to spend less this year.

Ms. Friesen: What was the nature of those professional fees?

Mrs. McIntosh: That included the Glenn Nicholls report, commissioner's fees for the school boundaries, Dr. Tim Ball on the geographical make-up of the province, Dr. Richard Rounds from Brandon University regarding the effects on rural school divisions, and that is it.

Ms. Friesen: So all of that \$71.5 was related to reports commissioned by the Boundaries Commission and the professional fees.

Was there money in a previous year, '93-94, that was allocated to preparations or any allocation to the Boundaries Commission?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, in '93-94, there was approximately \$250,000 spent and in '94-95, approximately \$370,000 spent. This year we expect to spend \$40,000, \$43,000 to be exact.

Ms. Friesen: Just for clarification, Mr. Chairman, the minister said that in '94-95, \$370,000 was spent, but in the estimated expenditure it is only estimated at \$71.5.

Mrs. McIntosh: That is just the professional fees portion. The 300 that I gave you includes everything: the indemnities, parking, meetings, travel, printing, advertising, secretarial support, commission support, hearings, all of those items. There are others as well but those types of items. We can provide you with a breakdown of the budget if you would like. We do have one here, but it has got scribbling all over it. So we will get a clean copy and bring it in to tomorrow's Estimates and give it to you. I think that will give you the breakdown you are looking for.

Ms. Friesen: Yes, I would be interested in that, but I am also interested in where I would normally look to find that kind of material in Estimates. If it is not on this line, where would it be for approval?

* (1710)

Mrs. McIntosh: Staff advises me that normally this type of thing would not be found under a category of its own because it is not an ongoing commission. So, because it is sort of a temporary thing that only occurs once—maybe once or twice, but it is not an ongoing thing, then it is budgeted for out of another allocation. So the line you see here in the book is the only line that you will see. It comes under a different heading because it is placed into a category. Limited life projects is the terminology.

There probably would not be a category under which you could find this normally, but we will give you the complete breakdown of that budget for your benefit. There is not a place. It would normally be identified though in the—just one other clarification. Staff advises that those types of items are—because they are limited life projects, it is indicated by type of expenditure rather than by project.

Ms. Friesen: These limited life projects, are they listed by department? I mean in what manner is a sum granted to Her Majesty for a limited life project?

Mrs. McIntosh: Normally, government will be determined through cabinet. If they have something like a boundaries commission, for example, they would determine which appropriation they were going to take those funds out of, because you know you will

normally look within your department to the funds that you have, and then you place it where you feel you can fund it from. So then it will show up in that spot for that, because there are sort of like one-time-only expenses. That is normally the way it is done.

Ms. Friesen: In 1994-95, \$370,000 was spent. Could the minister tell me, here under Education line 16.1(c) we have \$71,000 of that, 71.5, where was the rest? Is it in one allocation or is it in several? Is there a direction, a chart anywhere in the beginnings of some Estimates processes which tells you how to find those other amounts?

Mrs. McIntosh: I hope I have understood what you are looking for properly here. Because there is no category that says Boundaries Commission, for example, they will take each of the things that pertained to the Boundaries Commission and itemize them, professional fees being one example that we talked about earlier. They will put down professional fees, and those are professional fees that were paid out to people whose services were used. I guess the simple answer is that, because it is not broken down under Boundaries Commission, you would have to ask where the Boundaries Commission stuff showed up, and then we would direct you to professional fees, equipment rental, computer, that type of thing.

It is definitely not in the user-friendly category, like we talked about at the beginning, and I can understand that would be a source of some frustration. If you did not know to ask about the Boundaries Review you would not see it showing. That is maybe—[interjection] Yes, the total expenses are reflected in the whole thing—right—printing, equipment rental, et cetera, but you do not know necessarily that that is Boundaries Review unless you ask. You have asked a good question there.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us what is anticipated to be expended on the Boundaries Commission this year?

Mrs. McIntosh: We anticipate it to be in the neighbourhood of \$40,000, and that would be mostly for the people, like the services by the commissioners, et cetera.

Ms. Friesen: Does the minister anticipate a further report to the public, or will it be a report to the minister?

Mrs. McIntosh: The report, when it comes back from the Boundaries Commission, after they have put in all of their adjustments, will come to the minister.

Ms. Friesen: Does that budget of \$40,000 for this year—the minister indicated it was generally directed at support for the individuals. Is it budgeted in that \$40,000 for any reports, publication, communication?

Mrs. McIntosh: Sorry, I think you asked—because I was listening over here, I was not picking up completely what you said. You were asking if that report would go some place else besides to the minister?

Ms. Friesen: No, what I was asking for was just a clarification of that \$40,000 that will be expended on the commission this year, whether that includes any appropriation or estimate of expenditure upon publication of a report?

Mrs. McIntosh: No.

* (1720)

Ms. Friesen: I am still looking at 16.1(c) and looking at the increase under Equipment from \$36,900 to \$62,600. I wonder, could the minister explain the implications of that?

Mrs. McIntosh: This particular one is not directly related to the Boundaries Review, ergo, your earlier question was well put. With the move to 1181 Portage Avenue the office rental increased by \$29,000 to a total of \$57,000. That is the variance you can see there, the \$25,700, but it is not Boundaries Review related.

Ms. Friesen: That expansion to 1181 Portage—this is across the street from the Fletcher Building—has this resulted in an expansion of office space, accommodation of additional personnel, or is this simply the exchange of one set of space for another set of space?

Mrs. McIntosh: When the lease at 1200 Portage, which is just right across the street—actually 1181 is the Robert Fletcher Building—the lease at 1200 Portage, when it was cancelled, resulted in staff being consolidated in the Robert Fletcher Building at 1181 and also at 1970 Ness Avenue in the old Deer Lodge School. That is what happened, there are two spaces, one for two.

Ms. Friesen: What was the reason for cancelling the 1200 Portage space?

Mrs. McIntosh: We have across government been rationalizing, consolidating space to make better use of space and to make more cost-effective use of space. In our department, the Department of Education, over the last two years we have been trying to centralize staff in overall space. We try to reduce or try to get a decrease in our overall space requirements, and we have done that.

In fact, we have saved to date \$296,700 in our space accommodation. That is good because not only in some cases are we ending up with more appropriate use of space and better space in some instances, but we have also been able to redirect those savings toward information technology renewal initiatives throughout the department, and would be able to form the major portion of the Management Information Services budget of those increases in that subappropriation budget under 16-1F.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Can the minister inform us, the Ness Avenue building is that a government property or are you leasing it from the St. James School Division, and what are the incurred costs?

Mrs. McIntosh: It is owned by the St. James-Assiniboia School Division and leased by the provincial government.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister share with us at what rate? How much is it to lease out that building?

Mrs. McIntosh: Staff is checking to see if we have that. That would really come under the Minister of

Government Services' (Mr. Pallister) Estimates, but we may have it here and if we do we will provide it to you.

Ms. Mihychuk: Just to follow up on the facilities, the Robert Fletcher Building is a government property, I understand. I understand that there are other private organizations that have now moved into the Robert Fletcher. Was consideration given to amalgamating the Department of Education in that building to a greater degree to even defer greater costs? Leasing would not be required therefore in that building.

Mrs. McIntosh: The member asks a very good question and the staff did indeed take a look at that concept that you have identified, but found that, for a variety of reasons, they just did not have the amount of space that they would require.

They did, however, have some extra space and so it has been given for use to some organizations. They have given some of that space without rent being charged to the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, to the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, to the Manitoba Physical Education Teachers Association liaison officer and to Child Find Manitoba. They felt that was a good use of the space because it was extraneous to their needs and they could not consolidate all their requirements in that area, so that is how they used up the empty space that is there.

We do have the information, while you are still at your mike there, on 1970 Ness. It is \$90 a square metre—this is for the rental—for a total cost of \$231,000. That is per annum that it costs to rent that facility for the province.

Ms. Mihychuk: I am new to this, so I am going to ask the minister's indulgence and perhaps explain what the—under the Supplies and Services line, Equipment Rental and Maintenance—that has gone up substantially from \$36,900 to \$62,600. Is that related to this, or what is that increase related to?

* (1730)

Mrs. McIntosh: This relates back to an earlier question when we talked about trying to consolidate staffing functions and you asked the question, could we

all fit into 1181. No, but they could all fit into 1200. I think it was 1200, was it not? Oh, you moved to 1181, the other way around. Okay. That meant they could get in and have all the staff together. The other place they had to—they were sharing space for starters, but as you see, this cost more to move over here in this particular one.

I mentioned earlier that we had saved this couple of hundred thousand dollars on these exercises, and overall that is what we have saved, but within that overall saving we have little fluctuations because we had a double-goal as a department, and all government branches are trying to do this type of thing to try to find an improved quality of space more appropriate to the usage of the staff needs while effecting an overall savings. So in this one the goal was improved space for staff requirements. It cost us a little more but with the other changes that went on, the overall cost was down.

The other part of this whole jigsaw puzzle of space is a kind of domino effect as groups of people moved out of, say, 1200, that meant there came a point when if the building was totally empty then the Government Services would no longer have to pick up the tab for it, so then you have another incentive for seeking new space which is to complete that overall empty building for Government Services expenditure reductions. So there are all kinds of pieces to the jigsaw puzzle, and once you start moving in and out you can create a domino effect.

Overall, these moves the staff have made have been really advantageous to the working conditions and certainly have saved us money that we have been able to redirect to areas where we were needing some extra funding.

I hope that answers your question all right.

Ms. Friesen: In the process by which the department moved part of its staff to Ness, was there a tender process for that building?

(Mrs. Shirley Render, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mrs. McIntosh: Just as an aside, we have named, so to speak, the space rationalization we are doing across government, and we call it an accommodation cost recovery, ACR, and so what we are trying to do is—the name is probably self-evident, the accommodation cost recovery.

Regarding the facility at 1970 Ness, we do not know if there was a tender on it currently, because that facility is—okay. There were some renovations which were likely tendered, but the government of Manitoba has had possession of that school for 15, 16, 17 years, so it dates back a long time. The province has been renting it for close to 28 years, so anything that has been done, if there were renovations that needed doing inside, we are pretty certain that those would have been tendered out, but I do not have the information here. On the building itself, it is a long time ago. I do not know in the beginning how the specific details of those negotiations went.

* (1740)

Ms. Friesen: From 1994 to 1995, on the Communications line, there is a drop from 44 to 20. Could the minister explain, first of all, what the 44 was for in Communications? Was that for the production of booklets on the new policy?

(Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mrs. McIntosh: To make a long story short, it is basically a decrease associated with the Boundaries Review and Distance Education and all of those things that are linked up in terms of looking at divisions and their structure and on the delivery of service within them. The variance there on the sheet that I have here shows \$23,000. Advertising would be included in that, printing, that type of thing.

Ms. Friesen: The \$20,000 that is anticipated for this year, what will that be spent on, since the minister said earlier, she was not anticipating any printing costs for the Boundaries Review.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, in that cost we would see telephones, and they are expecting that there would be a fair amount of long distance telephone calling

taking place. Within that, fax-fax as in communication—and you will see some Boundary Review ads in the newspapers. If they are going to make any adjustments to their recommendations, they might need then to reprint their report to send it to government with adjustments or changes that they might make as a result of listening to the people. We are estimating that up to 20,000 could get expended in this way. It may not, but we do not want them to be feeling they cannot reach out and communicate if they need to.

Ms. Friesen: Where does one find in the Estimates of the department the communication costs for the parent booklets, for example, the one that the minister demonstrated yesterday, made reference to yesterday? Do those come under Planning and Policy Co-ordination or are those found elsewhere?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, 16.2 (b) School Programs, Program Development, education reform, that would be the area in which we would find those particular items. We can go through them then.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, is that the same location for the various blueprint documents?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes.

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to ask the minister about the relationships from a policy perspective with Statistics Canada. There have been a number of dissatisfactions expressed across the country about the nature of Statistics Canada reporting and the way in which statistics have been collected.

I wonder if the minister could give us a sense of what the Manitoba input on that has been and what kind of relationship she anticipates with Statistics Canada in the future. Will there be any changes from a Manitoba perspective?

Mrs. McIntosh: I thank the staff for the interesting discussion we have just had and apologize for the pause here.

We are aware of fluctuations that cause dissatisfaction. As you know, I indicated and read into the record last night that deputy Carlyle is chair of the

Statistics Council. They have been working very hard, CESC, to address and correct some of these fluctuations that are causing frustration.

