



First Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

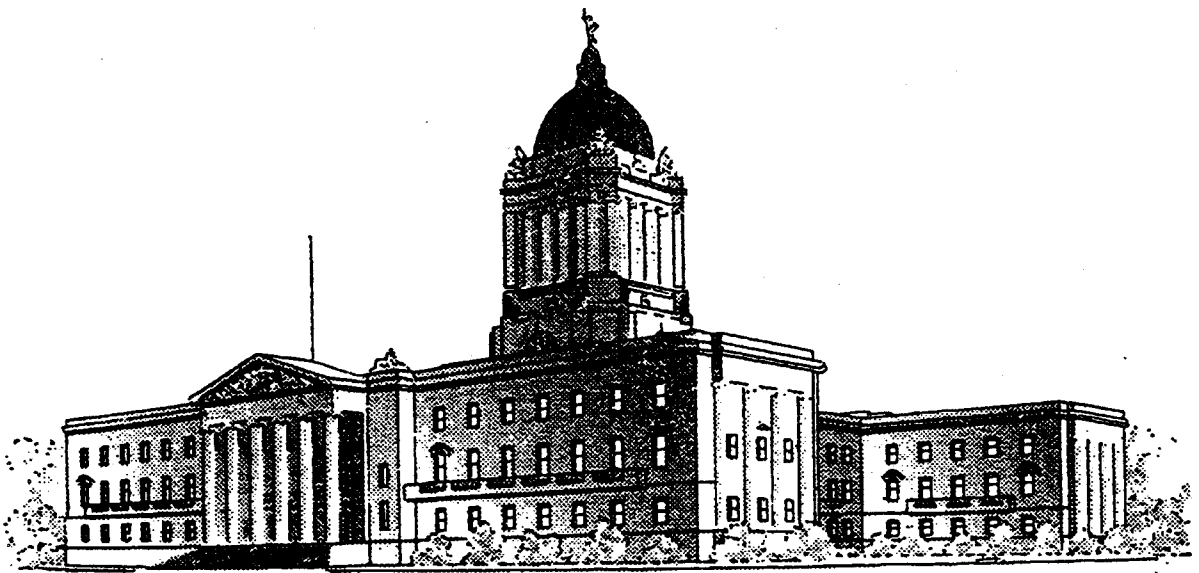
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(Hansard)

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 12, 1995

The House met at 8 p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY
(Continued)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY
(Concurrent Sections)

INDUSTRY, TRADE AND TOURISM

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Good evening. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

The committee will be resuming consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Industry and Tourism.

When the committee last sat it had been considering item 3.(a)(1) on page 99 of the Estimates book and on page 35 of the yellow supplement book.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): The minister cited some statistics in regard to tourism. I would be very interested in trading numbers, because I am quoting from StatsCan International Travel catalogue 66-001P March 1995 received June 12, '95.

It shows in the first quarter of '95 a small gain in automobile visits from the United States, actually in the month of March '95, but in the first quarter it shows a fall of 5.2 percent, first quarter over first quarter, and a total reduction of 1.5 percent, not that those are big numbers but they are clearly different from the numbers that the minister was putting on the record.

So I would like to just table this and see if these numbers are in some way not representative of what the minister was quoting from, not that I think they are horribly bad, but they do not indicate an improvement year over year.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): The numbers I had quoted were '94 over '93 of a 10 percent increase in the United States. Those are the numbers that I was quoting from.

Mr. Sale: You would confirm these numbers that the most recent quarter shows a slight reduction, certainly not an improvement.

Mr. Downey: I will not confirm them until I have an opportunity to have the department give me a response. I will do that.

Mr. Sale: Could I ask the minister? There is quite a section on the role of tourism services in promoting Winnipeg as a site for major meetings, conventions, events. It has puzzled us.

It has puzzled me why the—I do not know—it almost seems like a forced choice of The Forks as a site for the new entertainment complex when the one reason for coming downtown would be to make the Convention Centre viable for more major events, not that I am in favour of an arena there, but if we are going to have one anyway, I wonder what the rationale is for not getting some synergy between the Convention Centre and the arena which could clearly then put us in the major leagues of being able to host the largest events when we are now on a tier just below that where we cannot host the really big events, at least in one site.

Mr. Downey: I guess, at the outset, as far as I can see, I cannot see where the member has given any evidence that that in fact would be the case. I do not have any statistics that would in fact—or any numbers that would demonstrate, even though there would be two facilities, that we would not be able to host major attractions, even though location of the entertainment complex is not that far away.

What would give him to believe that there would be an inability to host major functions, even though they are not directly connected?

Mr. Sale: Well, I do not want to get into an unproductive exchange on this. I am really wondering whether there were any data that showed that it did not make a difference. I would just say on the face of it, the access to hotels, the access to the skywalk system, the downtown shopping and the fact that you could use

the arena and the Convention Centre efficiently together, I am sure the minister has been to many more big conferences than I have, but I have been to a few and when you have to travel between sites for parts of the event—even though it is only probably perhaps in the order of a kilometre or slightly less—that makes very inefficient scheduling and makes it more difficult.

I do not have any hard evidence—I do not think anybody does—but I wondered why the easy choice of The Forks as opposed to the Convention Centre which at least would have some rationale for strengthening the downtown.

Mr. Downey: I am sure we could get into a prolonged debate as to the pros and cons of, first of all, coming downtown at all, and that was certainly an issue that was debated. There are those who would feel it should not be downtown, that it would be better in an outlying area. I guess, basically, it was based on the final decisions of the people through MEC, I believe it was, in their work to bring it to the stage it is at, and that was the conclusion which they came to.

I think there is also a cost factor which benefits the current site that has been determined. I do not have the specifics on that. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) would be better asked that. But I think that there is a cost benefit to where it currently is being proposed.

* (2010)

Mr. Sale: I say again in a nonpartisan way to the minister that if those data were made available and they were in any sense persuasive, I suspect people would have less trouble with a decision, but there has been an unwillingness to publish the Coopers & Lybrand report and the underlying data, the Lavalin Report, which undergirded that study.

So far as I am aware, there are no data in the public sector that suggest that either the Convention Centre or The Forks is superior to the other or that give any reasons for either site in a cost-benefit sense. So, if such data are available or could be made available, I am sure we would be really happy to study it.

A small question before we move on to the next. Partly by happenstance and partly because I asked myself, I watched some very frustrated tourists in the front of the building here. They were Americans and, like many people, they had come and seen the tourist info sign and were enjoying the beautiful building and they asked for a map of the city. The person said, oh, we do not have maps of the city here. I said, that is really weird; why would we not have maps of the city here? He was loath to tell me specifically, but he said that there had been some kind of kaffuffle over who had access to what maps and maybe City Hall wanted people to go down there to get their city maps, so they would go to City Hall.

It seems to me these are the kinds of silly little things that annoy visitors. The guide was very polite and handled the people very nicely and suggested that the maps were available at the tourist information centre at The Forks. Again, that is not good business to say to people, well, yes, you are in a tourist information centre, but you are not in the right tourist information centre. You have to go to The Forks.

Would the minister undertake to look into that silly little problem and see if we can have a comprehensive Winnipeg and environs promotion awareness in the Leg? It certainly should be province-wide, as well, but I understand that there is some minor altercation between the city and somebody on this issue.

Mr. Downey: I thank the member for raising it. It seems pretty petty to me. Everybody who is working in tourism should be promoting all parts and regions of the province and it should not be a matter of sending people to another system. All material should be available at all stations and all points promoting city, promoting province, promoting all the different events.

I can appreciate the member's concern and we will be finding out what the difficulty is.

Mr. Sale: Thank you very much. I would appreciate that. If the minister could let me know as soon as he can sort it out, it would dissuade me from raising it in the House. I would rather not do that, because it is one of the smaller items in the universe.

I am sure the minister's staff and the minister are aware of the Canadian Tourism Research Institute and the travel outlook. Is the 1995 travel outlook out?

Mr. Downey: We will have to check for the honourable member.

Mr. Sale: Thank you. If it is out, I have not seen it yet. I have only the '94. I noticed in their Manitoba outlook for '94, they felt the travel activity will grow at rates slightly below the national average. I wondered whether that was, in fact, the experience in '94 in an overall sense.

Mr. Downey: We will get that information for the member.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: 3.(a) Tourism Initiatives (1) Tourism Services and Special Projects (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$631,300-pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$625,800-pass.

(2) Marketing and Promotions (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$490,500-pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$3,022,400-pass; (c) Grants \$75,000-pass.

(3) Tourism Development (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$426,600-pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$277,400-pass.

(4) Canada-Manitoba Partnership Agreement in Tourism (a) Other Expenditures \$7,100-pass; (b) Grants \$111,800-pass.

(5) Grant Assistance - Manitoba Horse Racing Commission \$3,394,000.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I note that the Liberal member is here from St. Boniface, and this was an issue during the election.

Are there any indications about whether the track which was sold, I believe, essentially to the workers at the track—what was the name of the group that bought it?

An Honourable Member: The Jockey Club.

Mr. Sale: Pardon? The Jockey Club. Okay. I know nothing about this area.

I am just asking the minister: Is it now on a firm footing or is it still at the point where it is marginal and at risk?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I do not know why the member made reference to the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) as it relates to the track. The track is not anywhere near his riding. It may be closer to his former leader—[inaudible] That might be what you are referring to.

An Honourable Member: That was what I was referring to.

Mr. Downey: Oh, okay, I am a little slow tonight, and other times.

Mr. Sale: Pass.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member to complete his answer.

Mr. Downey: Pass.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: (5) Grant Assistance - Manitoba Horse Racing Commission \$3,394,000-pass.

3.(b) Health Industry Development Initiative (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$484,200-pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$270,300-pass; (3) Grants \$750,000-pass.

(c) Aerospace Industries Development Initiative (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$274,300.

Mr. Sale: In this section, I wonder if you could just bring us up to date in an overall sense. I want to talk about the airport under this heading. I think we agreed earlier that this was, at least, a reasonable place to do it.

Just so the minister does not feel that I am sandbagging anybody, I have met with some staff of the project and I met with the chair of the board of the Winnipeg airport authority. I attended their meeting in Winnipeg, downtown, a few weeks ago along with

some members of the government side of the House, specifically, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews). Is the minister generally brought up to date on a regular basis of the state of the negotiations with Canada?

Mr. Downey: I would have to say generally kept up, but I will conclude that the staff are on a regular basis kept up to speed.

Mr. Sale: Could I ask the minister whether there are particular concerns that are of real concern to this government, in terms of the way in which Canada is handling the negotiations, the adequacy of their offers, et cetera, in terms of how the process is going at present?

Mr. Downey: I guess two points. Staff inform me there are basically two concerns. One is the delay in getting on with dealing with the agreement, and the other are the demands which the federal Department of Transport are placing on the local authorities in accepting the airports. That is a general comment.

Mr. Sale: I have to be cautious here in asking questions because apparently, and I am sure the minister is aware of this, there is a confidentiality agreement which is so onerous that some of the clauses would appear to make it constitute a breach of the agreement to reveal the clauses that are in the agreement. It is a bizarrely complex agreement on confidentiality. I am deeply troubled by that. I am wondering how the minister is aware of it and how he feels about it.

Mr. Downey: Well, again, dealing with a public entity, it is a matter of trying to make sure that as much as possible can be fully disclosed on any actions that are taken, so I will have to further request comments from the department as to the excessive—if that is what I am getting from the member—confidentiality that is being brought forward as part of the agreement.

Again, there has to be a certain amount of public disclosure when public resources are being involved.

Mr. Sale: My understanding, Mr. Chairperson, and to the minister, is that the data, for example, that are supplied by Canada are not subject to verification; that

if the data are used and are found to be wrong, that is our problem, not Canada's problem; that we have no ability to put forward alternative cases. It is rather like the fast-track proposal in the States, you either take their proposal or you leave it, but there is no ability on the part of this end to access the databases that are available to verify whether or not the case that we are being subjected to bears any relation to reality.

* (2020)

In fact, my understanding is that the first offer from the federal government was so disconnected from reality that the board simply refused it and sent it back, but they were not in a position to verify it. They simply were using their own instincts, I guess.

Mr. Downey: I guess the case the member has laid out does not seem to be a reasonable approach in a system where we would expect if a case were presented to an authority from the federal government, and you should take it or leave it seems somewhat not only heavy-handed, just is not a traditional way of doing business wherever you are coming from.

I will do an investigation, through the department, as to in fact if this—I am not questioning him. I will verify what he is saying if that is happening. I will attempt to communicate with the federal minister the concerns that are being raised and see if we can help resolve it.

I do believe the federal minister is of the mind to get these agreements in place and to get it done. I do not believe he is an individual who wants to drag these things out for the sake of dragging them out so this may be coming from an official's level. I will undertake to communicate to the federal minister if in fact evidence is demonstrated that this is the case.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for that. May I just request that the minister be cautious in how he raises this, because I do not want to jeopardize the people who have shared the concern with me. I think this is a terribly important issue for our future as a city, and we need to resolve the process question.

I would also say to the minister that what happened, what caused at least a chunk of the delay was the

change in the federal government. The new government came down with totally new, absolutely new, requirements of the transfers.

Previous airports at Calgary and Vancouver, for example, that were transferred under the idea that the federal government would be no worse off after the transfer than they would have been before. The new regime requires that the federal government be paid a profit on their lease from Day One of the transfer, that this has to be profitable.

Well, in Winnipeg's case, that is a very severe constraint and will likely require passenger tolls at the gate, which I am sure you have paid in Vancouver and Calgary—require tolls of a substantial level just to pay the operating profit requirement let alone to do what the tolls are really supposed to do, which is to pay for new runways and infrastructure. I hope the minister will take a real interest in this issue and will attempt to get it on track in a way that does not wind up with us holding a rather leaky bag.

Mr. Downey: I will proceed with caution.

Mr. Sale: I want to raise questions at some point, and I am not sure where the right place to do it is around—it has been on the back burner for a long time, but the proposed potash development. Where would be appropriate?

Mr. Downey: Any time.

Mr. Sale: Well, then, let us do it now. Can the minister update the committee on the current status of the long-term plan which may, or may not, result in a potash mine in the Russell area?

Mr. Downey: I do not want to overstep my bounds, but I will attempt to just give a brief overview. I do not believe there is any funding that comes from the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism on this project. It will fall more with the Department of Energy and Mines. The specific details of it, I can suggest that is where he gets his information.

However, I can just give a quick comment as it relates to industrial development and have to say that,

as a department responsible for Industry, Trade and Tourism, we are extremely anxious to see the project proceed in the Russell area. I know there has been a considerable amount of 3-D seismic work carried out, a site location for the proposed shaft and considerable work done as it relates to preliminary preparation.

I am also aware that potash values have improved substantially with the improvement in the agriculture prices throughout the world, and it has I think encouraged the partners which we are involved with to move as aggressively as possible to do it.

Again, the economics of it have to be there, and we hope that is in fact within the reach of the industry. I said at the outset, because of my previous knowledge and my previous responsibilities in that department, I have met with the partners of the province, a French company, and the last time that I discussed with them, there were indications that they were planning to proceed as the market turned around and as the plans unfolded on a normal basis.

So my feeling from Industry, Trade and Tourism is it certainly is a major job creator; it is a major wealth provider for the province and should be done on a reasonably planned basis.

The details of any current situation would be more appropriately asked in the Department of Energy and Mines because they are actually the project leader as it relates to the development.

Mr. Sale: I thank the minister for that background on it. I do not remember whether we have done Energy and Mines yet or not—I guess we have not, so we will pursue that there.

Again, I think this illustrates why, if it were possible, it would be good to pull together all of the industrial development questions under one broad ministry that has them in place, because the other area I wanted to explore in regard to that was the degree to which transportation might be at risk because of branch line abandonment.

I do not know the exact site of the mine. I remember it from a map, but I do not know it exactly. Is it on a

main line? As far as I recall, there is not a main line through that point. It is a branch line.

Is the government concerned about this issue in terms of the line that serves Russell and the surrounding area?

Mr. Downey: I am going by recollection, but I do not think it is too far away from a main line.

Mr. Sale: I cannot recall the exact location, but it just I think illustrates how important the overall transportation strategy is in an industrial development strategy. I think we would welcome a closer integration of those strategies.

I want to ask some questions about a project. Here, I do not in any way want to embarrass the Chair, but he may want to make an observation on this from the Chair because I believe that one of the signatories to this is your brother. Am I right?

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I am not sure what you are talking about.

Mr. Sale: I am talking about Moosehorn Supply and their request for support in terms of waste processing.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Just a comment from the Chair and from the MLA for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson), I do not know anything about the document you have in your hand. I know my brother has been in the Legislative Building a couple of times in the last number of months, but that is what I know about it.

So you can proceed as you wish.

Mr. Sale: For the record, I am not in any way suggesting that it is a problem, but I wanted—not anybody to be sandbagged by the idea that your brother is one of the signatories to this letter.

The company, Mr. Minister, is called Moosehorn Supply. They have the Canadian rights to an American waste-processing company called Swis Corporation. I believe that Mr. Cummings has received this information as Minister of Environment, but it is also an industrial development proposal.

Very briefly, the proposal is to take waste at the tipping site and do the separation of recyclables, compostables and combustibles at the actual tipping site and to manufacture a heavy condensed brick which I guess would be like a peat brick probably, is what it would look like, that could be burned in conventional boilers as long as they had a fly-ash system.

Swis manages a plant like this in the States and will shortly be opening a large plant. This company is talking to Brandon and Portage la Prairie, but they have not felt that they have gotten reasonable response from the province. It may partly be because the WRAP system, recycling program, is not fully sorted out yet.

But I wonder if the minister is aware of this proposal. If he is not, then I would get them to supply him with the information, but I would just see if his officials or he recognizes it. I presume it might come in under MIOP or MIRI.

Mr. Downey: The first comment is that I am sure, Mr. Chairman, that—and you have clearly indicated—you are not aware of this. I do say, though, I am sure that if he is like his brother, he is a very fine gentleman.

To answer more directly, he may have had contact with the Department of Rural Development, but I am not aware from discussions with the staff—I do not believe we have seen a copy of this proposal before. However, we will have a discussion with the Department of Rural Development and also the Department of Environment to see at what stage it is at. So if there is any assistance that might be able to be brought forward to further help look at the project at least, then we will discuss it with the other departments.

* (2030)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: I would like to say something further here.

I did not want it to sound like I did not know what my brother was doing as far as the business was concerned, okay. I did not know what this document, and so on, was. That is all.

Mr. Sale: I thank the minister for that. Could the minister indicate who the right person to direct the inquiry for Mr. Sexsmith and Mr. Sveinson would be?

Mr. Downey: Because it falls within an environmental initiative, we would have it proceed to go to Valerie Zinger who is the managing partner of the environmental branch.

Mr. Sale: Of your department?

Mr. Downey: Yes.

Mr. Sale: Okay. I appreciate the minister directing that.

Under the Canada-Manitoba Communications Technology Research and Industry Development Agreement, which must be one of the longest names on record, could the minister indicate what that agreement is covering and what the current state of the agreement is? Is it a five-year, three-year?

Mr. Downey: It is a five-year program of which the province has put \$5 million forward and the federal government have put \$5 million forward?

Mr. Sale: What stage is the program at, what year and what are its current goals and achievements?

Mr. Downey: We are in the final stages of the agreement. We are in the last year of it at this particular time—oh, I am sorry, it expires in '96, as I have indicated. So it is in the final stages.

The objectives are to try and put forward a nucleus of new technology as it relates to the whole communications field, as it relates to—what are some of the examples—new styles, methods of purchasing and ordering for the general public, a matter of analysis of the industry. It is also the funding for TR Labs which is the major research component which falls within this agreement.

I have to say that I think it has demonstrated some fairly positive results. It also has the capability of major industry capabilities which fall within this agreement.

Mr. Sale: Is it anticipated that this will be renewed or is this a one-time?

Mr. Downey: I think the member has probably heard from the federal government the same message that we have, that it does not look very hopeful for federal-provincial agreements. The federal government have given notice that we not anticipate any new agreements as per agreements like this.

We have indication that the tourism agreement probably will not be re-entered into or a new one developed. We are of the same feeling on this one, although I am not aware of any official notification. We are assuming, and one should not do that, but we are assuming that with the manner in which the federal government have been reducing funds to the provinces, we are not expecting any great things to be carried on as it relates to agreements like this.

Mr. Sale: I just, for the record, express my sadness that that is the approach that this federal government is taking. These are not costly agreements in an overall sense, but they lever substantial improvement in the knowledge base, they lever improvement in services, and because Canada is involved, they cross-fertilize from province to province and share help in that dissemination of useful information across the country. I am sorry that our federal government no longer sees these kinds of things as priority activities in their current state.

Could the minister explain—again my rookie lack of knowledge here. What is TR Labs? What does it stand for and what do they do?

Mr. Downey: Basically the work that is carried out by TR Labs is to carry out work prior to commercialization, precompetitive research work.

Before industries would spend a lot of capital commitment to a new initiative, it is a joint effort between industry and the federal-provincial governments to try some of the technology before it goes right into full commercial application. It removes some of the risk as it relates to the investment that will be expected. Basically, what it does is it also helps to put in place building blocks for the telecommunications

industry. We believe that it has carried out a very meaningful role. In fact, I think it is leading the industry in Manitoba, in the country, as it relates to work that they have done.

Mr. Sale: This, too, Mr. Chairperson, is an area where there is a great deal of potential for people tripping over each other. I think of the critical role of distance technologies for education at all levels, particularly secondary and post-secondary, the potential in terms of industry, the need for easy access to the various databases that come through the Internet and other nets. I take it that this must be more hardware-related in its research, solid-state devices, switching devices. Is that the sort of thing this is?

Mr. Downey: That is correct. I think it is a good example of the government, industry and Academe working together to produce the kinds of hardware that will be needed in the whole telecommunications industry. It is interesting some of the spin-off technology that develops from the work they are doing that can be applied, for example, in the agricultural industry.

If he has the opportunity, I would suggest he should tour TR Labs. It is certainly most enlightening as to the work that they are doing.

Mr. Sale: Could the minister tell me whether MTS, the telephone system, has a direct involvement in this?

Mr. Downey: The answer is yes.

Mr. Sale: Presumably, this area falls under this ministry, but obviously there are at least four other ministries that would have a direct interest here in terms of the Minister responsible for the Telephone System (Mr. Findlay) per se, the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), yourself. If I think for a minute, there is likely another major ministry. Agriculture may well have an interest here.

Is there a mechanism or is this the mechanism for co-ordinating the government's activity in this area?

Mr. Downey: The Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism is the mechanism for the co-ordination.

Mr. Sale: You are the lead area.

I have another question, which may be in the wrong place, Mr. Chairperson. Under the Environmental Industries Development Initiative, does that initiative have responsibility for the Hazardous Waste Corporation?

Mr. Downey: The answer to that question is no, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Sale: That then is under Environment, is it, entirely?

Mr. Downey: The answer to that question is yes.

Mr. Sale: Thank you very much. The last item there then is, does this group have anything to do with the Hazardous Waste Corporation?

Mr. Downey: Not a direct relationship.

Mr. Sale: My colleague from Swan River has a couple of questions under the agri-food area.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Chair, the whole area of agri-food development and expansion to value-added jobs for the agriculture industry is very important as we have changes in the agricultural industry right now. One of the areas of diversification that has been talked about is the ethanol production. I wonder whether this department has been looking at expansion of the ethanol industry and whether there has been work done to develop markets.

We see the initiative in the United States where they are shifting over to more blending of ethanol, and we hear that there are markets for that production. I would like to ask the minister whether any research has been done on that and what he sees as the potential for this industry.

Mr. Downey: The answer to that question is yes. There is a tremendous potential for that industry.

Ms. Wowchuk: There is ethanol being produced at the present time at Minnedosa. Does the minister see any expansion in the province, and where does he see the

possibility of expansion of the ethanol industry in Manitoba?

Mr. Downey: The answer is yes to that question. I see it taking place on the western side of the province.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chair, I do not know whether this is the right place to ask this question. As the minister well knows, there is an interest in ethanol production in my part of the province, in the Swan River constituency.

One of the things that this is hinging on is the expansion of natural gas. We had a proposal put forward by this government with the federal government. Unfortunately, that proposal failed. It probably failed in the minds of people in the area because of some of the details of the agreement, the high sign-up rate, a need for a 60 percent sign-up, and as a result that requirement could not be met.

*(2040)

There are other parts of the province that are looking for expansion of natural gas. Since the agreement with Centra has not been successful in some areas, I wonder if the minister can indicate what other options will be available to communities such as the Swan River area that are in desperate need of an alternate energy source.

There are other areas. I believe there was one in the southern part of the province, maybe in the minister's constituency, where the people were not able to meet the requirements of that agreement, so it is going to mean that if the government is sincere about expanding natural gas, they are going to have to look at other options. I wonder whether the minister could outline what he proposes to do, or his government proposes to do, in those areas where there is a need but the agreement that was signed under the infrastructure program was not satisfactory.

Also, since that agreement failed, is the money that was in the infrastructure program for natural gas still available if another program is designed?

Mr. Downey: I have been holding back, Mr. Chairman. I have to say I have been restraining myself.

The member has now gone and triggered—I feel a speech coming on that I am going to have to give about this whole ethanol business. I do appreciate the questions. I will elaborate a little bit, first of all on the ethanol industry and what in fact I believe can take place.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, there have been several organizations or companies, both locally and other areas, actively looking at the potential for further ethanol production in Manitoba.

I first of all should say, though, that I was pleased between 1977 and 1981 to be part of a government that brought in a measure which encouraged a plant at Minnedosa that was, in fact, not operating any longer—an old distillery and Mohawk Oil and Gas corporation came along, and through planning and commitment put forward the kind of capital needs that were necessary to start up the plant at Minnedosa known as Mohawk.

That has been in operation ever since. There has been an incentive put forward by the Province of Manitoba which encouraged that to take place. I was pleased that the previous administration to ours did not remove that, and of course it has maintained jobs and using agricultural product to produce alcohol that you drive not drink.

I would further suggest that some of the recent changes in the U.S. have encouraged expansion of ethanol operations in the U.S. I think some of the most recent changes that have taken place in Canada in Canadian law will further enhance ethanol production in western Canada. Again, it has to be based on demand. I understand that the demand continues to grow.