I believe I have written, or I am in the process of writing, myself, on terms of the issue. If I have not signed it, it will be signed. But we hope that technology will help make data more timely, more accurate, more up to date, more reflective of the real situation out there. Provinces are developing standard data definitions, and that should enhance comparability efforts. So when they are comparing, they have some definitions that are accurate and make sense, and of course it would make work for the statistics people easier.

We need to I think have Stats Canada more streamlined, more focused. We are aware of the problem and are doing all that we can in every way to make sure that we all get to rely upon really up-to-date correct data that people have a comfort level with when they are discussing it because they know they are talking about something meaningful and significant without any doubt.

Ms. Friesen: What are the implications for Manitoba of the standardizing of data across provinces? How will Manitoba collect data differently? What kinds of different classifications is it likely to involve?

What I am getting at is, is this standardization going to mean changes for the way in which we have collected numbers and interpreted them?

* (1750)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, it is a good question because people always look to statistics to try to monitor or make decisions based upon what is out there.

We tend to manage important issues, with labour force, I think, one area that would be of particular interest particularly talking about education. Under Training and Advanced Education, we will have post-secondary staff here who might be able to give us some good information on that under the section, labour market analysis.

I guess, in the meantime, I could just make a generic statement that, along with so many other areas of government, this is another area where we think it is really important to have a Pan-Canadian or a national effort to ensure that data that flows back and forth interprovincially and interjurisdictionally is relevant and accurate so that you are comparing apples to apples from province to province, et cetera.

New technologies enable us to trace these more accurately and more swiftly, instantaneously, in fact, across country on some of these. The communications and the technology are there, and with the groups working on ensuring that the accuracy and the relevancy is there, we are optimistic that we will see an enhanced and improved comfort level surrounding statistics and data that are made available. We may wish, when we have the post-secondary people here, to delve into that a little more closely because I do not have the in-depth answers at the current time with respect to the labour market specifically—not everything. So we will not have that.

Ms. Friesen: The deputy minister, who sits on that council, is here, and whereas I am interested in the labour force statistics, I am also interested in some of the difficulties that provinces have had over the years in this comparability.

The question I was asking was, does the minister, through her representative on that council, see any difference in the way educational statistics will be collected in Manitoba? Are we going to be asking different questions that we have not asked before? Are we going to be collecting more data? Are we going to be collecting it at much deeper levels? What are the implications of change for the way Manitoba has done things in the past?

Mrs. McIntosh: I just want to clarify something in terms of the deputy who co-chairs, deputy Carlyle co-chairs the CESC protocol between CMEC and StatsCan, but his task is a very specific one. I do not want to mislead you to think that he speaks for the province on StatsCan matters. It is a specific educational statistical authority that he has to speak, and we call it the Pan-Canadian education indicators project.

But on those things in terms of your question, will we change the way in which we are asking questions to solicit data that becomes then part of a statistical base, I cannot give you a direct answer on that except to say we will be looking for these types of things.

If that is not what we are doing right now, then those are the types of things I will be looking for us to do, that they be timely, that you do not get them five months later or something, that they have some relevance to a moment in time, that they be accurate and that they be consistently accurate, so that that comfort level I mentioned earlier is there, and you know you can count on a sure, accurate figure, and that they be relevant, that you have a piece of data that has meaning.

It does not do any good to know how many schools are painted mauve, for example. I mean, who cares? So we need relevant data, and capable of being used—and this, I think, is an important one—in an inter-connected way, such as used to articulate across areas, like post-secondary and kindergarten to Senior 4, so that they can have that interconnection and that you do not have to go out and repeat the gathering of a whole series of data because you need to factor in one new component.

Those are the kinds of things, and very little new information will be requested of schools and divisions because StatsCan has the data. That is as a result of the CESC.

What we do need is a frame to put it in to use, and there is, again, in the little magazine, Liaison, Council of Ministers of Education Canada, the little pamphlet, it talks about the Pan-Canadian education indicators program, which talks about this initiative of the CEMC and StatsCan.

So I do not know exactly how the gathering will change or if it will change, but those are the types of things that as minister, I would be hoping to see in any gathering of data.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: The hour being six o'clock, committee rise.

HEALTH

* (1440)

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Health. We are on item 1.(b)(2).

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

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, the minister has been encouraging me to perhaps re-ask the question that preceded us in Question Period, so the minister can attempt to answer the question with respect to his own Estimates and the figures in his own Estimates.

Just to update the minister, if the minister were to review last year's Estimates book, the minister would note that compared to this year, by the department's own Estimates and by the department's own figure, there are 173 fewer personal care home beds scheduled to be occupied.

My question, of course, to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the minister is why this is the case, why this year there are fewer beds. Despite the fact that the government has indicated that they are closing acute care beds and building more personal care home beds in order to offset the closure of acute care beds and to expand community service, not retract community service, how is it that there are 173 fewer personal care home beds this year than there is last year?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Chairperson, I appreciate the opportunity the honourable member is giving me. Just as I speak, Ms. Murphy is preparing for me a complete rundown on the increase in personal care home spaces, which the numbers referred to by the honourable member, as I will explain in a moment or two, do not reflect. There is, as I said, a massive increase in personal care home spaces in Manitoba.

In the meantime, in answer to one commitment I have made, I want to share with honourable members

a map which sets out the northern and rural health regions, which include the Churchill Health Association, Burntwood, Norman, Parkland, Marquette, South Westman, Central, Interlake, North Eastman and South Eastman.

In each of those 10 regions, ultimately there will be formed 10 regional councils, which has been the subject of so much work by so many people over the last couple of years, and the work will continue. I would ask that I could pass this information to those honourable members.

The honourable member's question today dealing with personal care home spaces reflects some numbers that appear in last year's supplementary information to the Estimates process and comparison with this year's. What it shows is a number of personal care home spaces as recorded in the documents last year versus the number of personal care home spaces as recorded this year.

Last year's listing, as I will explain in a few moments, includes—I better explain it in a few moments, because I am still compiling the information.

Mr. Chairperson, the number in last year's listing included 160 personal care home beds, which were at that time under construction and not yet open. They are planned to be open in this fiscal year. That is 100 beds at the Betel Home and 60 at the Lions Manor.

The honourable member's question also did not take account of the fact that 240 beds opened at River East, two centres with 120 beds each. It does not take into account additional beds in Ste. Rose, I believe it is.

What the honourable member is doing is taking a snapshot at a given point in time, but in overall terms, we have constructed hundreds and hundreds of personal care home beds additional to what we had previously. Basically, for every personal care home bed, a health care job is also created. That needs to be stated as well.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the minister indicated that a hundred additional beds were created at Betel Home and 60 other beds were created somewhere

else and 200 other beds were created somewhere else. Yet in sum total for the year, the minister's briefing Estimates book says there will be 173 fewer beds this year than last year. That begs the question, which beds have been closed and where have they been closed? Quite clearly, more beds have been closed than have been opened since last year.

Mr. McCrae: I think the reason for the confusion, Mr. Chairperson, is that in the 1994-95 listing it shows 9,077 beds in approximately 123 personal care homes. That number included the Betel Home for a hundred beds and included Lions Manor for 60 which were not open. They were under construction at the time—new personal care home beds under construction. For whatever reasons, construction delays or whatever, they did not get the beds into operation in time for that snapshot picture to be taken.

I think the main point that the honourable member is trying to make is that somehow you can spend all of these hundreds of millions of dollars on capital construction and put all these hundreds of personal care home beds, and somehow you can take this snapshot picture, which I acknowledge does not reflect the situation that the honourable member is pointing out, and make some kind of a case, but the facts do not justify the point the honourable member tries to make.

* (1450)

Mr. Chomiak: With all due respect to the minister, I do not think the minister's facts quite justify the point that he is trying to make.

The fact is, construction delays or no construction delays, the effect of the 160 some-odd beds in place last year can only impact on this year if there were less beds constructed or open this year or somehow those 160 beds that were supposedly constructed last year did not open up. But the fact is there are still 173 fewer beds, which begs the question, where have the beds been closed?

Mr. McCrae: What I am trying to get the honourable member to understand is that last year's number of 9,077 was an inflated number, because the beds were under construction and not yet open due to

circumstances beyond the control of the writer of the Supplementary Estimates information. But those beds will be open, because they have been under construction and remain under construction and will be open.

The honourable member asks about closed beds, and the honourable member and I were involved together in the issue related to the Kiwanis Courts and the resolution of the problem that we had there with some older hostel-type personal care home beds. We worked very carefully with the community to resolve that problem in a way that worked for the concerned residents of St. James as well as the Kiwanis Clubs involved with the project.

In fact, the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) received a very nice thank-you card signed by—it must have been a hundred or more—concerned citizens of St. James for his efforts in helping to resolve that problem. But in total terms, I regret if the honourable member has been misled by the numbers, because they in fact do show an inflated number. I cannot explain that in any other way except the way I have, to say that those beds were under construction and were included in a list of beds open which were not open.

Mr. Chomiak: I can understand that perhaps there was an inflated number and they were beds that were under construction to be opened and were not opened. I can accept that, which brings a total of 9,077. The question is then, why do we have less beds this year?

Mr. McCrae: I think, if the honourable member takes the 9,077 beds and accepts my acknowledgement that it included 160 beds that were not yet in service but under construction—I am going to get my pen out, and the honourable member can work this through with me. [interjection] Now he is down to the point here. So we take 9,077, and then we take from that 160 beds and subtract 160 from 9,077—my arithmetic is no better than the member's. That is 8,917 beds. Pardon my arithmetic. So that is the real picture.

Now I am told by staff that in future we will ensure that these numbers reflect—if you went out and counted each and every bed, that is what you would have on the

day that it is reported in our Supplementary Information. So those 160 beds, what it does is creates an inflated number for last year, and then, if you look at this year, now we are going to have to deal with this year's number, 8,904, which is recorded in there. That does not take into account 20 new beds going into Beausejour, East-Gate Lodge, does not take into account 30 new beds under construction in Fisher Branch, Manitoba, in a personal care home there.

Now I know that there is construction going on in Killamey and various other places where either replacements, sometimes replacements, there are fewer replacements for closed beds, but those amount to small adjustments which would account for nothing more than a dozen or so beds.

We should also remember to look at the capital planning of the department to get more accurate figures. I am sorry to say to the honourable member that these numbers appear incorrect, and no doubt would have been a good reason leading to his question today. It does not reflect what the honourable member is trying to put across, that there is somehow a major reduction in personal care development in Manitoba because quite the reverse is the case.

Mr. Chomiak: I do not want to belabour this point because I think the point has been made. I just want to again indicate to the minister that he indicates last year there was an inflation of 160 beds because they were not actually occupied. Presumably those 160 beds are occupied this year, because they are still not under—

Mr. McCrae: They are under construction.

* (1500)

Mr. Chomiak: They are still under construction. So the minister is saying 160 beds that were last year under construction are still under construction, so they were reflected in last year's statistics but they are not reflected in this year's statistics.

Can the minister therefore explain, does the 30 and 20 beds that he was talking about just recently include the 160 that were under construction last year in the inflated statistics but are outside of this year's statistics?

Mr. McCrae: No, and that is the trouble here, Mr. Chairperson. The 160 beds that I referred to refers to the Betel Home in Winnipeg, the Lions Manor in Winnipeg, but does not include the Beausejour beds and the Fisher Branch beds and others that are under construction.

Mr. Chomiak: So the statistics this year do not include beds under construction, but the statistics last year included the beds under construction, do I get that correctly?

Mr. McCrae: That is correct, and the department, when it compiled the numbers last year, had expected that the construction would be complete, and it did not turn out that way which I hope explains the discrepancy in the numbers.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I appreciate the chance to participate in the Health Estimates and raise a few questions of concern to my constituency. I am going to begin by talking about a situation that I have discussed at length numerous times in this House, and that is the situation in west Transcona for residents that have suffered the accumulated impact of a contaminated site, the former Domtar site which is in the Lakeside Meadows area, and I have a letter that I was preparing to send to the Minister of Health trying to initiate a community health study for this area. I would first of all like to have the minister clarify what is the procedure for initiating a community health study done by the provincial government and involving any other bodies in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the honourable member will be available in about 15 or 20 minutes when our assistant deputy responsible for that area would be here to assist us with these deliberations. If so, then we could discuss it then. If not, I could answer the honourable member's question when I see her in the Estimates again.