I would invite or encourage anyone who is interested in the kind of an overall program that supports agriculture and also supports the consumer and also supports clean environment, there is an operation at Lanigan, Saskatchewan, where there are several thousands of litres of ethanol produced.

The by-product of that ethanol, both the liquid and the mash, goes into a several-thousand-head feedlot at

the same location. It is owned basically by the producers of that area, and it is quite an impressive operation.

I should also say that there have been recent changes at the Mohawk plant at Minnedosa where they have introduced a new process where they extract some of the higher-valued proteins off of the grains before they use it for the alcohol production. That is now going into cereal production for human consumption, which adds further value to the grain that is being used. Again, the product that is left is good for the production of alcohol. After the alcohol is taken off, it again is maintained or used for livestock feed. It is an excellent process, and I think what they are doing at Mohawk will show the way for other plants in Canada.

* (2050)

I should also state that one of the things you need in a community to put a plant like that in place is access to natural gas. The unfortunate thing in this country is that we have not seen the expansion of natural gas to communities, whether it is the Swan River Valley, southwestern Manitoba, or in areas of South Central or Interlake, in fact, there is no natural gas.

We have proceeded and it is basically being led by the Department of Rural Development, because it is a Rural Economic Development Initiative, one which we saw as an opportunity to use the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure program working with Centra Gas. Again, because some of these areas are somewhat distant from current gas hook-ups in Manitoba, it would take substantial amounts of resources to make that connection.

To my knowledge, there have been some off-and-on decisions made as it relates to southwestern Manitoba. I know there is supposed to be a meeting in Killarney tonight where the council are deciding whether they are proceeding or whether they are not. It is my understanding, as well, if they do not proceed that it, in fact, could put in jeopardy that whole project.

Initially, if the member remembers, there were some 23 communities that were put forward under the Infrastructure Agreement. I think with those that

decided not to proceed and go ahead, there were something like 17 left, but in the interim another community came forward under a co-op mechanism known as Gladco, in the Gladstone-Austin area, that are doing it a different way through the formation of a co-op using infrastructure money and doing it based on forming their own company, not using Centra Gas. So there are basically a couple of alternatives that are out there.

I, quite frankly, hope that they proceed. I think that until you have a cheaper source of energy that you need for ethanol production, that it just makes it impossible for Swan River to have one. It makes it impossible for southwestern Manitoba or any area that does not have access to natural gas. So when you talk economic development for these communities, the first thing you have to do is put in the infrastructure and the kinds of capabilities that would allow them to do that. Anything you need that takes high energy usages, natural gas is the most effective way.

I know in Dauphin, for example, they have an alfalfa dehydrating plant. Without natural gas it could not operate. We know that in Arborg they are proposing to put in an alfalfa dehydrating plant. Without it, they cannot move on it. So you are really in a position without having natural gas service to these communities, basically, unless they have another source of energy—they have hydroelectricity but it is for high usages and in these kinds of operations it just is not competitive. I might as well be blunt about it. It just cannot happen. So that is why the desire is to move and put natural gas in.

As it relates to Swan River—and I think the most recent situation is that they have been asked for a business plan and asked for resolutions from their communities to come forward. Again, Swan River is not unlike the southwest part of the province. There are alternatives as to bringing gas to Manitoba from Saskatchewan. One of the problems there is that we need National Energy Board authority and, again, it costs money to bring it from Saskatchewan to Manitoba. I think in Swan River's case it is something like \$2.3 million. In southwest Manitoba, it is in excess of \$4 million to \$6 million. So it is a substantial cost.

The initial plan, I have to say, was that Saskatchewan we thought were prepared to bring the gas to the border without any initial cost. They put gas into Montana and the National Energy Board said the people of Saskatchewan could not subsidize putting gas into another region. They could not back subsidize it into Saskatchewan. That threw a curve ball at us in Manitoba and Saskatchewan Energy TransGas decided they would not proceed based on that ruling. Now that maybe should be challenged. It is a consideration which should be considered.

I say, particularly, though, in the meantime, Centra Gas made a proposal to come from a northern hook-up at the Rapid City position which would have accomplished taking gas into the southwest corner. Swan River, I believe, still would have to make an agreement with Saskatchewan to bring the gas in. There is a substantial cost to that, as well. The member says if that fails, is there a way of which we can maintain the infrastructure money. I think there is a point at which there has to be a decision made as to whether or not the project can proceed. If the communities are not able to generate some support locally and put money forward then it is pretty hard to proceed.

Again, though, getting back to the question about ethanol and developing more ethanol plants, it is absolutely critical to have a gas line supply to do that. One could make reference to other major energy users, again, for further processing that has to take place. You have to have the additional support for energy supply.

I have been a very strong supporter all my political years in trying to enhance and make sure rural gasification is provided. I thought we were well down the road. We know we will have some communities signed, get it, because some of them have already agreed to it. I think it was the southern part of the province, I think Rosenfeld is it, that is going to get hooked up. Several smaller communities in the central region are in fact benefiting under the infrastructure program and are proceeding.

Some of the larger cost areas are having some difficulties, because the municipalities either feel they

cannot afford it or they do not see there is enough economic benefit to do it, and there is controversy within their own communities as to whether they should proceed. I would hope, and I say this genuinely, they could agree that at least they could see the benefits because, to me, without it, it will be hard for those communities to continue to grow and expand.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chair, the minister said that Swan River would have to negotiate with Saskatchewan to get that energy. I guess the question is: Is it not the Manitoba government that would have to negotiate this with the Saskatchewan government to get that energy there, or is it, in fact, the community that would have to do the negotiating?

Mr. Downey: Not necessarily the government, because if, for example, it were Centra that were doing the project they would have to negotiate with the TransGas hook-up in Saskatchewan. If the local community set up a co-op to do it, it would have to be that entity that would have to negotiate with TransGas. Again, we have offered to help, to help encourage it to happen. We have talked to the Saskatchewan government. They know what our intentions are. They know we would like to do it, but they have a Crown corporation that is responsible for the delivery of gas. It would be that Crown corporation that would be the selling agency to the Manitoba corporation that was going to deliver the gas in Manitoba.

Again, as far as movement of the product across the border, it would take a National Energy Board approval to actually do that. It should not be a problem. Where the problem comes in is if they were going to deliver it to the Manitoba border without charge to Manitobans then they say that could cause a problem.

Let me just give you my feeling about the development of the Trans-Canada Pipeline and what went wrong, and it is easy to look back and be critical. When the Trans-Canada Pipeline crossed Canada from Alberta to give our good neighbours in Ontario natural gas, I believe they should not have got a licence to do it unless they put a complete lateral system in as they moved across Manitoba. To me that would have been a minuscule cost in relationship to the overall project, and Manitoba would have developed at a very

aggressive rate. Just certain communities were cherry picked because they had greater populations and could show greater profits, and that is why they got the gas to start with.

I firmly believe that in issuing any licence to go across Manitoba the national gas pipeline system should have been required to put lateral lines in as they were moving across the province. That is hindsight. How do we do it now? That is, I would hope, a common objective of the member for Swan River and also members at this table.

Ms. Wowchuk: Certainly, all of us have said on both sides of the House that if we are going to have economic development in rural Manitoba we have to have a cheaper energy source.

We talked about ethanol, and, again, I do not know whether this is an area to ask this question about other energy sources. But in Ontario there is a product where they are looking at geothermal energy. Again, that might come under Energy and Mines, but I want to ask whether there has been any research done by industry under this department to look at alternate energy sources in other areas where you cannot get natural gas, and whether this is a possible alternative as an energy source that could help communities. Or, has any work been done, and does the minister feel this is a viable route that should be explored for an ultimate energy source in areas where it appears difficult to get natural gas?

* (2100)

Mr. Downey: The answer is yes. We have been in discussion with certain companies looking at further research capabilities in the whole geothermal activity, particularly one company at this stage. They were talking both to the province and to Manitoba Hydro and we were looking at the development of a plant here. At this point I can report that we have not had any positive decisions to move ahead with it, although we have been working on that kind of a project. I believe it is an excellent alternative. In fact, we have seen a lot of geothermal activity in the province through the private sector. Right now people are putting in the heat-pump systems for heating of their houses, for their livestock

facilities. Again, the initial cost is relatively steep, but the long-term benefits are certainly, certainly there.

As far as generating large sources of energy for production of an ethanol plant, it just is not there. You could not produce enough energy in a form which would generate enough heat to do it, to cook the grain, that is, not to my knowledge and I am very limited. There has been some work done on it, and there is being some work done. I, quite frankly, would like to see more extensive work done on it. I know that Manitoba Hydro, in the discussions with us and this company that was looking at Manitoba for further expansion, could well have played a major role.

I thank the member for the question. Energy is critical to the future development. Manitoba Hydro is critical, and it is certainly the lowest cost power we have available to us in many communities, but it just is not low enough to compete with natural gas.

Ms. Wowchuk: This is the Agri-Food Industries Development Initiative, and there is some \$283,000 that is spent. Can the minister give some indication how this money is spent? Are there labs in certain areas where testing is done on agri-food or value-added products for agriculture?

We talk about the value-added jobs that we really have to get out of our agriculture products instead of shipping everything out in the raw state as we are doing now. So I would like some information as to, where is this money spent and where is the research done?

Mr. Downey: The money that the member is referring to basically falls into the category of salaries for people working within the department and in that whole area of further food processing and development of the agri-food industry. The food test lab comes under EITC which is based in Portage la Prairie, which is a major piece of infrastructure and supporting mechanism to the food industry.

I do not disagree with the member. For example, what we are seeing happening particularly in the potato industry—that is a major growth sector which we believe will continue to grow and expand. In the pulse crop industry, whether it is cleaning, processing or

packaging of pulse crops, we believe it will be another tremendous growth area because the Asian, South American and Mexican markets are opening up at a very rapid pace.

In the whole area of crushing of oilseeds particularly, we have two very successful oilseed crushing plants in which we hope we would see expansions in that area as freight costs for raw product go on the producers. There will be alternatives that will be looked at, so we will be shipping more finished product rather than raw product.

I would hope that we could further see the enhancement of pasta processing because of the restrictions that are being placed by the Americans on the movement of durum wheat. I am upset that they do not want to have our durum wheat, but if we have to turn the durum wheat into pasta and put it in small boxes and sell it in small containers, and ship them a whole lot of jobs and value added with it, that, I am very supportive of.

Those kinds of programs and supporting activities fall under the Manitoba Industrial Opportunity Program, of which we have been involved in several agriculture food processing-related activities.

Mr. Sale: Could we spend a bit of time on the hydro issue? I know that this is not your area, but the marketing of the product is and the product is. We do not have to spend any time debating that what we are exporting is a raw material at this point or at least a very low level of finishing in it in its 60-cycle current.

We have a sale which is running out in about 10 years, I guess. The Northern States Power Agreement runs out in about 10 years. The lead time on any kind of major user of 500 megawatts is pretty significant. My understanding of our energy demands provincially for hydro is that they are not growing particularly quickly and certainly they will not absorb the Northern States Power sale.

Can the minister indicate, in whatever detail he can, the view of the government in terms of where we are going with that excess power in 2005 when the contract expires and whether we have any possibilities for

moving the finishing of this material in-province instead of sending it offshore?

Mr. Downey: Again, in the sense of dealing with it in a specific department, he knows that there is a minister responsible for Energy and Mines and The Manitoba Hydro Act (Mr. Praznik), and I will leave any answers as it relates specifically to the hydro to that.

But I will make a general comment, because I think it is important for Manitoba's Industry, Trade and Tourism department.

That is why we were extremely supportive and anxious to see the government, and were pleased to be part of, removing the sales tax off of hydroelectricity used in the manufacturing sector. That is a substantial amount of money that is paid in taxes and puts us in an uncompetitive position compared to other provinces. That move in itself makes our hydroelectricity basically 7 percent cheaper than it was a year ago right now.

Anyone looking at using major amounts of it, whether it is in the mineral processing, which, quite frankly, takes electricity, whether it is in the smelting of product at Selkirk rolling mills, or whether it is in the welding industry out at Versatile shops or the glass business in St. Boniface, which the member wanted some support for and got, the whole bottom line is that hydroelectricity is our major asset in this province.

Quite frankly, I believe very strongly that we need to probably move forward with a policy and programs that will encourage a lot more users of electricity in the province of Manitoba, and rather than exporting the electricity down a hydro line into the United States or selling it into Ontario—although I do also support strongly a national power grid; I think that it would be in the national interest to have a national power grid tying this country together—we would in fact be better off as a province if we could turn that electricity into jobs.

I have said earlier and I firmly believe that we have a tremendous opportunity to expand our transportation sector. We now have a major development in the two bus manufacturing plants. We have some major carriers for raw materials in the grain-hopper bottom

trailers and also the materials-handling trailers. Again, these are major expansions taking place.

We also have the tractor and the farm machinery manufacturing sector where we believe we have a tremendously competitive edge with our lower costs of electricity and the dollar that is lower than the United States. We have seen our exports and our manufacturing jobs increase substantially. Again, that is what we want to drive towards.

My strategy as a minister within the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism is to further encourage the automotive industry to take a look at Manitoba to do a lot more of the work that they do, if not in building complete automobiles or that type of thing, then to build a lot more component parts here.

When one looks at what is going on throughout Manitoba, we see a tremendous amount of component parts going into the automotive trade in other parts of the world, particularly in the United States.

So I am a very strong supporter of using electricity here in Manitoba to enhance our economy. We have talked over the past few months as to how we can further do that. Some of the ways in which we have done it, as I said, we have removed the sales tax off of electricity. We will be further working on policies and programs that I am hopeful will encourage the use of the electricity here in Manitoba.

When one looks at what is happening around the world, there is I think a tremendous demand going to be developed, and we will be in the most competitive position because of our low-cost, clean hydroelectric power.

Mr. Sale: I thank the minister for his enthusiasm. He and Ed Schreyer must have been good friends.

Mr. Downey: Well, after we beat him in 1977, we were better friends.

Mr. Sale: I am concerned about this because the rhetoric—and I do not want to use it. That is a nasty term. I withdraw the term "rhetoric."

The speech of the minister is fine and supportive. My question though is, what are the actual resources of the government that are being put to this task?

We have Manitoba Hydro responsible for selling its product. So they have a marketing arm over there, and they try and negotiate power sales. We have your department, this Department of Industry and Trade, responsible for an industrial strategy, so you are trying to keep some of that product available so that you can do more value-added kinds of activities with it.

* (2110)

You talk about a national energy grid. I guess I do not see evidence of a clear strategy here in terms of, is the priority internal? Is the priority sales offshore? Where is the co-ordinating point? Where is the will of government to focus energy—unintentional pun—to focus the energy of the government on the question of this resource that is going to come available, and, of course, we have potential for another what, 2,500 megawatts?

Mr. Downey: I will speak as a Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism. As far as I am concerned, the major focus, and I have pointed out previously, is that we want to make sure that we maximize the use of hydroelectric power right here in Manitoba to produce value-added product.

There is a limit as to how fast that develops and grows, and I think one of the things that we have done that cuts across all departments as in a central focus, is that is we believe strongly as a government that you encourage business to develop and grow by removing taxes and to create the environment for which that industry can develop.

The biggest move that we have made to encourage the use of hydroelectricity in Manitoba was the last two budgets when the first year we took a 3.5 percent sales tax for last year and this 1st of April we removed the balance 3.5 percent sales tax. That, basically for industries that are heavy users of electricity, lowered the cost of electricity by 7 percent. That to me is a substantial benefit to encourage the use of electricity in

Manitoba. That has been long requested by industry, and certainly I have been a very strong supporter of it.

The member asks for a co-ordination between Manitoba Hydro and the Province of Manitoba. Let me give him an example. We had a very close working relationship and have on projects like the Dow Corning project at Selkirk where we had a management committee in which we were both involved in the management program. That in itself was encouraging use of electricity. We were part of it as a province; Manitoba Hydro was part of it on the basis of selling more electricity.

The co-ordination which some of this activity comes to place is under the Economic Innovation and Technology Council and the Economic Development Board of Cabinet. Again, that is a co-ordinating role in which ministries come together, staff come together to further enhance and push co-ordinated policies. To me, that is the co-ordinating body.

Again, I think that we are not going to sit back, I would like to play the lead role and continue to play the role as it relates to the use of electricity; however, because Hydro is a Crown corporation, they do have a responsibility as well to be part of a marketing exercise to get out and sell their product. It is not totally up to the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism. They are an entity which should be out promoting it as well, but they have been doing it in concert with the province.

Mr. Sale: I appreciate the member's comments. Earlier in our discussion tonight we agreed that under subappropriation 10.3, there should be a transportation initiative.

I just would suggest to him that maybe an (h) is also appropriate, particularly as we get closer to the expiry of that sale agreement, that there needs to be a Hydro initiative that becomes a strategic initiative for the government in order to maximize the possibility of that resource for our province.

I would also say that I think it is important that comments from the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) in regard to geothermal energy and other

energy sources be highlighted because not through my own knowledge, but through those who work in the environmental areas, there is increasing concern that the flooded areas of the province were flooded for the dams.

I am not evading or avoiding responsibility for whose administration was in charge when this was done. This released and is continuing to release a great deal of the carbon zinc that was in that area and the CO₂ emissions from flooded areas that have been flooded for Hydro are extremely high—much, much higher than you would expect, essentially because the rate of rotting of material goes up very, very sharply.

It is not as clean and benign an energy source as we sometimes think because it does not have any waste product coming off of it as it is actually developing the electricity, but the carbon zinc problem is a very real problem in terms of global warming, so I am not sure there is such a thing as a benign energy source.

Could we move on then? I think I managed to skip over the health ones. Somehow that got by me without my realizing that we passed it.

That is (b). I think we could pass that under the Minister's Salary and we can go back to (b). All right?

An Honourable Member: Sure.

Mr. Sale: We can go anywhere in the Minister's Salary. Pass.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: (c) Aerospace Industries Development Initiative (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$274,300—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$173,700—pass; (3) Grants \$255,500—pass.

(d) Information and Telecommunications Initiative (1) Information Technology (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$354,800—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$95,800—pass.

(d)(2) Canada-Manitoba Communications Technology Research and Industry Development Agreement (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$61,700—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$290,100—pass;

(c) Grants \$678,200—pass.

(d)(3) Telecommunications Marketing (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$301,100—pass; (b) Other Expenditures \$565,500—pass; (c) Less: Recoverable from Rural Economic Development Initiatives \$216,600—pass.

(e) Environmental Industries Development Initiative (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$237,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$68,900—pass.

(f) Agri-Food Industries Development Initiative (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$283,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$64,300—pass.

Resolution 10.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$14,054,900 for Industry, Trade and Tourism, Strategic Initiatives, for the year ending the 31st day of March, 1996.

10.4 Economic Development (a) Economic Development Board Secretariat (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Mr. Sale: Could I ask the minister, he has indicated that Mr. Bessey will be leaving and I believe this is Mr. Bessey's area in terms of his chair, his role on this board, what plans are in place at this point? What is the date of Mr. Bessey's departure and what plans are in place to replace him?

Mr. Downey: The answer to the question is yes, this is Mr. Bessey's area, and it is my understanding that he will be leaving the 30th of June.

Mr. Sale: Is there any thought being given to any reshaping of this area of the government's economic development role in light of the changes that are being made in the rest of your department with the increased use of MTC? I gather the Economic Development Secretariat is a broad secretariat that really serves a number of ministries and pulls together a number of functions, but is there any anticipation of change in this role or is it going to continue as is?

Mr. Downey: I would not expect any major change to it. I would think that it has carried out a meaningful

purpose, and I do not think any major change is anticipated at this particular time.

Mr. Sale: Could the minister outline the most significant initiatives that the board has currently undertaken? What are its major priorities at this time?

Mr. Downey: I know that we are supposed be done by ten o'clock, and I am not so sure whether I could get it all in on the record by that time.

Mr Chairman, let me start off by saying first of all we have carried out some major initiatives as it relates to an advisory panel on business regulations to try to remove some of the impediments to business development. It has been a major task force work area of the department to try and make sure we have removed or do not put any more regulations in place that would inhibit business activities.

Another major project which they were involved in, of course, has been the Arctic Bridge program which was a follow-up to the Premier's trip in 1991 to Russia, again trying to and enhancing the business activities between the Port of Churchill and Murmansk. Another major initiative was the \$100-and-some-million expansion of Ayerst Organics at Brandon which added several hundreds of jobs to rural Manitoba and to the community of Brandon.

We have seen the development of Calwest Textile in Portage la Prairie which is a textile manufacturing plant. We have seen such activities as the development of major call centre activities to Manitoba, one of them being the Canada Post Customer Service Centre. We have also seen the development of the Faneuil initiative to Manitoba. Work was carried out by the secretariat on the Churchill Rocket Range, CN Customer Service as it relates to the telemarketing business, again, several initiatives under other activities in the call centre business of which I have referred to as Faneuil.

* (2120)

Really a broad section of activities. We can talk about Louisiana-Pacific which was a major program very much involved in the overall divestiture of Manfor, The Pas and the work that was done with

Repap, to bring Repap into play in Manitoba. Development in the work that was done with Monsanto to set up their world-class operating plant in Morden. Work with the North West Company to put their central distribution operation here in Manitoba.

Again, work with the Northern Hemisphere Distribution Alliance is a part of it. Again, a lot of these—they are not solely the responsibility of the Economic Development Board or secretariat but a lot of co-operative work was carried out by the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism in conjunction with them.

There are just a lot of activities that have been carried on as it relates to economic development. We also were involved in setting up the task force on capital markets which we talked about earlier. The list goes on and on, and, as I say, it has not only been the Economic Development Board and secretariat, but there has been a collaborative effort with the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism, also with Rural Economic Development.

One may say, Mr. Chairman, that it has been a team approach to the tremendous economic development and job creation in the province of Manitoba of which I have been extremely proud to have been a part of. I think it would be important to acknowledge publicly that Mr. Michael Bessey has contributed in a substantial way in his role as the secretary to the Economic Development Board and should be acknowledged for that. I know that all members of the committee may not speak highly of him, but at least I think the majority of the government members certainly would. Again, it is important to acknowledge when work is done that it should be recognized.

On the Economic Development Board, he has been the key co-ordinator as it relates to cross departmental co-ordination of which we spoke earlier. It has been a co-ordinating role. It is always interesting. It is certainly a challenging job in the area of Economic Development, but I think the basis from which we come is that the policies of this government that have been enunciated over eight years of no tax increases to the people of Manitoba.

We have made some major economic moves as it relates to the sales tax off of electricity, which I talked about extensively for the past half an hour. It has been generally a thrust of our government to create a climate that economic development can take place and then it is a matter of using the instruments of government to go out and market Manitoba in a very positive way.

I will make reference again to the unemployment numbers which were released this last weekend. It is obvious that the policies of this government are working. It is obvious that the people of Manitoba have accepted the policies of this government as they voted on April 25. If that is a nonpolitical statement or a political statement I do not give a darn; they voted and they voted to show their confidence in what we were doing.

Mr. Chairman, that is all I have to say at this particular moment.

Mr. Sale: I thank the minister and I commend him for restraining himself for so long over the last three days. It had to come out some time. We have had a very useful exchange.

My rookie philosophy in Estimates is that I do not generally try to score points in Estimates. We do that in the House, but—

Mr. Downey: That is a good philosophy, too.

Mr. Sale: —I am glad that you stuck to it for the most part. I want to ask you about three different areas that you raised. I am glad you raised Ayerst Organics. I know there is controversy on both sides of that, but one of the issues about which I do not think there is much controversy at all is the pollution level in the holding ponds that have been created to deal particularly with the effluent, the highly concentrated ammonia effluent.

Some, I think, pretty competent people have looked at that pond and have seen it as a disaster waiting to happen in terms of the potential for breaching the containment and its proximity to the river. I am glad that with the flooding level we had this year, that it was not more of a problem.

Has the minister done anything to become more aware of the pollution level in Ayerst's effluent, and can he comment on whether the current technology that they are using is appropriate?

Mr. Downey: There were three points on which a controversy has been brought forward as it relates to Ayerst.

One was the point which the member raises, and that is the treatment of the effluent. To my knowledge, I say this, the Department of Environment is fully on top of and aware of and certainly keeping, as it should be, the discharge from the plant. I do not think there is anything untoward. I do not think there is anything improper. I think, in fact, it is within the law, the regulations that have been established. I think it is unfair, some of the manners in which the criticisms have come forward. I do not think there has been foundation for what has been publicly expressed.

* (2130)

That is coming from the information that I have from the Department of Environment. I think it lacks foundation as to the criticism that has come forward as it relates to the handling and the treatment of the effluent. No one wants to see pollution, none of us, and, of course, we want to see the industry survive.

We believe it is operating in the limits which are established, and they are acceptable to society.

Number two, it is extremely unfortunate that the producers of PMU product have been unfairly maligned as to the treatment of animals. I can assure the member that is absolutely absurd.

Point of Order

Mr. Sale: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, the record will show that I made no comments of any kind about the treatment of animals. I restricted my comments entirely to the effluent question.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: The honourable member for Crescentwood does not have a point of order but a point of clarification.

* * *

Mr. Downey: I appreciate that point of clarification, and I am not attributing any comments that he may have made about animals. I am saying the general criticism that has come about, and I want to stand up in defence of the producers of PMU product. They have been unfairly maligned as to the treatment of animals, and I know there have been some recent surveys and studies done that should put to rest any of that criticism as to the treatment.

The other one, of course, is the use of the product, the drug, which is derived from it, and that is in the use of Premarin. Again, to the best of my knowledge, it has been in use for some 28 years, the product, and has gone under the most severe scrutiny from the medical industry. Again, I am not aware of any evidence that it has a negative impact, but, in fact, my most recent readings and study or work that I have done on it has been very much the opposite, that it has been extremely helpful, particularly in the treatment of osteoporosis.

I appreciate the member's comments and I am not attributing them to him. I do appreciate his comments which he is saying about the lagoon. I do not accept them, but I know what he referred to. I will not add anything more at this particular time. I know the member has other questions.

Mr. Sale: The second company that I would like to ask about is Faneuil. During the election and prior to it and after it, I had a number of conversations with middle and more senior members of MTS.

At the door, I met many rank and file members of MTS. They were universally concerned about the mechanism that was used to, in effect, virtually give Faneuil a very major advantage. The members were concerned about the divestiture of assets of MTS, assets that could be made more easily profitable in the private sector, while MTS is left with some of the less perhaps desirable assets.