Ms. Cerilli: I would be pleased to have the question answered when the staff that have more expertise in the area are present.

I would then just like to clarify if the government is open to undertaking this kind of study. I believe that it

has been done for a different section of Transcona also affected by an industrial health hazard, and I am quite concerned that there is a higher incidence of asthma, allergies and other respiratory illnesses in this community. I would hope that the health records for the residents in this community could be analyzed to see if there is any higher incidence in any illnesses that could be attributed to the type of ongoing chemical exposure that these residents have been subject to.

Mr. McCrae: As I say, Mr. Chairperson, I will be pleased when Ms. Sue Hicks joins us a little later to discuss this matter further with the honourable member.

Ms. Cerilli: I will move on then to a couple of questions I have about Concordia Hospital which services the East Kildonan, Transcona area. Concordia Hospital is in the boundaries of Radisson, and I have a number of constituents calling me frequently with concerns about changes in programs there.

The first one is in changes to the home IV program. It was, until recently, available through the Concordia Hospital in the emergency department where residents could go there and have IV treatment in their own community. They are now participating in a home IV program where they are having to get materials, medicine, equipment, couriered to them from I believe it is the Health Sciences Centre. They also then have to go all the way to the Health Sciences Centre three times a week to have their IV site changed. They can have VONs coming to their home periodically.

One of my constituents is concerned that this is not saving money, and it is also causing a lot of inconvenience because they can no longer go to their community hospital to have this provided. It is providing problems for some patients if they are having problems with the IV and are not having it looked at frequently enough or taken care of frequently enough. So I guess the big question is can the minister confirm that this is part of the health reform and why this is no longer being offered through Concordia Hospital?

Mr. McCrae: I appreciate having the honourable member raise this topic, because I think it allows us an opportunity to discuss community care services and whether they are adequate or whether they are

delivered appropriately, and if they are not then we should do something about it. I am persuaded that intravenous therapy programs do not all have to be delivered in a hospital setting. There are some who agree wholeheartedly with me.

If there is any question about safety, though, in the delivery of a home IV program, I would be very interested in knowing about it, because I think that a proper assessment of any patient would reveal whether an IV therapy program should be administered in a hospital setting or at home. If it can be done at home safely, then I would be supportive of that, because that is in my view an efficient way to do it as long as you can show me that it is being done safely.

People do like the opportunity to be at home as opposed to in a hospital setting, but I hasten to underline my concern that it be done in safe circumstances by the appropriate professionals and so on. I do not know off the top of my head the details of the case the honourable member refers to. It may be that there was a less-than-positive experience in a home-delivered IV therapy service, and I would always be interested in knowing details about that so that we can learn from those things.

I do not claim that all services delivered are always delivered appropriately, and when they are not I need to know about it so we can make appropriate adjustments. I know that the Seven Oaks project with the We Care home health care company led to recommendations for home intravenous therapy services to be delivered more frequently in Winnipeg. I understand that all the hospitals in Winnipeg are looking at the delivery of that type of service in the home. I am told by health professionals that there are a number of services delivered in hospital settings today that could be delivered at home.

We have an advisory committee to oversee the development of a provincial IV therapy program, and that was established back last December. A phasing-in process beginning with Winnipeg has been developed, and the expansion throughout the province is something that I see as a possibility. However, I would want to know the views of those who take a different view and want to know why they feel differently about

it. This is the '90s. We are quite capable, I am led to believe, of delivering safe intravenous therapy services in homes. That is a good use of the health care dollars. It also frees up hospital beds for those who could more appropriately be occupying those hospital beds. So, if the honourable member knows of a case where concerns have arisen, I would be happy to review them, unless I have already been advised of the circumstances in writing in which case I could review that.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Chairperson, my concern was specifically that a community-based program is being centralized. This person was never using a hospital bed. They were going and visiting emergency. So I can understand that there were higher costs associated with having to go to emergency for this kind of service, but what I am wondering is why is it being centralized? Could the program not be offered in the community hospital so that this person who lives two minutes from Concordia Hospital could go there to get their needle changed for the IV rather than having the expense of having materials couriered back and forth from the Health Sciences Centre? So could we have true community based home services and have it offered through the regional community hospitals?

* (1510)

Mr. McCrae: What may be missing from the honourable member's equation is the fact that people from far and wide, beyond a two-kilometre radius, use the services of the Concordia Hospital, so that it might be a good argument to make for the resident next door or down the street from the Concordia Hospital, but there are people from other regions of the city that use the Concordia Hospital, from all corners of the city, depending on the physician that is doing the admitting.

Just on the whole point of centralization and decentralization, we are talking about a small city, the city of Winnipeg. For me it is a big city because I come from Brandon and we have always thought of Winnipeg as a big city, but in health planning terms Winnipeg is not a big city. We have seven hospitals operating in this city of Winnipeg of some 600,000, 700,000 people. There are so many things that we do not do very efficiently that we should be addressing. It is not with a view to centralize everything and

depersonalize everything, that is not the point. The point is we are operating in isolation, one institution from the other, when we should not be. It does not make sense.

I hear the comment from rural Manitobans. I just a few minutes ago put out the map of how we are regionalizing the province of Manitoba, and all of these regions and the people in them and the institutions in them have to make decisions to make more effective and efficient use of the dollars that they are getting from the Department of Health. They say, when are you going to regionalize the city of Winnipeg, when are you going to make the city of Winnipeg more efficient? It is a reasonable sort of comment to make.

If you describe our seven institutions in Winnipeg as seven totally autonomous institutions, you can build a lot of inefficiencies into the system. The system the honourable member is talking about should be made to work in a user-friendly fashion. I agree with her about that. But to have a system where we operate seven little islands of autonomy does not make sense in a small city like Winnipeg.

So I hope that the honourable member can see the reasoning behind what I am trying to say, which is that we need to get the boards and the administrations of all of our hospitals here working together, not unlike they are in the area of shared services, organization that is being put together to deal more efficiently with issues like dietary needs of the various institutions, the laundry needs, the supplies that hospitals buy. Why should we have seven hospitals all negotiating with suppliers separately?

Point of Order

Ms. Cerilli: I would just ask that the minister could keep his questions brief to the specifics of the issue I am raising in the region that I represent.

I am not here to get into a long debate with the minister; I simply want to raise a few local issues. I am not here to debate the larger policy, philosophical issues that I am sure he is having a good debate on with our Health critic. I would just ask if he could quickly answer the questions I am raising briefly please.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member does not have a point of order. The honourable minister does have 30 minutes in which to respond to any question that is put forward. The honourable minister to complete his answer.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, I regret if I have rambled a little bit too much. I will try to be a little more pointed in my responses to the questions, but I do want the honourable member to understand the context within which I am answering them. This is not Perry Mason, exactly, and if I very, very directly answer a yes or no to the honourable member's questions, I do not think that properly answers the questions, but I will try to respect her wish for some brevity in my responses.

Ms. Cerilli: A brief, short question then to conclude this topic. When the home IV patients go to the Health Sciences Centre to have their needle site changed, are they going to the Health Sciences Centre emergency department? Are the patients going to the Health Sciences Centre to have their IV site changed in the home IV program? Are they going to the emergency department at the Health Sciences Centre?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, to what extent that happens I do not know. I undertake to attempt to find out, and I will make that answer available to the honourable member.

Ms. Cerilli: Thank you. One of the other issues that I want to raise, changes at Concordia Hospital, has been with the short-stay surgery program. I want to ask the minister and perhaps he would like to provide this information to me as well after deliberations here if it is detailed information.

* (1520)

I am wanting to know the impact of this program on the level of surgery. What ends up happening is, over the weekend then, there are a number of beds, surgical beds that are closed. There are 27 I believe that are closed over the weekend at Concordia Hospital. I am wondering if this has meant that there are a number of

surgical procedures that have their post-operative stay shortened. Basically, I am wanting to know then the levels of surgery done at this hospital as affected by this program or if there are other new changes that have been put in place like shortening the stay after certain procedures that have accounted for that, or if it has meant a reduction in the amount of surgery done at this hospital?

Mr. McCrae: We will ascertain from the Concordia Hospital a response for the member and pass it on to her. Certainly we know that the number of surgeries being done in Manitoba is on the rise, not on the decline. The incidence of not-for-admission surgery is on the rise. In fact, there has been a complete turnabout in some places. I know in one hospital in Winnipeg, it used to be that two-thirds of all of its surgery was inpatient surgery. It is now two-thirds outpatient. So the nature of health care is changing. Technological change is making that possible, and it is appropriate because some people require longer stays and we have to have the capacity in our hospitals for longer-stay patients. We will do that analysis though and report to the honourable member.

Ms. Cerilli: One of the other issues at Concordia Hospital that I have asked questions about before in the House is the use of the CAT scan. I am wondering if we can have a clarification of the process for determining the use of this CAT scan which was purchased through the fundraising of the Concordia Hospital Foundation, and they were then seeking ongoing operating costs to be paid for through the Department of Health. Has any decision been made, and if not then where are we in the process to make that decision.

Mr. McCrae: Sometime in July or August I expect a report from our provincial imaging committee. There is quite a history to the whole scanning issue in the city of Winnipeg with respect to not just the hospital referred to by the honourable member but others as well. There is a deep well of good will in Manitoba in our communities and monies have been raised in various places to buy various pieces of equipment. It does cost money to operate the equipment. Sometimes it has not been ascertained, when fund raising is undertaken, as to whether the operation of the

equipment will be funded, and this created a bit of a problem in some community hospitals. The Department of Health has authorized, while we wait for that report, the use of the scanners for inpatients and for emergency cases, which allows the scanners to be used. It does prevent the transfer of patients from one hospital to another, that particular policy. But we will await the report from the imaging committee later this year.

Ms. Cerilli: I would look forward to that and hope that there would be then a cost benefit included in that, to see if in the long run these diagnostic tools cannot save health care dollars, even though we know that they can be expensive at the outset.

I want to ask one final question with regard to Concordia Hospital, and that has to do with the new ward that was built and the patients that have been in the new ward awaiting placement in other community care and what the current agreement is with the hospital in terms of having that ward used for its initial intended service, which I believe was rehabilitation.

Mr. McCrae: The reports we have are that the 60 beds transform to I guess the next best thing to personal care beds at Concordia Hospital. It may appear indeed to create the need that the honourable member said for the long-term and chronic use referred to, although I say the use that it is being put to is very important as we await the construction of this huge number of personal care home beds that are being constructed in Manitoba. In the meantime, though, we are embarked on a secondary care review. That is a review that follows on the—the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has called it Wade-Bell 2 simply for ease of reference, but it certainly does follow upon the tertiary review that was done with respect to the two big hospitals, at St. Boniface Hospital and Health Sciences Centre, and the secondary care review will, indeed, deal with the appropriate use of those 60 beds in the future in an integrated health system in the city of Winnipeg.

Ms. Cerilli: On to a new topic. I want to ask the minister if, in the view of this government and his department, there is a problem in Manitoba and in Winnipeg with teenage unplanned pregnancy?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, I believe that any unplanned pregnancies amount to a problem for the people who did not plan those pregnancies, and it is a question of degree, I think. I think it is appropriate for all of us to say, yes, that is a problem, and it is something that needs to be addressed, and I look forward to our discussion when Mr. Toews joins us, who is heading up our Youth Secretariat, so that we can deal with issues like that in a multidepartmental way. In other words, look at the whole problem instead of the immediate part of the problem, what causes these things to happen and how is the best way to deal with them.

The issue—I am told by my colleague, the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that this is becoming more of an issue instead of less of an issue. So I think that the honourable member might be interested in the discussion that follows with Mr. Toews when he arrives to advise us.

Ms. Cerilli: I will be patient then until Thursday when, I understand, this will be debated or discussed again, and I hope that the government will outline its current policy for preventing unplanned pregnancy, particularly among youth.

* (1530)

I want to ask, though, if part of the plan and part of the policy of this government will be to look at the effects and effectiveness of preventative health in schools as a way of addressing this problem, and further to that, if the minister is going to track the effects of the loss of health education as a required course in our public school system and on the issue of unplanned pregnancies among young people, if there are any plans to follow up this policy change in the area of preventative health, and if the government has put that in place so we can see what the effects of the government's policy change is on the decision making or the lack of decision making on the part of young Manitobans.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairman, the honourable member's comments clearly indicate ample justification for having at least three departments—Health, Education and Family Services—working together on some of

these issues. Her comments also clearly justify the need for the child health strategy document Dr. Postl's group has put together. We really have an opportunity in Manitoba that you might not see elsewhere to address the problems in a way that has far more likelihood of some kind of successful outcome should we follow those recommendations. Key to that is working together as departments but also working together with communities to address problems we all recognize are in need of attention.