There is some very real concern among the workforce of MTS that the government is doing what in American terms is called a hollowing strategy. You leave the shell but you hollow out the fruit. The shell

still looks all right for a while, but ultimately there is nothing inside to sustain it. The fear is that this is the strategy the government is following and that we are seeing the piece-by-piece privatization of this Crown corporation.

I think the question of privatizing or not privatizing is a valid policy question to be debated, but my sense is that the workforce, at least, fears that it is being done without debate through a gradual process of which Faneuil is the most obvious example.

Are there other pieces of MTS or operations of MTS that the government intends to transfer either to Faneuil or a similar corporation?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, I do not necessarily accept the member's comments as a matter of in any way eroding the effectiveness of Manitoba Telephone System. What I see is it would probably strengthen the role of the telephone corporation in Manitoba providing a marketing service for the company or with the company in partnership which gives us, I think, a leading edge on the activities in the whole telemarketing industry in Manitoba.

The commitments which Faneuil have given to the province of Manitoba will be over a period of time in addition to a thousand jobs or more. At this current time, I believe they are ahead of the commitment. Something like over 200 jobs have been established by Faneuil, which, I think, is extremely important to the province.

Again, there are conditions which have to be met, and we will make sure that it takes place. But I disagree with the individual. It is not a way in which we will be in any way eroding the Manitoba Telephone System. I think it will enhance the opportunities that the Manitoba Telephone System has to provide service to an ever increasing and growing telemarketing industry.

Mr. Sale: The minister indicates Faneuil's promise to create something in the order of a thousand jobs. Almost at the same time the Faneuil deal was announced, MTS announced intention to lay off over 1,200 people over the next few years, virtually in the

same time period. So, in effect, these may be different jobs, but they are not new jobs. Can the minister provide information about how many people have been laid off from MTS while Faneuil has created its 200 jobs?

* (2140)

Mr. Downey: Well, again, I do not accept the numbers. I am not aware of any announcements or any decisions by Manitoba Telephone System laying off 1,200 people. That is a number that I have never heard of before, but I will take it upon myself to check as to what the numbers of layoffs have been. It is not a promise of Faneuil to create a thousand jobs; it is an agreed-to commitment that has to be met or penalties will have to be paid.

Mr. Sale: I will supply the minister with the background announcement that I believe was made by MTS about a year ago or a year and one half ago in which it indicated its intention to streamline its overall operations by approximately that number. Can the minister assure the committee that there are no plans for further privatization of MTS at this time?

Mr. Downey: I would suggest that that question would be more appropriately asked of the minister who is responsible for the Manitoba Telephone System, although I would make a general comment. As I said in an earlier statement, what the public is looking for today is the provision of services, the best services at the best possible price. I would think, at this particular time, that the best way to judge that is in the competitive field. Again, as far as any direct plans, I cannot speak to that. That would fall within the direct responsibility of the minister responsible for the Manitoba Telephone System. But, again, I say, in a general statement from my position, the public is looking for service, the best possible service at the lowest cost possible price.

Mr. Sale: I thank the minister for his answer and take note of his very careful wording of the answer. Finally, could you comment on the northern hemisphere development project. We talked briefly about it earlier in the Estimates, but because it is so linked to the airport and to the rail questions, could you comment on

the current status of it, if there are time lines, what those time lines might be, whether your government will be bringing forward any particular actions such as a proposal to create a customs or tariff zone?

Mr. Downey: I thought, Mr. Chairman, I dealt with that earlier today in a half-hour speech, but if I have to give it again, I can.

Mr. Sale: No, no. I just retreat in terror from a repetition of the earlier ministerial speeches, although, in the main, I think the minister restrained himself. I do not recall him answering. Perhaps this is the problem; the speech was so persuasive and long that I do not recall the content of it. What was the time line on this project, and what are the specific things that you think need to happen to realize the potential here?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, they are completing a feasibility study this summer as it relates to potential, I guess, profitability of the operation, who would be the potential users of it, how the different transportation sectors would develop to satisfy the market opportunities, basically, as it states, a feasibility study as to proceeding with it. Again, I am excited and encouraged by it because I believe there is an opportunity to do that.

As far as a special free trade zone area which would help assembly, adding, breaking down, cargo shipments and then redistributing them from that area, I do not believe they have pressed the federal government too hard at this particular point, but I do understand, that will be part of the overall goal which they are driving toward so that products shipped into the area would not pick up any Canadian or local tax that could be distributed from that area with the advantages of the lower cost and not having local taxes added to it.

Mr. Sale: I thank the minister for that. I think the minister would likely find that we were very supportive of that kind of a strategy in general terms, so I hope it comes to the fore.

Would it be the minister's intention to release the feasibility study quickly as soon as it has been received?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Chairman, again, on the basis of confidentiality, I do not believe it will be ours to release. It will be in the hands of the board of directors of the NHDA, and I think, because other jurisdictions are probably looking at it as well, the same concept, that it would be in our best interests not to disclose publicly what the advantages or disadvantage of certain aspects of it are.

I would think, though, if there is some information that might be helpful, I could talk to the individuals to see if there was an ability to share as much of it as possible with members of the Legislature. But, again, it is a competitive arena which we are in. There are other jurisdictions in the United States that are currently trying to implement the same kind of a concept. If that information became available, it might encourage others to do the same, and we want to be the leaders in this whole area.

Mr. Sale: I thank the minister for the answer. It is not one that I am really very persuaded by. Having worked in government, I know that the fastest way to get anything read is to stamp it "secret," and virtually the fastest way to get it leaked is to put it in a folder with something around it that says "do not open."

Those who are in the transportation industry know how these things work, and the actual data which might be being kept secret for fear of competitive advantage, I suspect that the competitors already know the data. I am really upset with the degree to which we are still possessed with the need for secrecy in government. I cannot often see the sense involved in it, and I go back to this horrid debate that we are having around an arena.

Why we could not make public a study such as the Coopers & Lybrand report which attempts to look at cost benefit and has figures it, both net and gross benefit figures, I do not think anything is lost by letting some daylight shine on important policy decisions.

When the minister spoke, he said it would not be in our interest to let others know of the advantages or disadvantages. I think that it is hard to make the case that it is not in the public's interest to know the disadvantages of any public policy.

Certainly, it is not in the public's interest not to know the advantages either, but I do not think we gain anything much in the public sector by trying to keep things secret, both because our attempts usually fail in the long run, even in the medium run, because plain, brown envelopes are as plentiful as rats and beavers and, secondly, because the information is usually reasonably readily available to the high-priced help that is hired to ferret it out for us in the first place. So it is well known.

I would appreciate the minister commenting on whether or not something like this ought not to be in the public interest made public unless there is something to do with Reimer Express Lines and is specifically internal to the company. I cannot imagine why the minister would not make available the project's cost benefit.

Mr. Downey: Again, it will be the property, as I understand it, of the Northern Hemisphere Alliance, and I would not have any ability to make it public. We have provided funding, along with the federal government, to carry out the study. I certainly have no reason to keep information from members of the public. To me, it looks like it will all be a positive initiative.

Again, if the people who own the study feel so inclined, I am sure that they will release it. I have told the member, if there is information which is sensitive—and it well could be sensitive to the trucking industry and individuals within the trucking industry as to how it may impact their decisions as their future planning in a competitive way—then I do not think the member has indicated that he does not particularly feel that that should be released. Again, if it is in the public interest and is not damaging to an individual organization that is developing to a particular target, I certainly have no objection to providing as much information as possible.

Mr. Sale: I am on 4.(b), the Economic Innovation and Technology Council. I have not visited this centre, so I have no questions here, but would it be reasonable for me to ask the department to give me a briefing on this council and to facilitate a tour and discussion of what they are doing? I know where they are located, but that is about all.

Mr. Downey: That would be quite likely possible.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 4. Economic Development (a) Economic Development Board Secretariat (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$551,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$369,300—pass.

4.(b) Grant Assistance - Economic Innovation and Technology Council \$3,730,600—pass.

4.(c) Economic Innovation and Technology Fund \$1,000,000.

Mr. Sale: This fund originally came from the sale of MDS. Where are we in terms of drawing down this fund? How many years is this meant to continue?

Mr. Downey: The number that has been drawn from this fund is approximately \$500,000.

Mr. Sale: The appropriations for \$1 million, is the minister saying that only \$500,000 is being used in the current year?

Mr. Downey: The total that has been drawn down to date is about \$500,000.

Mr. Sale: This is puzzling. I believe this appropriation has shown up every year for the past number of years, and you are saying that out of this appropriation, it is chronically underspent to the tune of probably a quarter to a fifth of what was budgeted.

Mr. Downey: That is correct. We have seen about \$500,000 drawn down from this appropriation. Again, the Economic Innovation and Technology Council has not, I guess, seen projects that would be supportable by them, and that is the amount of money that has been used.

Mr. Sale: Can the minister comment at bit more on that? It seems puzzling that if you are trying to run a centre that is trying to incubate small business over—what is it, about a five-year period now?—that period of time, its incubation period does not sound like it is terribly positive.

Mr. Downey: What it is, it is an advisory group of approximately 30-some people who have come together with the government to make recommendations as it relates to new innovation and technology in the province. To this point, I, again, indicate to the member that they have not identified projects, in their judgement, that would require funding. We have not penalized or restricted the funding.

We are of the belief that they would have in fact or can in fact find projects which they would support. So, again, it is a judgment call on people who have been appointed by government, and, again, they are conscious of the fact that they have not used all of the funds but, again, are also conscious of the fact that unless they see a project that they feel should be supported, they have not.

* (2150)

Mr. Sale: I am glad they have not squandered the money, and I would not be in favour of that, but I guess I wonder, if we are spending almost \$4 million a year on a staff of some 30 people, and they are unable over those numbers of years, however many it is, to come up with candidates for the very purpose for which they exist, that is, incubation of new technology, then either we have the wrong project or the wrong people or the wrong incubation going on, but it clearly is not paying off.

Mr. Downey: I should make it clear; these individuals who are on the council are all volunteers. They are all volunteering their time. The administrative costs are the ones that are identified in the budget. I can say to the member, again, I think it is legitimate work that they are doing. They are advising to the Province of Manitoba certain activities which they feel are important to the province, and the whole economy, and the whole area of innovation and technology.

I will certainly bring to their attention the discussions that have taken place at this committee. Again, there is a review process which is available to us and to them, and I appreciate the fact, the member said that he is happy they have not squandered the money. Again, I tried to make that point. If a project has not been

identified that is worthy of supporting and proceeding with, they have not.

Let me put it on the record. They have added valuable advice to the government in this whole area. There is process in place which, I think, has been extremely helpful, and I acknowledge the hard work and effort of the volunteers in this area.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Item 4.(c) Economic Innovation and Technology Fund \$1,000,000—pass.

Resolution 10.4: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$5,651,100 for Industry, Trade and Tourism, Economic Development, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1996.

Item 5. Expenditures Related to Capital (a) Canada-Manitoba Partnership Agreement in Tourism \$905,000—pass.

Resolution 10.5: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$905,000 for Industry, Trade and Tourism, Expenditures Related to Capital, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1996.

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

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

Mr. Sale: May I take the opportunity to thank the staff for the answers you have provided and to also thank them for the answers that will be provided to the questions that they have not yet responded to. Thank you very much.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 1. Administration and Finance (a) Minister's Salary \$22,800.

Mr. Sale: I just want to say that I have no further questions that I want to ask. I want to thank the minister for, I think, a gracious and productive discussion. At least it was productive for me; it may not have been for him. I learned a lot, and I

appreciated the tone and manner in which the Estimates were carried out.

I look forward to working with the minister, hopefully in a productive way, over the next period of time, however long that is in this area. I think it is an absolutely vital area for all members of the House to focus on as we try and grow in our own ability to do well in the kind of global climate that we both spoke of in our opening remarks. So, with that, I would to thank the minister and pass this item.

Mr. Downey: Again, Mr. Chairman, in my concluding speech, which will take a little less than 40 minutes, I would like to thank the committee members for their support and their questions and, again, thank the departmental staff for their support and input. Thank you.

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

Resolution 10.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$3,288,100 for Industry, Trade and Tourism, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1996.

The next set of Estimates that will be considered by this section of the Committee of Supply are the Estimates of the Department of Fitness and Sport. Shall we briefly recess to allow the minister and the critics the opportunity to prepare for the commencement of the next set of Estimates? [agreed]

* (2200)

FITNESS AND SPORT

Mr. Deputy Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order.

This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Fitness and Sport.

Does the honourable Minister of Fitness and Sport have an opening statement?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister responsible for Sport): I think in view of the hour and everything else, I will dispense with any statement, and we can go right to questions.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the minister. Does the official opposition critic, the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), have an opening statement?

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I will make a few comments. I just want to say that I am looking forward to again being the critic for Fitness and Sport. This is an area that is near and dear to my heart, and I know that there are a number of issues that are of great concern.

There are a lot of changes going on in this area with the amalgamation of the Sport Directorate and the Sports Federation. There are a number of major games, the Canada Games coming up, and the successful Pan Am Games bid that we have had, and also there are serious concerns with respect to the decrease in funding transfers from the federal government and Sport Canada.

So I just want to say that I hope the minister is going to be co-operative, and even though it is late in the day, we can spend the time that is necessary to examine both the Fitness Directorate and the Sport Directorate and ensure that these programs are going to serve the needs of Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We thank the critic from the official opposition for those remarks. At this time we invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we ask that the minister introduce his staff.

Mr. Ernst: To my left is Mr. Ted Bigelow, the Director of Sport, and to his left, Mr. Jim Evanchuk, who is the Director of Fitness.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: We are now on line 1.(a) Fitness Directorate (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$134,900.

Ms. Cerilli: In reading the Expected Results for the Fitness Directorate, I have a few questions. One of the

first tasks was to develop a framework for action on fitness, and I would like the minister to explain what that framework is.

Mr. Ernst: Essentially, we work with Health Canada and the other provinces in order to provide an overall framework for fitness programming. We have a very small staff associated with the Fitness Directorate—a director, one professional staff and one secretary, so it is mostly a co-ordinating role. Internally in the province we carry out activities in conjunction with Culture and Heritage regional offices, municipal recreation departments and a host of other volunteer organizations in the community.

Obviously with three staff we cannot deliver very much in terms of direct programming, so we do a co-ordinating role, provide information, provide the conduit to the federal government and so on.

Ms. Cerilli: What I am hoping to get clarified is, what is the framework for those activities? What is the framework for the collaboration between the different provinces? Is this just to outline the different programs, areas that the division is active in?

Mr. Ernst: Yes, basically you have programs like Active Living, which we do a fair bit of promotion of, both from—well, you have some of the literature there. We also address the whole question of physical inactivity and wellness surrounding the benefits of physical activity.

Ms. Cerilli: I guess the question is, what does framework mean?

Mr. Ernst: I suppose when you are dealing with the issue of fitness, there is an overall goal obviously in mind that everyone should be physically fit and have a healthy lifestyle as a result of that activity.

In terms of a framework, what can you do to reach that goal? There are a variety of programs that are involved. We spend a fair portion of the other expenditures in the department there with the University of Manitoba in terms of training fitness leaders. But it is a conglomeration, I guess, of a variety of fitness activities that we try and disseminate to the

public. We do that not in an unco-ordinated but rather in a co-ordinated fashion so that you utilize the resources that are available from the volunteer sector and from the professional sector in the community as a whole, in order to try and achieve that ultimate goal.

Ms. Cerilli: I am not wanting to belabour this, so I am going to move on, but I just was hoping that I would get some sense of how this division does its planning. To me that is what framework means, how this division, given the limited staff, does its planning to do, as I said before, the ominous task of delivering a province-wide program with the limited staff that it has.

So how does it determine how to spend its time? What kind of assessments has it done?

Mr. Ernst: There has been a considerable amount of research done on the whole question of physical fitness and the benefits from it, what should be done and so on but, basically, it is a framework for action, and it is based on a number of specific strategies related to certain kinds of activities and the number of partnerships in the community, where you cannot deliver any kind of a program with three staff people, two professionals and a secretary is just not possible to do that.

So we look at a number of partnerships with volunteers in the community, with other organizations, with programs that are being run in general terms but which can be more specifically targeted, do a fair bit in terms of promotion and literature and things of that nature. We conduct forums and think tanks and other kinds of activities for people who will ultimately deliver the program in the community, in trying to assist them in preparing them to be able to deliver those programs in the community.

So those are the kinds of things that you are faced with. If you want a very nice little chart, this is how it is done and so on, like that. I do not know whether we have one, we may, but this is not haphazard arrangement. A significant amount of planning does go into this area of activity.

Ms. Cerilli: The minister has clarified that the framework has been determined to be partnerships with

other agencies in providing resource material, because there is not the staff to actually deliver programs, so you are looking for other groups that you co-operate with. I am wondering if the minister could shed some light on it, how other governments in Canada, other provincial governments in Canada, have their fitness directorate function. I have been trying to get this information from other provinces to try and compare Manitoba in terms of the scope and the mandate for a fitness directorate.

I have I think said before that I would like to see this area expanded. I would like to see it more connected to preventative health. I am glad that the minister has said that there is not much that a small office like this can do in a province with more than a million people. I am wanting some kind of comparison between Manitoba and other provincial jurisdictions with regard to fitness promotion.

Mr. Ernst: The whole area of fitness, recreation and sport varies from province to province. In some it is buried in a huge department somewhere where there is limited access ministerially. When the Premier put me in charge of the Fitness and Amateur Sport Directorate, it was my choice that the staff people not report through a deputy minister or through some departmental chain, but rather report directly to me. So, as I say, it varies from province to province, but by and large it is limited resources.

Now again the Department of Health in the Province of Manitoba, for instance, has a wellness institute, and part of that, you know it is something that as the whole wellness issue in health comes to the fore that it may well be that other changes might be made, but at the moment the Fitness Directorate does carry out its specific mandate as Health brings its wellness program forward.

* (2210)

I cannot really give you a specific answer. In Alberta they have 17 people and do this and that and the other thing and spend \$10 million. I do not know. From what the staff advise it is fairly limited in terms of both staffing and resources in other provinces. In fact, Alberta just dumped all its sport and everything else off

to a Crown corporation just recently. In other places it is contained within the Department of Health. In other provinces, too, it can have a pretty limited scope right across the country.

Ms. Cerilli: I wonder if the minister would agree to examine what other provinces are doing in this area and see if there are any trends, specifically to make greater links with fitness promotion and the move towards health reform and preventative health.

I have other questions I was going to ask with respect to activities that this division has undertaken in trying to work with—the term is used in the mandate for the division—other stakeholders, so I wanted to see who the key stakeholders in Manitoba are, because one of the other goals for this division is to have the stakeholders integrate fitness into their planning. So I want the minister to identify who those other stakeholders are in Manitoba as well as to tell me if he would agree to look at this area across the country.

Mr. Ernst: I can say to the member for Radisson that we are in the process of looking at all the issues surrounding fitness and how it is best delivered in conjunction with the Department of Health. But we have a number of other departments as well, for instance, Active Living in the Environment is a potential stakeholder, the Department of Health, Education and Training, a number of other fitness programs run through the schools.

We had the whole question of physical education, the value of it, whether it should be mandatory or not mandatory and so on. I mean, one of our biggest problems is that when the kids walk out the door of high school somehow in a lot of cases any kind of fitness or activity related to fitness and sport and so on seems to end. How do you educate kids in school? You have to start somewhere. To look at the broad population and to say you are going to get 75 percent of them involved in an active living constant fitness program is just not going to happen.

So what you have to do is start back with the kids, and if you run them through the school program and at the end of that time when they leave school if they have imbedded in their mind that fitness is an appropriate

activity for them for the rest of their life, that it is valuable for them in terms of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and ultimately their own personal health is going to benefit, that they are going to be more productive in the workplace, and all of the other benefits that result from a healthy lifestyle, then that is a very laudable objective and something that we ought to be doing.

I know that the former Minister of Education in discussions with phys ed teachers said, well, yes, phys ed will remain mandatory through Senior 2. It is important that at the end of the time when they leave high school though they at least have—it is not simply good enough any more to put 30 kids out on the floor and here is a basketball and spend an hour. You now have to train or "educate," I guess perhaps is even the most appropriate word, educate those children to the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, so when they leave school they are not simply going to forget it, that they are going to be able to maintain that healthy lifestyle throughout their adult life.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Chairperson, I appreciate the minister's comments, but I will break it down to two questions. First, I am wondering if the minister would consider having the directorate examine its activities in relation to the other provinces in the country, looking at the trends in this area and comparing what this division is doing as opposed to divisions similar to it in other provinces, to see if there is a move to have a greater emphasis on having fitness promotion as part of preventative health.

Mr. Ernst: Well, it is a very nice idea and so on, but we have been doing that for some time. Mr. Evanchuk has, as a matter of fact, chaired the National Fitness Committee who reviewed these kinds of programs since 1987, the last eight years. I think he is pretty familiar with what is going on in other parts of the country and what they are doing. The whole health area related, the trend is to wellness, and active living is a part of that wellness, and hence you have these kinds of programs come forward.

Ms. Cerilli: Well, I would appreciate then—like I said, I am trying to get this information from other provinces, and I will be bringing this matter up in the

future, because I am concerned that, with the number of staff in a division like this, we cannot be making very much of an impact.

One of the questions I wanted to ask is: With the kind of programs that have been undertaken by this division, like the SummerActive program, the Fitweek, how does the department or the division evaluate the effectiveness of these programs, and can the minister explain what the impact of these types of programs have been?

Mr. Ernst: As part of this program there is an evaluation process built into it. We, as well, will undertake our own evaluation program provincially to determine the outcomes from this particular program.

Ms. Cerilli: I am glad to see that there is an evaluation. I am wanting to know a little bit about how that evaluation is conducted and what the outcomes of the evaluation is. There has been a similar program, the Fitweek program, which has been operating for a number of years, certainly longer than this new SummerActive and WinterActive program, so I am wanting to get some feedback on any evaluation that was done on the Fitweek program which was similar, which included materials being mailed out and a kick-off and just sort of public promotional materials.

Mr. Ernst: There was an evaluation done last year of the Fitweek program. There is a report on it. I would be pleased to provide it to you if you like.

Ms. Cerilli: Can the minister not, with the assistance of his staff, inform me what the results were now, at the committee?

* (2220)

Mr. Ernst: The statistical information we do not have here, but I can tell the member that last year for instance, Fitweek was a week-long program. It is now expanded into an entire summer program to try and give people an opportunity. A lot of this is motivation oriented and so you get fired up for a week and then it kind of peters out over the summer, you go on holidays and stuff like that. So if we run an entire summer program in an attempt just to try and expand that

horizon and keep people active for that entire period of time in the hopes that the motivation will continue on beyond that and ultimately will maintain a healthier lifestyle as a result.

Ms. Cerilli: So might I understand then that the report will list the number of activities that were conducted as a result of groups getting the promotional material, is that the nature of the report? Can I get some kind of indication if that is increased?

My concern is then that we do not go a step further and are never able to look at the long-term effects of any of these kind of programs, if they have actually translated into changing behaviour or if people, you know, come out to an activity one day, and then that is it.

Mr. Ernst: Ultimately, when this year's program is completed, we will have a lot more measureables from this particular program. We cannot do it obviously right now, it just started.

From prior years we do have statistical information that we can provide, difficult, unless you do a long-term study. There is an increased number of people that are maintaining a healthier lifestyle and why. What may have triggered it may not be the ongoing motivation for it. We do not really care because the goal is to keep them into a healthier lifestyle, so whatever triggers it and whatever maintains it is valuable because the outcome is valuable.

Just in general terms today, people are leading more active, more healthy lifestyles as a societal change, for whatever reason. I think they are seeing, as a result of activities of our fitness department, sport, Participaction commercials, you name it, they maintain or are maintaining a healthier lifestyle. There is, generally speaking, an increasing number of people doing that. They recognize the value of aerobic exercise for prevention of heart disease, for instance, as an example.

To say what motivates it, what ultimately sustains it, is not necessarily one thing or another. The trigger may be a program like this that they get involved for the summer and find that they are feeling better,

enjoying it more and want to continue. They may get involved in one activity under the SummerActive program and may find that is sufficient to kind of motivate them to go on. Maybe it was the Corporate Challenge, last year and the year before, under the Fitweek program, that motivated them to get more active and so on.

It is difficult to say but in each of these programs they try and measure, try and evaluate to see if it has helped and does help, but in many cases no one will ever know. It depends on the individual themselves and whether they get involved in active programming or they simply do it on their own, taking up walking the dog for two or three or four miles a day kind of thing. All of it is helpful.

Ms. Cerilli: I guess these questions are aimed at trying to identify how the department evaluates the effectiveness of this kind of promotional campaign or program. The minister has just said that he thinks that there are more people getting involved in activity and leading a more healthy lifestyle. My concern then, in Manitoba, we do not have the capacity to really do that kind of study. We do not have the capacity, certainly through this division, to truly assess the impact programs like these are having. We probably are going to have to rely on information from other jurisdictions. Maybe there is something happening in the Department of Health that I am not aware of.

That is sort of where I am headed with these questions. I want to understand and have the minister confirm that Manitoba does have that kind of research so we could find out the trends, the activity levels, the kinds of programs that work to encourage more activity and how we do that in Manitoba. I am concerned that, unlike what the minister has said, there actually are a lot of people who are living a more sedentary life. Particularly, we are learning with young people, they are watching a lot more TV. For a lot of young people, participating in organized sport and fitness activities is becoming inaccessible due to the financial costs.

I want the minister to explain how this division does that kind of research and evaluation. If we know, with the money that is going into a program like this, that it is the best way to spend that money, that this kind of

advertising campaign and promotional campaign is the best way to encourage more activity, physical activity, in Manitoba.

Mr. Ernst: In the past, a lot of measurement of success, if you will, or participation at least, was based on the number of events and the number of people who participated in those events, and the number of programs and the number of people who participated in these programs. These things are more than a glitzy advertising campaign. I mean, this works with local fitness leadership people here right across the province to try and encourage and give some profile to the need and the desirability of an Active Living program.

We work regularly with research people. We spend a fair bit of our budget actually with the research people at the University of Manitoba in the area of fitness leadership programming in order to broaden the horizons. We can not possibly deliver anything with three staff in terms of direct program to the public. So you do the next best thing. You try and get to the people who can deliver those programs and provide them with information, provide them with opportunities, provide them with this kind of thing which helps them develop their programming in the community.