Ms. Cerilli: I think the report on children's health that the minister referenced also recommends that health education should be retained as a mandatory course throughout public education, and I would ask the minister to clarify his government's and his department's policy with respect to providing public schools with a required course in health education, and especially, with the intent for this coming September.

Mr. McCrae: I think the honourable member's questions touch, somewhat, on the education blueprint that was part of, and remains part of, the planning for future education of our children in Manitoba, and the Youth Secretariat advises the Education department as well as the Health department. I was pleased to note that during the election campaign that the First Minister announced that more time was going to be allowed for the development of the implementation of the blueprint. I think that helped a lot, certainly in my discussions with community people and teaching professionals. It helped a lot to give teachers some comfort around the whole issue of reform of curriculum and reform of education in Manitoba, so I would be sure to pass on the comments that the honourable member is making to my colleagues when we discuss education and health issues.

Ms. Cerilli: I just want to emphasize, again, especially given that the minister just talked about co-operation between departments in dealing with children and youths' health, that that report did clearly recommend mandatory public health education throughout all public school grades. I hope they would consider seriously that this September we would not see a drastic change, especially as I understand it, there is some review going on, looking at a new physical education curriculum and putting health into that.

There are a number of concerns around that, that this September there is going to be a lot of confusion with different schools doing different things, because that physical education curriculum is not going to be ready for this September.

So I think the minister may want to direct the Youth Secretariat and the government to give some attention to that issue that is going to cause a lot of disparity, perhaps in education services for young people throughout the province, and I appreciate that he will take that forward.

The other issue that I wanted to raise in terms of personal care homes and the policy for personal care homes in providing access for residents in personal care homes to visitation and I guess other services from the public, having access to their own mailing privileges, their own mailboxes, and how much of that is done through the management in the personal care home? There are some concerns in the community that people in personal care homes have equal rights in terms of availability with the public as other residents would enjoy.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, Manitoba Health encourages personal care home operators to make the environment of their facilities as home-like as they can, to allow for as much independence as possible under all of the circumstances. Many, if not all of them, have volunteer components that assist in helping raise the level of the quality of life of the residents in our personal care homes.

I think I would like to ask the honourable member if there is something more specific she can raise with us so that we can either respond to it or take it as a suggestion for improvement or some such thing like that. So if the honourable member wants to be more specific with us, we could perhaps be more specific in our response.

Ms. Cerilli: I was just wanting to know if there is a policy from the government that would provide guidance to personal care homes in regulating access through mailing to the residents in a personal care home.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, there are some guidelines that the department asks the personal care homes to follow. We are just kind of speculating over here as to whether the honourable member is talking about protecting residents from perhaps unwelcome entreaties by rip-off artists or that sort of a thing or the whole issue of junk mail and so on. I do not know specifically but we do have some guidelines which we can review and make known to the honourable member, but in terms of being more specific, I am unable to in the light of the nature of the question.

Ms. Cerilli: Just to conclude, I would just require that maybe the policy that the government has could be sent to me. I know there needs to be some balance in a personal care home between having every vacuum cleaner salesman and solicitor going in and knocking on every door, but also we do not want to restrict the freedom and privileges and rights of residents in personal care homes. So that is what I am after, is to get some kind of policy sent to me that would answer some of the questions of my constituents.

* (1540)

Mr. McCrae: We will go into that part of the manual and share that information with the honourable member. I suppose that in some places it could be a question of interpretation, and it might not be interpreted exactly the same everywhere across the province. But we would be very concerned if residents of personal care homes were subjected to undue and inappropriate sorts of approaches by people whose motives are not the kindest for our residents.

Ms. Cerilli: Just to conclude even further I would just ask—I am going to have to leave the Chamber now, I am unable to continue questions related to the first issue I raised, perhaps we can do that another day—but I also want to just request that when the discussion on teenage pregnancy occurs that there would be some kind of a breakdown provided on the different regions on both the city and the province in terms of the frequency of incidence?

Thank you for the indulgence of the minister and the House.

Mr. Chomiak: The first line of questioning that I wish to pursue is the issue of the foreign doctors. I am wondering if the minister feels it is appropriate I deal with it with the people that he has, the staff now, or on some other occasion.

Thank you, I see nodding in the affirmative. I am going to get very specific on this because I want to clearly understand the issue myself. Part of the reason I am following this line of questioning is that I received a memo from the minister dated February 6, 1995, in response to a memo I had directed to the minister concerning foreign graduates.

The minister took great pains to very accurately—and I know he must have spent many nights up drafting this letter, because it is a very precise letter, and it is very accurate. I am going to use it as the basis of my questioning, because I want to understand the issues, particularly in light of what appeared in the paper yesterday concerning the proposed solutions for foreign doctors and where the difficulties lie and where the next steps might be.

I want to ask the minister first about the conditional register. The conditional register is being proposed to be for five years. I assume from that that it will permit physicians to be registered to practise medicine in the province of Manitoba for a five-year period, and the minister's memo indicates that it replaces the one-year temporary licence that was put in place previously. Have I got that correctly?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, it was really two six-month temporary ones, replaced by this five-year conditional, which means that after the five years, you still have to meet the requirements of the Manitoba College of Physicians and Surgeons, and you must also practise those five years in an underserved area as directed by the, I guess it is the Physician Resource Committee who will give us the plan.

(Mr. Mike Radcliffe, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response. Now, the two-year internship is still required by those individuals who participate in a conditional registry.

They still would be required for two-year internship, or not, or how does that relate to the five-year conditional registry?

Mr. McCrae: The two-year licensure requirement can be waived under this five-year program in the appropriate circumstances, waived in favour of the one-year licensure. That is seen to be a transitional measure because the move from a one-year requirement to a two-year requirement creates transitional problems, we have learned. That waiver may not always be necessary in every case, but it is there if it is necessary.

Mr. Chomiak: I could only hope. Yesterday's newspaper report and the minister's letter to me of February 6 indicated that the college had reviewed the qualifications of 10 of the international medical graduates in Manitoba and found that only two were eligible for the conditional register. This is reflected in yesterday's paper as well as the letter that the minister sent to me in February. Can the minister indicate what criteria those individuals do not satisfy that does not allow them to, therefore, fall under the umbrella of the conditional registry?

Mr. McCrae: Well, I am glad the member asked because sometimes you get incorrect reporting in the newspapers. This happens and it happens because newspapers operate on a day-to-day basis and have to meet deadlines and get their stories in and very often are wrong which is the case here.

It is true that two initially were identified, but there are six who meet the requirements. There are five who are being viewed as being favourable prospects, five more. That makes 11, not two. I can understand why the honourable member would refer to that two. As I say to him all the time and to my friends, do not believe everything you read in the papers because you could go off in some direction that is not necessarily always right.

* (1550)

With respect to the rationale and so on, we will request of the College of Physicians and Surgeons to correspond directly with the honourable member to

answer that question. Their criteria are theirs. They developed them as an organization, they are given a legal mandate to do those things. I do not know the answer to the question, the college does. The college, we will ask them if they would correspond directly with the honourable member to answer his question. Maybe he will give me a copy so I can know that too.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response, I look forward to that. I believe it is probably related to educational requirements that do not meet college standards. Yesterday's press report also indicated the conditional registry would exempt South African doctors from the two-year internship, but not foreign-trained doctors. I think that is probably inaccurate. [interjection] Yes, in the minister's first response to the first question he indicated it was broad and that it would apply to everyone.

If I look at the presentation made by the association of foreign medical graduates in Manitoba, in their presentation to the Physician Resource Committee, I think they recommended a five-year conditional registry which is being put in place. They indicated an agreement to commit themselves to practise for specific periods of time, but somehow, pending my receiving information from the college, there is still the question of the educational standards which seems to exclude a number of individuals. I still have a sense that there is something that we are missing in this.

Even if we accept the college's—I will receive information from the college indicating what the education requirements are. If the two-year internship can be waived, if there is a five-year conditional registry, it seems to me that the majority of the 50 or 60 foreign medical graduates ought to be able, given the demand in rural Manitoba, to almost immediately start up practice, but I know that is in fact not the case. I am just wondering where the impediments are to movement in that area?

Mr. McCrae: What it comes right down to, according to my advice and understanding, Mr. Chairperson, is not something the IMGs, the immigrant medical graduates, really want to hear, but it is a fact according to the Manitoba College of Physicians and Surgeons. It is that in the countries they identified—those being

Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, United States—it is felt that the standards of training and education in their medical schools resemble Canadian standards or come to a level high enough to be satisfactory to Canadian regulatory authorities, including Manitoba regulatory authorities at the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and that the standards in the remainder fall below that.

So that is why the IMGs, the Immigrant Medical Graduates referred to by the honourable member, the ones that did not make the list, were trained in medical schools whose standards fall far below a level which is acceptable to them as a college. Now we can go behind that, I suppose. I think that is what we are doing by asking the college to report to us on just what it is, in more detail, that you expect of these graduates, that you seem to be satisfied with from Canadian and commonwealth and U.S. graduates but not from these others.

There have been those who have wanted to make the point or allege that this had to do with a bias. I do not know if anybody said racial bias, but bias. I said if there is any of that, that would be a matter of some concern to me because that is not the way Manitoba works, and that is not my understanding of the way Canada works. Do not forget we are talking about a Canadian regulatory agency. I forget the name of it but it is Canadian College, I guess it is called, then there are our own Manitoba requirements.

You see, we do not just make our rules in isolation from everybody else. I think other provinces have similar requirements. There is good reason, as the honourable member would recognize, that you want to, as a legal practitioner who went through all the motions of becoming a lawyer, all the study you had to go through and the tests you had to pass, I think it is probably reasonable for me as a consumer of legal services to want to know that the person who is going to provide those things to me has been properly graded or tested or whatever by the Law Society of Manitoba, the law school, and so on.

I, as a Health minister, have met with the foreign medical graduates and have lots of sympathy for their point. I would like the college, the department and

everybody to be as open as possible, especially at a time when we have requirements in rural Manitoba, open with these graduates in the sense of giving them a proper chance to qualify. But if they do not qualify, they do not qualify. Let us, at the end of the day, at least come to grips with that, that that may exist in some of these cases. Nobody wants to be unfair but we have a cap on the number of practitioners that are allowed to practise in our province, and we have shortages in some rural and remote areas that need to be addressed. It is with that backdrop that we are dealing with a very, very important issue of physician resources. I am glad that we have six who qualify and five more who may yet do so in a reasonable period of time. That, to me, is encouraging.

Now, somebody might say, well, there are 76 of them, so what is encouraging about 11? Well, what is encouraging is that it was not 11 not very long ago, it was zero. So we are making some progress, but I certainly have met with the representatives of these graduates and can understand how they feel, having gone to a fair amount of trouble in their lives to become educated in medicine, but that does not mean they meet the Manitoba standards, which we have to insist on in the interests of proper care for our fellow Manitobans.

I think I will stop at that point. I was going to say something else, but I think when the honourable member asks his next question, what I was going to say may come forward in my mind.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister clarify for me whether or not it is a question of their credentials in the form of their former training, or it is a question of them having to pass an exam?

* (1600)

In other words, are the ones who fall in the excluded list now, are they precluded from participating in a conditional registry because of their training, or will they have an opportunity to pass the qualifying exams in order to allow them to take part in a conditional registry? In other words, is it as a result of their training or as a result of their having to pass an exam, because if it is as a result of their training, then they are in serious trouble, because that means they will have to

receive further training or additional training, and that is very difficult. But if it is a question of passing an exam, that is a much easier, I think, opportunity for some of them to demonstrate their skills. Is it a question of their previous training or the fact that they have to pass qualifying exams?

Mr. McCrae: We are going to ask that direct question of the college and get a response, rather than try to speculate on what it is. We are going to get a direct response from the college.

Mr. Chomiak: Just wanting to continue along with the same line, we had this sort of discussion yesterday or the day before. What we did not enter into was the discussion with other credentials that are brought to the province, in particular, through nursing professions.