You go back to the question of kids coming out of school and saying, you are right. They are watching more television and doing less participation, physical activity. So we have to impress upon them through the educational process and through the phys ed teacher in our school system that active living or a more active lifestyle is important for their health, not just now, when they think they are indestructible, but later on in life when they come to realize they are not.

If you have maintained that healthy lifestyle throughout that period of time, you are going to be a lot less destructible, shall we say, when you reach ages 50 and 60, and so on, than you might have been had you led that sedentary lifestyle for a long period of time.

So we do work in partnership arrangements with people all over the province and with the university. There is constant monitoring and research by them and, to a certain degree, by the department and in

conjunction with Fitness Canada and Participaction to measure, or try and measure at least, the kind of involvement that we are getting. It is an uphill struggle all the time, but the goal is worth it. Ultimately, you know, if you save 10 people's lives, it is probably worth it, or at least prolong them for a period of time that they might not have had otherwise.

* (2230)

Ms. Cerilli: Who got the information this year on the SummerActive program? What kind of a list do we have for distribution? The minister has talked about working with program deliverers in the community.

Mr. Ernst: Yes, it went to every municipality, every recreation director, all the recreational and sport regional offices across the province and libraries.

Ms. Cerilli: So this information does not go to community clubs. It does not go to boys' and girls' scout groups, boys' and girls' clubs. It does not go to schools. It does not go to sport delivery organizations that the Manitoba Sports Federation covers so that they can distribute it to the variety of clubs that are involved with them. It is mostly going to regional offices and recreation directors, who are sort of under the auspices of the provincial government, as well as the municipalities.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Chairman, most programming that takes place in community, through the community clubs and everything else, happens through municipal recreation departments. That is why it goes to the municipal recreation departments who disseminate it from there down into their networks. So they may call in people from various community centres who may run fitness programs and say, okay, here is another opportunity for you. There is going to be some major promotion on this kind of activity.

But this is a promotion of a principle as opposed to a program. The principle of active living, of having an active summer and an opportunity, it is all about creating awareness of the benefits of physical activity.

I am advised by staff also that it did go to schools, and it did go Manitoba Sports Federation.

Ms. Cerilli: Can the minister confirm the number of packages printed of this promotional material and the cost for that material to be developed?

Mr. Ernst: I do not have that detailed information available here at the present time. I can tell you that we assisted the federal government in developing the program, and then we purchase the information from them, as do other provinces. So we can tell you what it cost us to purchase the information and how many we sent out, but I cannot do that tonight.

Ms. Cerilli: I am always disappointed at Estimates when I cannot my questions answered. Especially as this is one of the few programs that this division runs, so I am surprised by that, but I will have to carry on.

I am looking at the promotional materials, the order form for everything from shoelaces to shorts and T-shirts that someone could purchase. I just want to clarify, this is done through a private agency. I am looking for the name. Can the minister clarify the which agency the Province of Manitoba is working with on this?

Mr. Ernst: Participaction.

Ms. Cerilli: So that is a nonprofit organization, I understand.

Mr. Ernst: Yes.

Ms. Cerilli: One of the things we had talked about earlier as outlined in the objectives for the division is to have the stakeholders in the area of fitness—or actually, I will read the directive from the book here: The directorate will continue to develop and strengthen networks relevant to active living and will assist the integration of active living and fitness into the planning frameworks of key stakeholders in Manitoba.

I am wondering what stakeholders that is referring to.

Mr. Ernst: Health, Education, Environment, Rural Development, municipalities, community fitness organizations, a host of people. We want to get them to develop active living principles into what they do.

For instance, in the Department of Health in their wellness area, we want to get them to use active living as a basic principle. We can provide information, both our own direct material and that which we can have access through Fitness Canada, to try and have them develop that principle throughout their programming.

We will have it disseminated as widely as possible. Again, as I have said all along, we need to have a network of people out there delivering the idea, the principle, the concept, as well as programs related to it.

We will do what we can to assist them through information, through research that we can develop over time, both ourselves and with Fitness Canada, and through programs such as SummerActive.

Ms. Cerilli: I was wondering if the minister had anything to add to that.

Maybe we can get into a little bit more detail because this is the area that I think the government should be pursuing and as trying to get the variety of stakeholders, caregivers, planners, everything from urban planning. I mean, if we want to have a fit and active community, they have to have places in their community to be active, to recreate and to participate in activities.

I remember having an interesting discussion with the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) in the last Estimates for last year, talking about this issue and trying to advocate for having more green space. That becomes an important environment and health issue in urban planning.

So I am wanting to get a little bit more specific in any of these areas and talk about whom the division has been in contact with. I will leave it up to the minister to choose which of those many areas he has mentioned—health, education, rural development—to get into a little bit more detail about the kind of groups or individuals or professionals that we have had the division working with, to try and have them integrate fitness and healthy lifestyles into their planning.

* (2240)

Mr. Ernst: We have had a number of contacts and discussions, particularly with respect to municipal jurisdictions, who are the prime deliverers of both the program and facilities related to sport, physical activity and the like.

We talked about a number of—you know, the built environment, what can be done in terms of providing some facilities, either passive or active facilities, and trying to have them put the whole concept of active living into their planning processes. So that if you are going to carry on an activity with a bunch of seniors in Dauphin, for example—a member for Dauphin is here tonight—to try and build into the programming for those seniors, an activity area which will focus more on active living as opposed to having crafts in a sedentary setting, that maybe they ought to, you know, walk around the block even, if you will, or have an opportunity for a walk in the park or some physical activity to build into their programming so that it starts to contemplate the whole question of active living.

Now, in order to do that you need a park to have a walk in. So that when you talk to municipalities about creating, you know, bicycle paths, parks, hiking trails, a variety of different activities and opportunities for activity, they do not necessarily have to cost a lot of money nor do they, ultimately, require an admission to that as would an arena or a facility of that type. The opportunity is there, you know. A cross-country ski program, for instance, does not have to be terribly strenuous, but as an activity, even if it is for short duration and so on, all tends to build on that whole concept of active living and the values of a healthy lifestyle.

Ms. Cerilli: So this Fitness Directorate is doing this, is actually talking to municipalities about developing more community programs and facilities for active living? How do you identify who you are going to deal with? Do you have a plan for this objective in the division? Tell me a little bit about what the plan is.

Mr. Ernst: The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which is the umbrella organization for all municipalities in Canada, has a general focus to which all of their provincial organizations subscribe, that is MAUM and UMM and so on. So we try and provide

information to these people, assistance where requested or where we have the time, the staff availability, to talk with them about the kinds of things that they can be doing related to their jurisdiction and the programming that they ultimately deliver in their communities.

So you know, we may not send Mr. Evanchuk down to the city of Winnipeg planning department and say, look guys, you need to be planning more bicycle paths, but we do work with municipal organizations trying to provide information to them and assistance wherever it is requested or we have the time to provide it unsolicited.

Ms. Cerilli: So is there a plan in this area to identify stakeholders, and have you targeted or is it mostly just on a response to information?

Mr. Ernst: Well, we have identified that the prime deliverer of this kind of activity in the province is municipal recreation departments. So you know, we target them in the process to try and provide them with as much information and assistance as we can.

We become a bit of a clearing house for information so that we will get, for instance, an organization, or a community group in Dauphin will contact the Dauphin recreation people and they will in turn put them in touch with us, and we will be able to provide them with information or assistance on an as-required basis.

As I said, with the limited amount of staff that we have available, we obviously cannot be out delivering individual programs, and we are not out assessing the Parklands Region, for instance, to determine what kind of facilities they require in order to have an Active Living program. These are community-driven situations. So we can provide encouragement. We can provide information. We can provide research. We can provide literature. We can provide some promotional programs in conjunction with Fitness Canada or others, and then from that we will be able to assist them on an individually identified situation if that is what they are after.

Ms. Cerilli: Maybe the minister can give me some of the highlights, the successes in this area. What, specifically, organizations have you influenced in their

planning, be it in rural areas, in municipalities, in health or in education? What are some of the highlights or success stories amongst the stakeholders you have worked with?

Mr. Ernst: I can provide the member with several examples here, if you like. For instance, in the Town of Carman, in conjunction with our department, the community created a pathway for active living so that the people of the community are now walking, cycling, rollerblading, a number of activities within the community. This is a community-driven project assisted by us with some ideas that we had and some information that we provided to them. They, in turn, turned it into reality.

Gimli, for instance, just received an award for their active living projects related to both walking paths, hiking trails, and also some canoeing activities there. They tied it into tourism; they tied it in to producing their own brochure for promotion, internally, within their municipality, and so on.

All kinds of things have come out. We had a community garden project in Flin Flon, as an example; creation of community gardening, garden plots, and so on like that, for people that go—if you do not have the opportunity in your own yard, then this is an excellent activity for active living. Well, you see them all over Winnipeg.

It did not actually come out of here; it came out of here out of Active Living; it has been ongoing for a long, long period of time where people utilize underutilized property, hydro lines, and other public types of property. From that, it is a very good activity. It keeps you busy in the summertime, and they get something productive out of it at the end, hopefully, if they have any kind of green thumb at all. So those are some of the kinds of activities and projects that have been influenced as a result of the work of the Fitness director.

Ms. Cerilli: Those sound like fine success stories. I am wondering if there are some areas that the division has identified that it would like to be pursuing. Has it has given some attention to prioritizing where it would like to have a greater influence in planning of different

stakeholders to have them pay more attention to the potential for enhanced activity within their jurisdiction?

Mr. Ernst: I suppose it is only limited by the imagination in terms of the kinds of activities that can be produced. But this is a community-driven kind of program. This is not a top-down one, imposed by the Fitness Directorate. We do not call up the community of La Broquerie and say, look, we think you should be doing this; get off your duff and do it. That is not how it works.

We provide information, provide encouragement, provide promotion, provide a host of supports in terms of trying to encourage people to do it; and, if there is someone there who is prepared to take the initiative and start to organize something, we will provide them with all the help we can.

From that come these kinds of activities, and, quite frankly, if you try to impose it upon them—you know, it is like the construction of a path, a footpath in a public park. You ever notice that, when construction of a public park takes place, they do not put in the sidewalks right away. They leave it for a year or two to see where people walk, and where the grass is beaten down, that is where they put the sidewalk.

People have to want to commit to it; people have to want to get involved; people want to have to take ownership of it. If you do not, in a lot of cases, you are simply wasting your time. You can follow the old adage: if you throw enough mud at a wall, some of it will stick. That has gone on historically, in the past, in the ways the governments have operated.

We think that, if you have got somebody who is interested in the community, is prepared to develop it in the community, and if the community takes ownership of it, that is where you get your greatest success. The more people that participate, the more people who want to get involved, the greater your scope in terms of the kinds of objectives and goals that you set. So, rather than us imposing something on somebody, we will try to encourage the local community to come forward with their plans and activities, and we will try and assist them to create that ultimate objective.

Ms. Cerilli: I guess my ultimate objective here right now is just to determine if this very ambitious objective, as it is stated in the Estimates book, of trying to influence the planning of other jurisdictions—if that is done at all, other than on an ad hoc basis, and if it is done merely on an ad hoc basis, especially, as we have already said, given the resources of the directorate, how do the majority of these stakeholders find out about you? How do they come to you to get this assistance?

Mr. Ernst: We advertise. We have some basic literature that is sent out to a variety of people throughout the province, particularly those who are taking an active role in terms of the leadership area.

University people who are involved in the fitness area are also aware. We do provide information through a variety of government offices, say, municipal recreation people, and a variety of sports.

Ms. Cerilli: So then the government is acting in the Fitness Directorate as a resource centre, basically, and there is no specific planning intention of where in Manitoba we can identify specific needs that we want to have an influence?

Mr. Ernst: Yes.

Ms. Cerilli: Okay. Has there ever been any work done with professionals, let us say, in the health field with nurses or physicians, in any kind of health centres or clinics? Has that ever been requested by this division?

* (2250)

Mr. Ernst: Yes, we have done some work with the Healthy Communities network, and the Manitoba Heart Health Project, and the Canadian diabetes education, fitness and pregnancy, child health, and a number of areas like that.

Ms. Cerilli: How about in the area with social workers, counsellors, those who are working with people tending to have employment problems perhaps, the whole area of mental health? Has there ever been any work with those kinds of organizations or with health care providers in those kinds of clinics or areas?

Mr. Ernst: When you say that we have necessarily targeted social workers as a contact group—through the Healthy Communities network, and through work with Mental Health, it is sometimes more active living as a bit of an alternative in terms of getting people's focus back, if you will, or provide a tool, not necessarily the be-all and the end-all of a rehabilitation program or mental health program, but it is an assist, if you will. People are physically getting active, getting involved. They provide a little bit of focus on a specific issue, and you get the result and the physical benefits, and sometimes those physical benefits translate into an assist with regard to their mental health.

Mr. Chairman, I also had direct involvement both in the planning and delivery of a couple of conferences related to Healthy Communities, and one was held last year in Winnipeg, and there is another one coming up this fall again. So we have had quite a bit of involvement in that area.

Staff advise we have been involved with the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and the Healthy Children's strategies.

Ms. Cerilli: I am encouraged by what I am hearing. It is great. I just wish that there could be more of it. I wish that this division could be expanded, and I am wondering if the minister can inform the committee if he has ever advocated for that, if he has ever advocated for having an increase in this division so that there could be, perhaps, a more proactive approach on this. Maybe there just could be more people doing what Mr. Evanchuk does, responding when there is a request from the community.