I quite often, for example, will hear of individuals who have practised nursing in other countries. They come to the province of Manitoba, and they are not able to continue that practice along. I am wondering if the minister can indicate if there are any committees that are out there that are looking at this particular problem.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, as I am able to make good on some of my commitments, I would like to do it. I will be brief in doing so, and then I will get on to the answer to the present question.

The honourable member for Inkster asked about revenue estimates reflecting reduction of established programs financing. Established programs financing, the Estimates of Revenue for the four-year period 1992-93 to 1995-96 are as follows: 1992-93, \$424,700,000; 1993-94, \$436,000,000; 1994-95, \$420,000,000; 1995-96, \$416,000,000.

This is a complex issue because federal transfers are based both on tax points and cash payments. To ensure that this issue is clearly understood, I suggest that further questions be directed to my learned colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), in whose department this responsibility lies.

Mr. Chairperson, with respect to the honourable member's question, I think it is directed that

ascertaining the kind of input we get from the nursing profession per se into issues related to nursing education, would I be correct in—[interjection] Immigrant credentials of nursing.

Immigrant credentials of nursing are credentials of nursing generally; you have to get licensed by the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses. So some of the comments that we might have made respecting the College of Physicians and Surgeons, respecting credentials of nurses from out of province or from outside our country would be in the purview of MARN. I believe it is safe to say that the standards set by MARN are the same standards as other nursing regulatory agencies across the country. I think I am correct in saying that the standard of nursing education is the same across our country, so when I said out of province, I meant outside Canada.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): This is in fact an issue that comes up quite often with me with respect to nursing as a profession, and the question that I had asked the minister was, do we have or does the minister have, out of all the health care committees that have been established, a group that is looking at this particular issue?

I understand that it is MARN, or the Association of Registered Nurses that is ultimately responsible for certification, if you like, but I am wondering if the minister could give some sort of indication whether or not we have something in place to review, to look at those who come from foreign lands to Canada and acknowledging the credentials that they might be bringing with them.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, we do not in Manitoba have a committee or a subcommittee of MARN that we are aware of that deals with the issue raised by the honourable member. However, we will undertake to find out whether the Canadian Nurses' Association has such a subcommittee or authority which is part of its mandate to deal with the credentials of foreign nurses.

Mr. Lamoureux: I would ask the minister, and to the minister's staff, if you will, are they aware of the situation, and to what extent would they be aware of it?

I give you a specific example and that might be the best way of going about it. Whether it is, let us say, from the West Indies or from the Philippines, a nurse can be practising in a hospital scenario, at least this is what I have been led to believe. They come to the province of Manitoba where their credentials and their background are not given the recognition that allows them to continue on in the profession.

I have been even told further that in many cases they can go to numerous American states and go right into a working atmosphere of a hospital, of a mental institution, a hospital setting, if you like.

This is something that comes up at least for me in particular when I am talking to immigrant groups, and I am wondering if the department is aware of this as an issue, or has it been brought to their attention in any fashion?

* (1610)

Mr. McCrae: I invite the honourable member to make direct contact with the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses to make sure that anything we say, or I tell the honourable member today, he could have confirmed, or otherwise, by the MARN which is the recognized legal legislatively sanctioned organization for this purpose. I guess maybe in some places you can walk into a hospital and get a job as a registered nurse. You cannot do that in Manitoba. You have to—should you. You have to be registered by the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses.

There are some nurses who come from offshore who may not be able to meet the requirements of the MARN, and they might take employment as a nurses' aide or some other type of work in the health system, or you can, subject to what the MARN might tell the honourable member, as I say, challenge the—how do you put that? Challenge exam, take an exam to show your proficiency, and if that comes out appropriately then you would be registered by the MARN.

But I would urge the honourable member, maybe through his research people, to get this information from, or on his own, the MARN. If he needs my assistance, I will help.

Mr. Lamoureux: Maybe what I can, because we do have somewhat of a limited research capability nowadays, but what I will do is attempt to get a couple of individuals that can maybe get in touch with the minister's office with this particular issue. We see it when the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) is referring to the doctors just prior to me standing up.

It became an issue because there is a shortage of doctors in rural Manitoba. I would imagine, if what I have been told is true and I have no reason to believe that it is not, but if there was a drastic shortage of nurses and a very high demand for nursing in rural Manitoba that then might raise the issue a bit more.

I do not know why it is, maybe we have not had the thorough debate on this particular issue. It would be better to have some facts on the table. I appreciate the minister has indicated that he is, in fact, going to look into the matter. I will do what I can in terms of providing a couple of names, if at all possible, to him just so that he can have that follow-up.

Mr. McCrae: Let us close this topic with one more thing. We are fortunate in Manitoba that in January of '94, we appointed Dr. Carolyn Park as our provincial nursing advisor, and I really have to say that since that happened, our relationship with the nursing profession, as a government, I believe has improved quite significantly. We have made a lot of efforts to work closely with the nursing profession to take account of their concerns as we reform our health care system, and I think that much good progress has been made.

I just wanted to say that Dr. Carolyn Park could also be available to the honourable member or his colleagues, and if he wants the telephone number, I can make that available: 945-6782.

Mr. Chomiak: The minister made an announcement yesterday concerning the nutritional compound known as Lorenzo's Oil, and I asked of the minister yesterday, and I am repeating it today, whether any consideration is being given towards dealing with this issue of experimental and new drugs in a more comprehensive fashion, rather than a case-by-case basis, recognizing that it is a problem, not just in this jurisdiction, but in all jurisdictions.

But, quite clearly, some kind of mechanism is going to have to be put into place in order to deal with these kinds of drugs. The specific drug that I am using as an example, and I have corresponded with the minister on it, is betaseron. It is the drug that deals with MS patients which, as I understand it, may or may not have a certificate of compliance from the federal government.

I do not want to get necessarily into the specific issue of this particular drug, but yesterday's announcement concerning Lorenzo's Oil only seems to me to be indicative of a problem that is going to become increasingly a problem, and there is going to have to be some kind of mechanism to deal with the issue, because clearly, the Life Saving Drug Program does not capture all of the drugs that are out there that increasingly are coming on line to deal with many illnesses. I wonder what the departmental response to that might be.

Mr. McCrae: I appreciate the point being raised by the honourable member. The honourable member knows that from time to time our Pharmacare eligibility list gets changed, too. That reflects the fact that a committee of people who are professionals and specialists make determinations about various pharmaceutical products, about some that maybe have outlived their usefulness. Another way of putting it is something better has come along that it could be replaced with so they get removed from the formulary and we have a debate about that when that happens. In fact, one year I recall, not that many years ago, we added 66, took off four and got into serious trouble because we took four off the list. That is the way the debate goes.

However, the Lorenzo's Oil discussion has an important distinction and the honourable member said it in his comments, that this product is not a drug so therefore does not really come under the certificate of compliance provisions in the same way that pharmaceutical products do. Lorenzo's Oil is a nutritional supplement. I do not think the honourable member disagrees with what we did but he does raise a question that has occurred to me, obviously, but this substance is not a drug and so therefore I do not think we can engage in a useful comparison of this product with a pharmaceutical product.

There is a process in the United States and in Canada for compliance, and there are issues related to safety and issues related to effectiveness and issues related to liability for governments, I suggest, that want to insure the cost of some of these products. So I thought about it pretty carefully with respect to the kind of precedent that might be set, and I felt that the precedent might be more in the way of a perceptual problem as opposed to a real one, because we are faced with some pretty strong evidence that Lorenzo's Oil is going to do what its proponents say it is going to do, whereas in the case of other pharmaceutical products very much the jury is out and requires further testing and study and monitoring and so on.

* (1620)

So I hope that addresses what the honourable member has said. I know that every time governments do something that is deemed to be in the best interests of a particular group in the population, you run the risk of hearing from other groups, as well, but I think there are distinctions here that help us make our case with regard to Lorenzo's Oil.

Mr. Chomiak: I probably will return to this item when we get under the specific appropriation and deal with some detail with drugs, but I will let the general issue suffice at that.

I have a specific constituency-related issue that I wanted to raise. It is a general question, and the minister may have to get back to me on the specifics. I do not have the individual's name per se, but I will outline the fact situation. The individual is suffering from quite a severe allergy and allergic reactions and is having a great deal of difficulty getting on with her life and has trouble sleeping, has trouble working, has trouble basically existing and has been referred to an allergist but cannot see the allergist until the third week of August.

To be frank, I have never had the particular issue brought to my attention before concerning allergists, but I am wondering why an individual would have to wait that long in those circumstances to see a specialist of that kind. Is that unusual? Is there a shortage of allergists in this area? Is it a question of the individual

going to the wrong doctor, referred to the wrong allergist? Does the minister have any idea, roughly, what the situation might be in regard to a fact situation like that?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, I am advised that there is not felt to be a shortage of allergists. The length—this is a busier time, of course, for people's allergies—but if this is a serious matter, the general practitioner involved, and I cannot say this for sure, may not have made the case with allergist in terms of getting an earlier appointment. Here, again, if, off the record, the honourable member would like to share with us the name of the patient, we can track this—and the allergist—and see if there is any way we can assist.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for that response, and I will try to forward the particulars to the minister, and I appreciate the offer of assistance in that regard.

I have been debating whether or not to go down this line of questioning or whether I would do it at some other appropriation, but insofar as I see who is available from the minister's staff, I think that I perhaps will pursue the line of questioning, and it has to deal with hospital funding for this year. The minister had indicated last week, during Estimates, what the budgetary shortfall, if I could put it in those terms, cutbacks, the budgetary difference between the last fiscal year and this fiscal year was going to be to the urban hospitals. I wonder if the minister might give me a list of what the shortfall would be for each hospital as a result of the 1995-96 budget year.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, we operate our relationship with the hospital facilities as a year-in, year-out, ongoing sort of relationship between us as a department and the administrations and boards of those hospitals. For the most part I can claim to enjoy a co-operative and productive working relationship with the various institutions.

In terms of hospital funding we are—the Minister of Finance made an announcement last winter, November, that there were going to be so many dollars available for the acute sector of the urban hospitals and personal care homes, community health centres. Since the

honourable member raised the issues related to the budget at Seven Oaks recently, I have been doing some work in this area.

The trouble with these budgets—and it is troublesome. It is troublesome for the honourable member, it is troublesome for me. To understand how they work is not even as simple as the problem with the PCHs earlier today. That was not that simple and it turned out to be pretty good. When you take a hospital's bottom-line number, it is composed of a budget, and then there are all these other things. There is what they call commitments, what they call capital requirements and various things that go into the making of a budget. It would be simple for me if I could say after the year was over, last year such and such a hospital received these many dollars from the government, and this year, if everything goes the way we hope it will go throughout the course of the fiscal year, this particular hospital will receive so many dollars, either more or less or whatever it is.

* (1630)

Even that kind of a statement, what does it show? What does it show to me as a Health minister who is concerned about care for patients? I am more interested, actually, in knowing how many people got well at the hospital. I am interested in statistics like how long was the average stay at the hospital this year? Was it shorter than last year? I sure hope so because we certainly have the technology to justify that particular approach on average, always on average because there are exceptions always.

I am not really clear what the honourable member is asking except he is wanting to get a handle himself on what are these budgets of these hospitals. My question is, if we knew what the budgets were, would we be any the wiser? We are going to end up having a discussion like we had earlier today about personal care homes, which I have taken my share of the blame for. The numbers were misleading with regard to last year's numbers. Within those numbers, was a number for personal care home beds not yet in service. That kind of thing can probably be said about—and I have looked at all the columns of numbers and what they all mean for a hospital. It appears to mean one thing until it is

explained to you that, no, it really does not mean that at all. It means something else.

I have seen lots of things like balance sheets and financial reports in my career here and before. You can get a bit of a sense from looking at those things, but the numbers that I have seen, I am sorry to say, for my untrained eye, lead me, without adequate advice, to make the wrong conclusions, just like the honourable member has been known to do from time to time. For whatever reason, I am sure he has the same problem as I do in terms of trying to understand what all these numbers mean. So that is why it is not a simple thing for me to produce a document like the Supplementary Estimates package information with regard to the specific financial circumstances of each of the hospitals. Some of them run deficits, not very much anymore. Some run surpluses, and then what happens to those surpluses?

This is one of the more complicated aspects of the running of the Health department, is keeping track because then, if, for example, you want to operate a pilot project at a hospital, does the money that you make available for that pilot project come out of the base funding for the hospital or is it separate and additional to, and if as a result of that project there is a surplus produced, what happens to it? Whose is it? Those are all very interesting questions, but do they really help me understand whether a patient is getting better care or not? What are we talking about? We still have a mentality, unfortunately, that says, you measure the result by how many dollars you have in there. You cannot do that anymore in education; you cannot do that in social welfare. I mean, are we a better province because we spend a million dollars more this year than last year on welfare? Excuse me, that does not sound just right to me. It does not sound just right to me if we spend a little more this year on a hospital if we are not getting value for the money.

I will listen carefully to what the honourable member says and maybe get a feel for precisely what it is he wants to learn here, and I will try to be as open as I can with him in trying to get to the bottom of the question.

Mr. Chomiak: I will indicate two things to the minister. Firstly, I think it is probably time to take a

short break for the benefit of everyone concerned, because I can get out all the time, but not everyone can.

The second point is, I am really actually interested in process, and we use Seven Oaks as an example. We know that there have been certain budgetary figures that have been given to Seven Oaks. There have been certain figures that have been circulated around the hospital concerning possible bed closures and possible staff layoffs. There have also been certain indications that these decisions are going to have to go back to the Department of Health or may not have to go back to the Department of Health. I do not understand how the process works. The minister indicated that it was ongoing, but at some point these decisions are final decisions that are made. I am just wondering what the process is for each of the individual hospitals in this regard.

I know that November 22, certain budgetary figures were provided, in fact sooner to the hospitals. Certain decisions are being made at the hospitals. The question is now, at what point are those final decisions made?

Mr. McCrae: I concur with the honourable member about the advisability of having a brief break here. I would like to ask the honourable member to make a note of this, if he would not mind during the break considering agreeing to deal with Healthy Communities, line 21.4(b) tomorrow. That will be Wednesday, June 7. If you would agree to do that, maybe he could indicate that after the break.

I am told that the Annual Report of the Department of Health publishes the bottom-line amount made available to hospitals on an annual basis. It is true, we do not have this year's because that annual report is not out. It is not going to be out for a while.

There are so many variables. I can give the honourable member a number today and six months from now that number might not be accurate anymore. I hesitate to get myself into that kind of position. I think that maybe I will stop there for now.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Is it the will of the committee to recess at this time? The committee shall recess at this time for five minutes.

The committee recessed at 4:37 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 4:50 p.m.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): The committee will come to order.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, yesterday, among others, the Leader of the Opposition asked a number of questions we took as notice, and we are able to answer some of them today. Does the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) advise that I go ahead and put the answers on the record or wait until the Leader of the Opposition might return, or does he have a preference?

Mr. Chomiak: I think probably the best course to follow would be to put the answers on the record, then I could confer with the member to see if he has any further line of questioning as a result of the responses.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, the honourable Leader of the Opposition raised a matter respecting the monitoring of drugs in personal care homes and perhaps some problems associated with that. He mentioned that the concern was raised by a Mr. Victor deCaro and that Mr. deCaro's mother had been a patient at Bethania Personal Care Home, had a drug reaction and unfortunately passed away at the Concordia Hospital.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

The process in place for personal care homes for drug monitoring is as follows: whenever a new order is written for a resident, it is reviewed by the pharmacist for appropriateness before the prescription is sent to the facility. In addition, all residents' drug therapies are reviewed every three months by the personal care home team, that is, the attending physician, a pharmacist and a nurse.

Manitoba Health, in conjunction with representatives from personal care homes, developed a formulary

system which provides guidance for prescribing drugs for the elderly. This formulary is continually updated on a regular basis.

It is recommended by the Department of Health that the honourable Leader of the Opposition or Mr. deCaro write directly to me requesting an investigation of Mr. deCaro's mother's care at Bethania Personal Care Home.

The Leader of the Opposition also raised an issue relating to a patient, again at the Concordia Hospital. There has been a formal complaint lodged by Holly Hrynchyshyn regarding a number of health care issues, the majority of those issues relating or relevant to the Concordia Hospital.

Holly Hrynchyshyn's mother-in-law passed away on March 2 of this year at the Concordia Hospital. Holly Hrynchyshyn addressed a letter to the acting deputy ombudsman, who in turn contacted staff at Manitoba Health. Staff contacted the administrator of the Concordia Hospital, who has investigated the complaints and prepared correspondence for Manitoba Health.

In his letter the administrator stated that Ms. Hrynchyshyn's letter would be forwarded to their hospital standards committee and that Dr. Dirks will extend an opportunity to meet with the family to discuss the situation fully. Dr. Dirks will not be available until June 8 of this year.

A Manitoba Health staff member has contacted Concordia asking that they be invited, the representatives of Concordia be invited, to this meeting. Ms. Hrynchyshyn has been telephoned and informed that Dr. Dirks will be contacting her regarding a meeting and that two staff members from Manitoba Health will be attending the meeting. Ms. Hrynchyshyn expressed agreement that there should be a meeting and she will be taking a family member with her to that meeting.

The honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) asked a question about the Provincial Cancer Control subcommittee on palliative care. The subcommittee on palliative care is a subcommittee of

the Provincial Cancer Control Committee. The Provincial Cancer Control Committee is chaired by Dr. Brent Schacter, who is the president and CEO of the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation.

That committee has been charged with the mandate to recommend a plan for cancer control from prevention to palliation for the province of Manitoba. The subcommittee on palliative care has tabled its report at the Provincial Cancer Control Committee. The Provincial Cancer Control Committee is currently in the process of summarizing and incorporating all the subcommittee reports and recommendations into the Provincial Cancer Control Committee overall report. The report and recommendations on the subcommittee on palliative care will be considered within the framework of the larger overall Provincial Cancer Control Committee report when it is submitted.

The honourable member for St. Johns asked a question about special assistive devices, and these are telecommunications devices for speech-impaired people. The honourable member gave details of the specific case of Sister Dufault, and I will tell the honourable member that Pat Charter, a representative of the patients' rights advocacy organization approached myself on behalf of Sister Rolande Dufault requesting reimbursement of 80 percent of the funds needed for Sister Dufault for the purchase of a special device from Manitoba Telephone System that would allow her to communicate clearly by telephone.

Before this request could be processed by Manitoba Health we were informed that an organization had come forward and purchased the device for Sister Dufault. Since then, officials have met with Manitoba Telephone System and have agreed that Manitoba Telephone System would provide services and that Manitoba Health would fund them.

The honourable member for St. Johns inquired about the number of residents in Manitoba that might be affected by this situation. Manitoba Telephone System has indicated that they have six requests a year, and it was felt that 12 would be the maximum annual number.

With respect to the procedure in place now, the policy now in place is to provide funding for

telecommunication devices. The necessary amendments will be made to the regulations under The Health Services Insurance Act which would include a \$75 deductible and a 20 percent co-payment, to a maximum of \$428 per device.

I guess we could just say stay tuned because we keep getting requests for information, and as we have it we will make it available.

* (1700)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for that response. Just continuing on that line of questioning before the break, I wonder if the minister could outline therefore what procedures—we could use Seven Oaks as an example since the minister raised it. What is the status of the budgetary recommendations concerning Seven Oaks at this point, given that we are well into the fiscal year?

Mr. McCrae: Well, let us see, Mr. Chairperson, if I can get this right, and we will use Seven Oaks Hospital for this example.

We are trying to be responsive to the hospitals in Manitoba by giving them whatever information we can, good news or bad news, and to give it to them as early as we can. In this case, this was done in November, 1994 to deal with the fiscal year 1995-96. We gave this information in November of '94 to all the hospitals.

We asked them to prepare detailed budgets based on that information. We asked them also to build into that budget certain stipulations or understandings, for example, in the past, things like Bill 22, or if we do not want to see layoffs, or if we expect to achieve a certain kind of result as a result of collective bargaining, or that sort of thing. So we asked them for budgets based on all of that, but we then asked them also—we review their proposed budgets.

If we, as a department in reviewing those budgets, see them as being appropriate then we ask them for their plan as to how they propose to achieve the budgets that they have laid out, and there is a review of that plan by departmental staff. If there is an approval of that plan for some aspects of the budget, there might

be bridge funding required, there would be bridge funding required. In addition to all of that, there are adjustments of one kind or another throughout the year which really, for me, makes this more complicated as we go along.

For example, mid-year there may be a special program that a hospital wants to get going on. Well, they consult our department, we work with them on those types of programs, or there may be something that the department wants to achieve and we make that known somewhere in the middle of the year, so adjustments have to be made throughout the year depending on what circumstances arise.

After the year-end there is a final review of the performance of the previous year's budget, so you have that going on at the same time that you are also going back to the first steps that I referred to because you are into the next year's budget cycle.

That is a very general description of the process that is followed, and it has a lot to do with the relationship that we have with the hospitals. It is that kind of business that we are engaged in throughout the course of the year.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that response. It has been helpful.

Just looking at the example of Seven Oaks—and I am going from memory here, so my numbers could be a little bit off but they are relatively close—the situation as I understand it is that the budgetary adjustment from last year, that is, '94-95, requires them to make up an additional \$600,000 shortfall from their budgetary allocation last year, and in addition this year they are required to expend \$1.6 million less this year, and as a result of that there is a proposal now put forward to deal with how to achieve those targets; that is, the \$1.6 million for '95-96 and the \$600,000 left over from '94-95 which entails some reallocation of resources, some staff cuts, et cetera. Can the minister indicate how the department at this point therefore interfaces with Seven Oaks concerning those matters?

Mr. McCrae: I am unable to accept the number that the honourable member has placed on the record, so I

will not deal with that number. It is not a number that we agree with. I am not sure how best to deal with that issue except to say that, as we proceed year after year in our relationship with the various facilities, there are times when facilities perform better than they had projected. There are times when they do not perform as well as they had projected or as we had hoped, and obviously life goes on. So we have got to find ways to make adjustments to help the facilities through and still do so in a way that we feel we can be fair with the facility in question but also others who might be in a given year performing better or performing worse or whatever happens to be.

Somewhere in the recitation of the process that I referred to, we are there at this time with Seven Oaks Hospital, and we are there to assist them, regardless of what the budget is for a given year, or what it was the year before, or what it is expected to be the next year, to assist those facilities to continue to carry out their function, which is laid out in their missions and their goals and their role statements and all of those things, to get them through each and every fiscal year, providing safe levels of care to our fellow Manitobans. That is done in concert with others.

* (1710)

We have hospitals seeking accreditation and achieving it, and some of them are getting it for multiyear periods. That is a positive thing. I am told that the longer you get accredited for, the higher your rating in terms of the effectiveness of your facility in the delivery of services to patients. To make a complicated issue a little less complicated, I would say that the relationship is very much an ongoing one which requires constant consultation, us with them and them with us, to get them through their years during times of recession and times of growth and during times of the inability of government to come up with the kinds of dollars that some initially would like to see.

I have noticed that in recent years—I should go right back to the beginning of my own political career in this place. It was an annual thing and the honourable member is still engaging in it, an annual thing that you fight over the budget. When appropriations to hospitals

were increasing at double-digit inflation levels, it never failed. I would be involved, Larry Desjardins, or whoever, arguing one side or the other. Hospital administrators would get into the act and make public statements about how it is going to be such a hard year for us to make do. We are only getting 8 or 9 or 10 percent more than we got last year.

Well here we are this year, and we are dealing with slight reductions or holding the line. Is it not interesting the only people making the noises are people like the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and the unions. You do not hear hospital boards and administrations—you do not hear me, anyway, like you used to—you do not hear those people wailing and bleating the way we used to do. We have clearly established a different kind of playing field. People understand, Manitobans understand that we are in different times today than in those days when every year was an annual serious fight over budget allocations for hospitals. What that new way of thinking does is it encourages us to work even more cooperatively than we ever have before.

I think, with rare exceptions, what I have said is true. I know that if you asked a hospital CEO off the record, tell me, what is it going to be like, they are going to say it is going to be rough this year, just like every other year. That is what they are going to say. I think it is so indicative of the sense of cooperation that exists between my department and the hospitals. For that I have to offer my thanks and commendations to the people who work for the Department of Health and also to the people who work for the hospitals. That includes their voluntary boards and board chairs because there is a clear recognition everywhere that the playing field is different. The game has changed. We have a job to do, and it is getting hard. There is no question about that.

We are going to work together. There will be a few naysayers out there, but the fact is the people of Manitoba expect us to do more and sometimes to do more with less. It is a tall order; there are those who do not believe it can be done.

During the election campaign, I attended a health debate sponsored by the health unions and the MARN.

I also attended another one put on by the Brandon Chamber of Commerce. Because my opponent was a medical doctor and identified health care as the only issue upon which he wanted to campaign, he successfully made our debate into, a large amount of it, into a health care debate. The good part of the debate was that we had good audience participation. There were some union people there and other people as well. The one nurse—I do not know if she was a union nurse or not, I think so—said, and this had to do with Brandon General Hospital: You have asked us to squeeze enough, and I can tell you there is just no more to be squeezed.

I remember feeling disappointed in that observation because I was moved to respond to that by saying, well, I regret that you feel that way because there are all kinds, thousands of nurses in this province who are prepared to continue working with us to get the results that we need for the patients in Manitoba. She did not like that response very much, but I cannot accept it when someone says there is no more that can be done.

We said that during the '70s and '80s when we were putting in more and more and more every year. We just cannot seem to manage; we just cannot manage. We have the best and the brightest in our province running our hospitals and our department. We do make very big demands on those people, and I am happy to report that they have responded, and they have responded effectively.

You do not need to take my word for it. Take the word of the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation because that centre has determined that, even though some pretty hard decisions have had to be made thus far, levels of patient care have not suffered as a result.

Honourable members can tell me stories of something that happened in hospital A on such and such date on such and such a ward, and I can agree because I know about those things and they happen in Brandon General Hospital too. Incidents occur. Someone waited too long for a nurse to arrive or—those things have happened. I think that we should remain vigilant every time we hear something like that, that we

respond and ask hospitals to be very mindful, but we do not want to see those things happening.

Yet, 30 years ago, I know those same things were happening, 20 years ago those things were happening, and 10 years ago those things were happening. In fact, in 1982 during the election campaign I read an article in the Winnipeg Free Press that spoke of a crisis looming in the hospitals in Winnipeg, and the Manitoba Nurses Union, the president's name was Vera Chernecki, commenting that this was a serious situation and the government had not done anything about it. Well, we all know which government was here in 1982.

In any event, I only mention that because I dare say vested interests are going to continue and those who speak for the vested interests in the Legislature or elsewhere are going to continue to make a case for a set of circumstances that do not exist in the way that they are being put forward.

No one has to tell me that we do not experience difficult circumstances from time to time in our facilities and elsewhere in the system. That includes the Home Care program. I mean, if that were not true, then why would we have put in place an appeal panel to deal with people who disagree with decisions made by the Home Care program. I think it was the right thing to do and, going by the results, we are achieving better care for people. Through the work of the Home Care Advisory committee or council we are achieving better policies and better services in the Home Care program.

So it is nice for us to brag about how well we are doing in these areas, and we will do that from time to time, but for us ever to conclude that there is no room for improvement, that is when we really run into difficulties.

So it is with those ideas in mind that we address the budget of the Seven Oaks Hospital each and every year. We have an excellent working relationship with the staff and management at Seven Oaks General Hospital. The people there are very co-operative in the sense of the direction that we want to take reform in.

The whole idea of the Wellness Institute there is an effort on the part of the people of Seven Oaks to address issues related to the whole person and related to wellness and how to achieve good levels of health promotion and disease prevention and those very, very important issues as we address the next century.

* (1720)

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Mr. Chairperson, I want to express my thanks for allowing me to ask a question on behalf of my constituents in the Dauphin constituency.

I would like to ask the minister some questions about two issues. First of all, mammography, does the government have any, does his department have any plans in which to expand services of a mammography unit into the Dauphin hospital into the Parklands Region?

Mr. McCrae: I have discussed the matter raised by the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) with representatives of the hospital in Dauphin and other matters as well. We are very pleased with the progress that we are making in Manitoba. We have not got so far along that I can directly respond to the honourable member's question today. We want to get the centres in Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson, the ones that were announced for our breast screening program, up and running. I would like very much to see that happen in the very near future, and beyond that we would want, I hope, to address those kinds of issues in the context of the needs assessments that would need to be done, and also I would think the rural regionalization concept will have a role to play in decisions about things like that in the future.

I do not think Dauphin is calling for a full-fledged centre like the type we are talking about in Brandon or Thompson, although I could be corrected on that as well, but I know they are looking for some capability in Dauphin to provide service to the people there.

I am very impressed with what I know of the Dauphin general hospital from what I have heard from the staff of the department and from what I have seen. When I talked about incidents occurring in hospitals, I

really cannot remember being made aware of any in Dauphin unless there is one that escapes my recollection. The honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) and his fellow citizens in that area are indeed well served, from my observation, at the Dauphin regional hospital. It is a regional centre, and I appreciate the work that is done there.

I have had a chance to talk to some of the staff people as well of community health in the Dauphin area. I think that compared with any other area, not only in Manitoba but anywhere else in Canada and therefore in the world, Dauphin is very well served, and it must be because of the desire of the people there to offer a range of services which might include some form of breast screening there.

We are a little early in the game for us to answer the honourable member definitively, but we are aware of the desire to provide that type of service from that centre.

Mr. Struthers: I thank the minister for information that he has just given me. I am interested in knowing about the needs assessment process. Has that process begun? Is there a time line as to when it will be wrapped up? I am sure he will find through the needs assessment process that there is a need for a mammography service within Dauphin.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, when I referred to needs analysis, I was speaking of a bigger picture. You are talking about a provincial picture. Population health needs and determinates of health, those concepts are the kinds of concepts that are going to play a greater role in driving our system in the future.

I can tell you today, without using any names, of perhaps three or four other centres in Manitoba which would make the same request as the honourable member is making today. Can we, as a society, do that? I know of one in even a smaller centre where demands are being made, not polite requests, as the honourable member is doing today, but outright demands are being made on the system.

As much as I would like to say yes to everybody who comes with a request, those days are over. It is that sort

of approach that has got us into so much trouble in the first place, I say with all due respect to those who make polite requests and demands.

In any event, I somehow got distracted. Oh, it is the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), who did that; he has done that before, and here he goes again, Mr. Chairperson. In any event, we welcome him to this side of the House and should he decide to stay, we will do everything we can to make things comfortable here for him. He will find it so comfortable, next thing you know the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) will start entertaining the idea of joining in with the rest of Manitobans and get on the business of running this province.

I will get to the member for Dauphin. The honourable member for Dauphin, though, reflects some of the thinking that I know exists in Dauphin when he makes this proposal to us today. When I am talking about needs assessment, I did not mean it in the context of a sort of a narrow needs assessment. We are now looking at our needs on regional bases and on a provincial basis as well. The breast screening program that we have announced for Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson is a provincial program. Within the context of a provincial program, I think we need to look at breast screening requirements.

With the program we have announced, I have been told that statistically speaking, we could realistically expect to save as many as 50 lives a year from breast cancer. That is a pretty significant step forward, and when you are the Minister of Health, getting to be the one to make the announcement, you get to feeling pretty good about such a thing. We are saying to women between the ages of 50 and 70 years of age that this sort of programming can save lives. Early detection can be so very important with this particular disease. We have not even got that up and running yet. I ask the honourable member to keep that in mind.

* (1730)

When I am talking about needs assessment, every chance I get I encourage people to get to know what we mean, to get to know how the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation works, how population health

requirements play a role as opposed to getting into the kind of problems that you can get into if you overbuild, if you overbuild services, if you overbuild buildings. Saskatchewan is a good example of that.

We have had, it is true in Manitoba, some overbuilding. We did that, and I am thinking of the reductions at the tertiary centres here in Winnipeg. Obviously, if you are going to close some beds, that means you had too many. When they were built, it was not felt that that was the case. Since that time we have put so much service into the community; it is very significant. With that happening we can make better use of our hospital beds.

I digress a little bit, but I am doing it for a purpose and it is to explain to the honourable member that we are trying to look at our population health needs. I am not trying to say that the people of Dauphin do not need breast screening. Of course, they do. They are going to, for the time being, access the service from Brandon or from—no, it will be from Brandon cause that will be the closest site.

The point of it all is that you cannot have every service at every location. If I were from Dauphin, I think I would be asking the same questions as the honourable member. I say I invite him to put himself in my shoes and to look at the health of our Manitoba population provincially too. Then work Dauphin region into that and the Parkland Region, which Dauphin is going to be an important part of.

I also ask Dauphin health people to be mindful of the way the regionalization process works. There are the people in the Swan River Valley who are part of the Parkland Region. There is not an entirely unanimous agreement about that. On the other hand, the decision had to get made. So I have encouraged the CEO and the board chair at Dauphin to be mindful of that particular sensitivity, and they are. I am satisfied that they are and that they will work very co-operatively with all the other parts of the region.

When you are a big centre like Dauphin, some of the surrounding districts tend to look a little bit—how should I put it? Coming from Brandon, the honourable member will know what I mean, because we in

Brandon have to be mindful of the needs and concerns of the people in the surrounding region. I think the honourable member understands the requirement for that.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Chairperson, I am sure the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) would be able to point out, maybe explain a little further exactly what the minister was talking about in terms of Perimeteritis in Brandon, Perimeteritis in Dauphin, wherever a big centre looks upon smaller communities and the needs of those smaller communities.

The one thing I want to assure the minister is that I will always be polite. When I am requesting things, polite requests are the way I will start out. Even if I am demanding something, I still promise to be polite. There is no worry there. The first time I make a request, it is a request. Maybe I will fall into the same trap as some other members and start demanding, but I will always do it politely.

I have a quick question to end off my questions on mammography; it has to do with what the minister said when talking about a regional basis and a regional assessment. I would encourage him to move forward with that type of an assessment in the Parkland area, including the Swan River area, because there are folks in the Swan River Valley who would also gain by having the mammography services in the Dauphin Regional Health Centre as opposed to moving across a great distance to get this service, as an example, going to Brandon or to Winnipeg.

The Swan valley and the Roblin area and the Dauphin, Parkland area, people going from that area to receive mammography services incur a lot of costs that I think are unfair for them to be picking up travel costs, hotels, lodgings, those kinds of things, which I am sure the minister is aware of, being a rural member himself. I would like to encourage him to move quickly with any kind of assessment that is being done in our Parkland area.

The other issue that I wanted to talk about—I am just going to shift gears here. I want to go back and revisit an issue that I brought up in the House a couple of weeks ago on the Grandview-Gilbert Plains-Roblin

doctor shortage. I would like an update on what has happened over the last couple of weeks in terms of this situation, because it is very much a crisis in those centres.

Mr. McCrae: If the honourable member would agree, we could give him a status update tomorrow. Otherwise, I might leave something out if I try to do it today.

Mr. Struthers: I suppose that would be acceptable. I will make an attempt to come back and listen to the answer that the minister has for me. Just so you would be aware, I am also interested in knowing what kind of recommendations Dr. Moe Lerner has come up with in that area.

Mr. McCrae: That is a problem. Dr. Moe is not available to us today. We can touch bases with Dr. Lerner for tomorrow and have a report for the honourable member. I am sorry, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Struthers: The other two areas that I will be looking for answers for are some ideas of where we are going to get doctors from. It is okay to talk about guaranteeing so many doctors to a certain area, but where are we actually going to get them from, and whether your department would be willing to compensate the boards involved at Roblin, Gilbert Plains and Grandview for any of the costs they have incurred in trying to locate doctors for their area, maybe that too can be in your response tomorrow, and I will be here to listen to you then.

Mr. McCrae: I hope that I am not asking the honourable member to change his schedule too much to be here for discussion tomorrow, because I will be better prepared tomorrow to discuss the Grandview, Roblin, Gilbert Plains, Dauphin situation having had a chance to consult Dr. Lerner prior to that discussion.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, when I last left off with the minister, the minister had indicated that he disagreed with the figures that I had offered up concerning Seven Oaks. I wonder if the minister might correct me, therefore, and indicate where I am inaccurate with regard to the figures that I put on the record concerning Seven Oaks?

Mr. McCrae: Well, in the sense that sometimes it is a question of the honourable member getting the numbers wrong, and on other occasions, it is the incorrect interpretations that he draws from numbers that are correct. So I just have trouble sometimes with the honourable member, as he knows, and I am not telling him anything new here today. He has this, well, from my point of view, annoying habit, maybe others would not be annoyed, but this habit of putting forward a proposition with which the facts do not accord.

I do not know what Beauchesne would say about that, but that is my frustration with the honourable member. I have dealt with it now—how long have you been my critic in Justice and in Health? Quite a long time now.

An Honourable Member: Most of your time.

Mr. McCrae: Most of my time, five and a half years now, Mr. Chairperson, and I have a personal affection for the honourable member, but professionally we have this problem from time to time, like every day. So that is my hesitation and also because the way these numbers work through the course of the method that I talked about earlier on, it is very easy for someone quite innocently to draw some incorrect interpretations.

* (1740)

The honourable member's figures—I think I know how he will describe them—but there is no secret that we are asking the MHO and the facilities to negotiate for certain levels of remuneration for their staff, and that would work into a hospital's budget to so many thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars or millions or whatever it happens to be. I will speak generically rather than specifically. There may be a case where a hospital did not make its budget last year and so then is being asked to make an effort to bring itself back to where it should be and at the same time meet the requirements that everybody else has to meet this particular year.

So some combination of those types of considerations go into the numbers for each and every hospital. I think the number was \$1.6 million for Brandon General Hospital that was bandied about

during the election campaign. I think the honourable member came out. I missed his audience there, his appearance. I had people there to hear what he had to say and his Leader (Mr. Doer) and the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans).

Here they were coming out to Brandon, and I guess they were going to get this money from SmartHealth, too, which does not exist.

An Honourable Member: SmartHealth does not exist?

Mr. McCrae: No, money for SmartHealth does not exist, but honourable members opposite spent \$100 million or more of it, even though it does not exist. That is why I call them "Doer dollars".

Anyway, the honourable member came out and lent his support to the member for Brandon East in saying we are not going to take that \$1.6 million out of Brandon General Hospital's budget. We do not think it is right, and that is our promise and it is all over the place. I think the member for Brandon East's campaign literature is filled up with this—how they are not going to do this.

I could not help but think, well, what are they saying for Seven Oaks? Are they being consistent throughout Manitoba? What are they saying for Grace? What are they saying for Health Sciences Centre? If they can make that promise in Brandon, what are they saying for Concordia? The member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews), I was looking for some help from him, but he does not know exactly what they were saying. [interjection] He tells me they are all over the map.

The point is, maybe the honourable member can answer that question for me since this is an opportunity for us to examine these matters. How can you say we are going to treat Brandon General Hospital different from all the other hospitals in Manitoba? This is what they said because I followed the New Democratic campaign fairly carefully because they were talking about health quite a bit and the Health minister had to be there to respond to various things. I do not remember them saying they were going to cancel all

requirements of all the other hospitals. They singled out Brandon General for special treatment.

I appreciate that, mind you, coming from Brandon, but is that fair? Now I put on my minister hat again and say, is that fair across the province of Manitoba? Are the people of Brandon really wanting something that is unfair? Are the people of Brandon really wanting something that places them at an advantageous position over and above their fellow citizens in the rest of the province? No. Brandon people simply want their fair share. They do not want a special deal, which is what it appears was being offered. It is that sort of business that makes it difficult for me to have a reasoned, logical discussion of hospital budgets with the honourable member as much as I would like very much to have that sort of a discussion.

Maybe they—yes, I believe they did. Did they not, in Flin Flon, make a promise not to go ahead with the implementation of the staffing guidelines? They may have done that, I am not sure—or at The Pas. Did they do that in Dauphin? I do not know. Did they do it in Morris? I do not think so. Did they do it in St. Pierre or in the other places where we have facilities of one kind or another, make that promise? That specific promise was strictly for Brandon. I am always trying to get a good deal for Brandon, but a good deal that works fairly with the rest of the province, too.

They never really did explain that. Maybe the honourable member can do that today. While he is doing that, it would be so much more easy for me to understand if the honourable member's figure for Seven Oaks is correct.

Let us just say that it is for the sake of argument, and he would want to do for Seven Oaks what he went to Brandon to promise to do in Brandon. Would he use the SmartHealth money to walk away from the requirement that Seven Oaks is presently attempting to meet? If so, how would he do it—because when I say Doer dollars, Doer dollars do not exist. They have spent a hundred million of them or more, but they do not exist.

We have now found out that every problem in the world—not in the world, but every problem in Manitoba

that requires money to solve can be simply taken out of the money the government is proposing to spend on a new arena in the city of Winnipeg.

Let us come clean with the people and not try to fool them all the time. That is all I am getting at. If I thought the honourable member was going to try to be forthright with the people on these issues then I think we could have a better discussion on it.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the figures I quoted from Seven Oaks are part of a memo that was faxed to a local radio station today from Seven Oaks that outlined those specific figures. I could have been off by a little bit. [interjection] I understand that memo circulated around Seven Oaks Hospital, for the minister's information, with those particular figures in it containing the staff cuts, et cetera, and it came out as a result of management, the CEOs of Seven Oaks Hospital. The figures jibe precisely with the numbers that I related last week in the Legislature which were contested and denied. I understand that memo has been faxed in writing, and it comes out of the hospital administration, as does all of the information that we circulate.

The minister may not be prepared to accept those particular figures, but those are the ones that are being distributed by the administration. I might add, last week when we raised this issue in the Legislature for the first time, the CEO of Seven Oaks Hospital confirmed that the cut to Seven Oaks this year would be \$1.6 million. He confirmed precisely the cut that I indicated earlier in my remarks, and in fact the only area that I am not entirely certain of is the area of the \$600,000 shortfall from last year which I also understand appears in the memo, the typewritten memo, but I could be off by a few figures since I am going from memory.

Notwithstanding that these figures appear in written documentation, notwithstanding that the CEO of Seven Oaks Hospital indicated that the figure for '95-96 was \$1.6 million, notwithstanding that we raised these figures last week in the Legislature, notwithstanding that I have discussed these figures with individuals in the hospital who have had these figures pointed out to them, the minister still tries to create the illusion that

we are making all of this up or that we are using it—[interjection] The minister denies that from his seat, but he certainly leaves the impression that somehow we draw these figures out of the air when in fact our sources are excellent. A hundred times out of a hundred we have been accurate in terms of the numbers we have used.

Secondly, I point out to the minister that one should talk about the allocation of figures when we have just heard this afternoon of inflated numbers for personal care home beds—and I am using the term "inflated," the minister's word. Last year's figures for personal care home beds were inflated. Now whether that was done deliberately or done inaccurately, the point is that documentation information was given out by the department which we relied on and which we used which we have now found out to be inaccurate. Now I am not going around assessing blame for that. The fact is that we can only deal with numbers that are provided by the department and we usually deal exclusively with numbers provided by the department.

* (1750)

My question was, he has indicated that my numbers are inaccurate; will he correct where I am wrong or will he at least indicate or confirm the \$1.6 million for '95-'96?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, I think the honourable member should give us a little credit once in awhile where credit is due. My staff and I, I believe, have acknowledged that a number contained in the Supplementary Information, while perhaps not technically incorrect, was somewhat misleading.

I think that at least the honourable member has said that he never makes a mistake. We do. I know the honourable member is perfect. We do make mistakes, and we own up to it when we do, and we attempt to correct those mistakes. That is the best way for us to proceed, I suggest, because people will believe us when we tell them that sometimes we make a mistake, and they will be prepared to work with us. That is what we try to do in this government and in this department. If we claimed perfection, I would not have wanted anybody to vote for me because nobody who claims

that should be believed including the honourable member.

I think in other cases I have spoken unwisely, and I would like to think when I have done that and it has been brought to my attention, I have tried to address and make right the situation because I do not want honourable members to be drawing conclusions from information that is not as clear as it should be. I make that acknowledgement, but I certainly do not make any apology in the sense that we are attempting to be very straight and open with the people of this province.

I speak for the people in my department when I say that because they have had to go through the very difficulties that honourable members opposite have attempted to put all of us through, and they have helped to steward a difficult department, in a difficult time in the history of this country, through to the point where we can claim—nay, we do not have to claim, we are told by others that we are leading this country in many, many areas of health renewal.

I am proud of that, and I am proud of the people who work for this department, and hopefully through my efforts we can use the good work they have done to the best advantage. I just get a little upset sometimes when the members opposite, for all the wrong reasons, attempt to discredit the good work that is done by their fellow Manitobans throughout this province, whether it be in the Department of Health or in a facility somewhere where they are dealing with difficult circumstances and doing their level best to do a good job for the people who require their care.

I am not questioning numbers the honourable member is throwing out, so much as I am questioning his interpretation of those numbers. I did not know Nick Kalansky was in the habit of faxing documents to radio stations and stuff like that, but we will review that. If that is what the honourable member is saying happened, well, we will review that situation. That certainly has not been my experience with Nick Kalansky.

What I want the honourable member to understand is that the budget is not a finalized thing at this point. That is why I hesitate to get too far down the road in a

discussion of numbers when the Seven Oaks Hospital is busily working away trying to respond to the demands and questions of my department while my department is trying to understand what it is that Seven Oaks needs to achieve in its particular fiscal year.

It is for that reason that I am not out to fill the honourable member's head with a bunch of numbers that all too often are bandied about early in the game and turn out not to be true or turn out to be changed later on. It is for that reason I think some precision is exactly what the people of Manitoba want.

The people of Manitoba are tired of hearing people respond and calling everything a crisis and responding to facts or figures that are far from clear in terms of being brought to a conclusion in a sense of preparation of budgets. Why do we not stop with all that business? Why do we not get on with presenting the people of Manitoba what really is rather than what might be. Let us present the people of Manitoba with what really is rather than what we think we might be able to scare them with.

Really and truly I believe we have a serious case of attempted abuse of the taxpayers of this province on two fronts. The Taxpayers Association, through its efforts, maybe overstated the case a little bit during the election campaign, maybe not. They did it certainly graphically to point out that we are engaging in the abuse of the next generation in the sense that we are asking them to pay for all our bills. I agree with the Taxpayers Association that that is wrong, and I am part of a government that is doing things to prevent that from happening.

I do believe that there are too many occasions when we attempt to scare senior citizens and vulnerable Manitobans about the real state of affairs that exists in our province. I think it is a repugnant way of conducting a political party. That is not my party, so I do not have to be responsible for that. I just say that it is a disservice, in my view.

Today we did tend to get into a little bit of rhetoric again, although we went for two or three days with not very much. I do not propose to spend my whole Estimates engaging in rhetoric, but I do have concerns

and I feel as a member of the House that I should have an opportunity, too, to have a chance to give voice. So sometimes my frustration comes through and I have to tell honourable members why I feel the way I feel. It is simply a question of interpretation.

Well, one of my rural friends said that if you took two farmers and put them in a room you would end up getting three opinions out of that room. Well, I do not know if that is true or not, but I know that you are going to get at least two in this Chamber and maybe sometimes three depending on the position taken by our colleagues in the Liberal Party. However, I have not seen as many occasions of the Liberal Party attempting to scare senior citizens. In fact, I cannot say that I have seen that happen. I think that is a credit to the Liberal Party, and we certainly have not been trying to do that.

What we see as our role is an attempt through good government and careful attention to the needs of senior citizens, that we can provide some reassurance to them about services today, at the same time providing reassurance to the next generation that those services will be there, too, for them when they need them and if they need them. I think one of the expressions was service when you need it and that is something I would like to be part of a team that delivers those services when they are needed. The way to do that is to pay careful attention to annual hospital budgets and to pay careful attention to the issues the honourable member is raising.

He is certainly right to raise them and to demand answers and accountability, and this is the place to do that. I do want to remind the honourable member that I think the time is here for us to build. In fact, I think one of his party's slogans was to rebuild. During the election, was it not rebuilding Manitoba or something like that and ours was keeping Manitoba strong. The message was so very similar in health care that I can understand why some voters would claim not to see very much difference or not to hear very much difference in what was being said.

In health I believe that our policies, the honourable member's party's policies and ours, were remarkably similar, in fact, sometimes taken from exactly the same reports. There is nothing wrong with that. Imitation is

the highest form of flattery and, frankly, I was flattered many times during the election campaign by the New Democratic Party, because if you stripped away the rhetoric and looked simply at what was being proposed, a remarkable resemblance, not only the child health strategy but the whole area of community health service delivery and various other pronouncements made by the New Democrats and the Liberals as well.

In a way, that is good because I think that reflects a general consensus amongst the population in Manitoba. Those are the directions we want to see you go in. We want to see you go there carefully. We want you to do it sensitively and with an eye on who should be the focus of all of our efforts. That is, in the acute sector, the patient, and in the rest of the system, the members

of the population, so that we can improve the health status of all of us and make some of the discussions honourable members and I get into more academic with the passage of time.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): The hour being 6 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 6, 1995

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