I am not advocating that this be dictated to communities but I think there probably is a role. I am wondering if the minister has even ever had any discussions to this extent with his colleague the Minister of Health, with the ministers for municipal and Rural Development. I just think that the department or the government could go after this a bit more. This is an area that we have to be looking at.

I entirely support the concept of a healthy communities approach. I am wondering if the conference that the minister referenced was the same

one that I was at at the Crossways-in-Common centre. I remember going to a healthy communities conference. It did encompass a number of things that the minister has made reference to in terms of urban planning, health care and education delivery. I am wondering if the minister does advocate for an expansion of this area within cabinet.

Mr. Ernst: I can tell the member for Radisson that we advocate continuously for new programs, new opportunities, additional resources within the directorate. We have to take our place in the overall fiscal realities of where the province finds itself. Sometimes we have been successful, sometimes we have not. For instance, we did a drug awareness program where the Sport director, in that case, directed it. What happened was, we drew on several other departments for resources to create a pool of money that would make it effective rather than simply allocating X number of dollars to that particular area of activity.

In the Sport Directorate, we went and said to the Treasury Board, we think this affects Justice, Education, Health, I forget the other departments, I think there were four other departments. We said, they ought to be able to set aside some resources for, when in their departments—their existing level of resource. Let them snip and steal a little bit of money from some of their other programs in order to focus this as an area of interest.

From time to time you are able to do that and, you know, we would certainly look at that as an opportunity to try and enhance the delivery of what we do.

Ms. Cerilli: So just let me clarify this. The minister was making a proposal that other government departments who could benefit from having some of their department budget invested into Active Living and Fitness were encouraged to identify some money within their department and have it go towards fitness promotion? Is that accurate?

Mr. Ernst: As I explained to the member, that is what we did with one particular issue, as an example, in the Sport area, with respect to drug program. Those kinds of things can occur, not necessarily directly in the same

basis, but you can suggest to Education, for instance, that as part of a fitness and Active Living program, phys ed teachers concentrate on teaching their kids, instead of basketball skills or other kinds of direct physical activity, maybe they can spend a bit of their time in terms of their whole overall physical education process focusing on changing the mindset of the youth in our high schools in particular, or maybe all the way through from K to 12 so that by the time they leave the school system, at least they have got it in their minds that active living is something they ought to be doing for the rest of their life. That would be an ultimate goal of tremendous proportion if that could ever be accomplished.

If you had 90 percent of the kids that left school thinking they have got to be active, they have got to participate, they have got to do things to create healthy bodies for them for the rest of their lives, there is an example of what you can do. You do not have to spend the money directly out of this department.

By encouraging the Department of Education to change the focus of their phys ed program to do that, we will have far more lasting benefits than spending tens of millions of dollars in the kind of things we are doing trying to catch that population that has already escaped that system. That is something that we need to work long and hard on.

* (2300)

Ms. Cerilli: I would think that the goal of physical education programs in the schools now is to do that, to try and have students graduate with the propensity for fitness activities, and I think one of the ways of doing that is making sure that they have the skills, the basic skills, to use sports activity to attain fitness. I think that there has been a trend to move to more lifelong activity and sports activities and away from I think some of the more traditional sports that have been taught in schools and practised as competitive sports in schools.

I am wondering if the minister has some other ideas of how schools could instill those attitudes and values and habits in students so that when they do leave school they are more likely to remain active throughout their life.

Mr. Ernst: I think what we have, I mean, that is fine for the 20 or 25 percent of the kids who have some natural athletic ability and who have a reasonable expectation of at least mediocrity if not success in terms of participation in sport. There are a whole pile of kids there that do not have any, or very little. They do not have an interest or do not have, are not sufficiently co-ordinated or a host of other reasons why they are not, whether they are unable or not, willing to participate in those kinds of sport activities.

I think the curriculum needs to be changed in the physical education area and, in our discussions last year, when we were going through the question of how you deal with physical education in the school system, the phys ed teachers themselves say that they agree that there is a need to refocus what they do, not necessarily on the kind of sport activities or the traditional ways they have dealt with the phys ed program. They need a curriculum change to develop the kind of educational programs that will hopefully assist and instill in these kids the value of active living on a lifelong basis.

Then they are going to have to change their teaching methods too, because they themselves admit in many cases they have not done as good a job as they might. From time to time in some areas—and this is their word and not mine—they have simply thrown the best 10 or so people out, the 10 or 12 people out on the floor for basketball, and everybody else sits in the stands and watches. That is constituted from time to time as one of the phys ed classes or perhaps the whole program in certain circumstances.

So we need a curriculum change. We need to work with the Department of Education toward that end. We need to work with the phys ed teachers to try and develop ways and means of instilling that in the kids, and then we have to go out and do it.

Ms. Cerilli: I am wondering what the Minister for Fitness is advocating. Change to what? What are you advocating in terms of curriculum change, in terms of teaching methodology change?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Chairman, I am not an expert in how to accomplish these things, nor do I pretend to be, and we know what the goal is. We know what some of the

professionals have said, either collectively in a group or individually. So we have to try and find the ways and means of doing that, but I am not a professional educator. I do not know the whys and hows and wherefores of trying to develop these things, nor do I pretend to be, nor quite frankly is Mr. Evanchuk.

We are there to provide the supports to those people to, in this case, encourage the change in the curriculum to ensure that these kinds of things are focused upon in an attempt to reach that goal. But we have to draw upon the professional expertise across the system in order to create that plan, if you will, that final plan, to reach that goal, and that is what has to be done over a period of time.

Ms. Cerilli: Can the minister tell me what groups or individuals he has met with to receive this message that there needs to be changes in the physical education curriculum and methods in schools, to ensure that young people are leaving school with attitudes and skills to be active liverers.

Mr. Ernst: Is that like a liver transplant? What Mickey Mantle got? Active liverers.

The phys ed teachers, the phys ed supervisors, the Department of Education—I attended a couple of seminars in recent time. I think the member did as well. I had discussions with people there, with the high schools' athletic people through the MSF. We have had discussions with all of these people about these issues, which the member could have gleaned from my earlier comments, that said that professionals in the system had talked about this with me during that whole episode with respect to the role of physical education in the school system.

Ms. Cerilli: Does the minister then support having a component of health education taught in the physical education curriculum by phys ed teachers? That is currently a change that is being looked at, following up on the blueprint, and does the Minister for Fitness support that?

Mr. Ernst: I do not think it matters a great deal how it is accomplished, whether it is accomplished through one path or another path. The goal is the same, and if

the goal is reached, then how you get to that goal I will leave up to the professionals in terms of education. Reaching the goal is what is important, and if we can do that, we have succeeded, and that is what we want to do.

Ms. Cerilli: Is the minister aware that it is a great concern among physical education professionals currently that physical activity time during classes is going to be reduced because of the changes in the curriculum? Is the minister aware of that concern among a number of physical education professionals?

Mr. Ernst: Yes I am, Mr. Chairman, and ways and means need to be sought to accomplish the goal that we are aiming for. I mean, the ability in the whole education system to try and accomplish a variety of objectives, everything from literacy and basic mathematics to physical education to a host of other kinds of supplementary or peripheral or important programs, if there is not enough time in the day to accomplish that, then we have to look at some other alternatives.

I am not about to get into a public scrap at the moment over what those other alternatives might be, but we need to explore those with the people who are involved in the delivery of the programming, to see whether they are acceptable, whether there is an opportunity and whether ultimately that is the way that the programming should go. But we will see what happens in due course as those discussions go on.

Ms. Cerilli: Is the minister concerned that young people in Manitoba could experience the diminished amount of time spent on activity within their school life and that that may decrease their opportunity to develop the habit for fitness and active living?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Chairman, the goal I think ultimately is to instill that value in the children through the school system if at all possible. If you instill that value, it will not matter whether they spend an hour more or less a week in the actual participation in physical activity within school hours or not. If you instill it in them, they will do it. They will do it on their own time. They will get involved in other activities. We can

create or have created some of those other activities, if they need to be more structured and so on.

I mean, most of the school sport programs are run not during school time, they are run after hours and weekends. So if we can create the same kind of interest in an active living basis, then perhaps you are going to create that outside of the system, outside of the structured portion of the system that is allocated only so many hours of time.

Alternatively, there may be an opportunity to expand the amount of time available, but that is something that has to be pursued on a different plane than this.

(Mr. Neil Gaudry, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Ms. Cerilli: I am surprised by one of the minister's statements that he has said that he thinks that the majority of sports activities are conducted after school by most schools. I am wondering if he has visited many schools to develop that opinion. I think for the majority of students the majority of their sport activity would be in their physical education classes and during intramural programs. Some schools run tremendous intramural programs that involve huge numbers of school students—

Mr. Ernst: But after hours.

Ms. Cerilli: No, the intramural programs are usually run at noon hour—

Mr. Ernst: That is outside of normal school time.

Ms. Cerilli: —or are run during the class activity time.

So I want to ask the minister if he thinks that the best way to instill this attitude towards fitness and active living is through participation in activities.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Chairman, I told the member earlier I am not a professional educator. I do not have all the answers with respect to how best to deliver these programs. We will look to the professional educators to try and develop the best possible way of dealing with it.

Ms. Cerilli: With all due respect, Mr. Chairperson, the minister, though, is in a position to, if not develop policy, to influence the policy for the Department of Education, particularly in this area of physical education and fitness. So I think whether he is an expert or not in this field, he does have a very powerful position over the next while, while new curriculums are being developed, to be a strong voice in cabinet, to advocate for no time to be lost in any grade level for physical activity during class time. Like I said, I know that this is a concern among the physical education profession.

I am wondering if the minister would like to clarify then his ability to recommend policy without taking a position on the question, if the best way to ensure that young people are going to leave school with an attitude and a propensity to participate in fitness activities, if the best way to do that is not by having them to participate in activities during their school life.

* (2310)

Mr. Ernst: Once again, I will explain for the member for Radisson that we have in fact advocated for changes to the curriculum. We are discussing with phys ed teachers, phys ed supervisors, Department of Education and others, that we need to create a new curriculum to deal with this issue to try and accomplish our goal. How we reach that goal I do not think matters, whether it is 30 minutes here or 30 minutes there.

I am prepared to take the advice of the professional educators to say that is necessary or not necessary. I am not going to go out and preclude—I know that happens quite regularly, particularly in the political spectrum, where somebody just tries to force you into a position of saying one thing or another with respect to an issue. I am not prepared to do that.

What I am prepared to do, and I think I have explained it time and time again already this evening, is what we have already done, in terms of trying to change the curricula, trying to gain that focus to reach that ultimate goal of having children leaving the educational system having instilled in them a lifelong desire and recognition of the advantages of active living. That is what the goal is. That is where we are

headed. How we accomplish that will remain to be seen as we go through the process of trying to change the curriculum and trying to change the focus in the school system toward that end.

Ms. Cerilli: Well, I do not want to belabour this too much longer, but the minister must have identified at some point that there was a problem with the current curriculum, the method of delivering physical education, whatever he wants to call it. I am wondering when that was identified and how that was identified to lead to the proposed changes that are outlined in the blueprint for education. How was that identified by this government, and was the minister involved in that? He has mentioned a number of meetings he has had with different groups. Did that begin prior to the blueprint recommendation?

Mr. Ernst: That is what created some of the blueprint concerns. It was the fact that, when you look at the end results and how many of the students leaving high school had that instilled in them, it was recognizably small. So, to address the whole question of that, one tack was that, if we are not gaining the desired result in any event, maybe we ought to scrap the whole thing. The other alternative is to say, rather than doing that, maybe we need to go some other distance further and create new curricula and other kinds of activity. That is what this minister advocated for, and that is what ultimately happened.

(Mr. Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Ms. Cerilli: Welcome back, Mr. Chairperson.

I am glad that the minister was one of the people advocating for that, and I do not think that the way to go is to entirely eliminate physical education at the secondary level. I am still concerned that we are not getting a clear message on what the minister is now advocating.

As I have said, and I hope that he is hearing this as well, there is a lot of concern out there among the professionals that deliver fitness programs to students in schools that they are going to end up doing more sedentary activity and book learning, or whatever you want to call that sort of teaching, and less time on

trying to actually develop the skills that are going to enable young people to participate in lifelong physical activity.

I sort of did get sidetracked into this area from the issues that we were talking about before. I wanted to ask the minister, when we were talking before about dealing with stakeholders and trying to have more government departments providing funding for fitness and lifestyle-related activities—I mean, he must be familiar with the report that was done from the Sports Federation, which has a remarkable statistic. I believe it is from a study that was done in New Zealand or Australia that talks about the potential for saving money from—this is particularly of concern to those countries that still have public health care insurance and health coverage like Canada, like Manitoba. If 40 percent of the population became involved in regular physical activity, the net saving to that country from health care alone would be \$6.5 million per day. That was a study that was done in 1988.

Going back to the issue then of trying to convince other departments and his cabinet colleagues that this is indeed a worthwhile endeavour, that not only is it good for the health of the citizens of Manitoba but it is also good, I guess, for the health of the coffers of the public as well, I am wondering if that has had an impact. This is something that is quite a dramatic study. So can the minister make any additional comments with respect to his discussions with his cabinet colleagues on moving in this area, moving to really go after this area and promote with all the stakeholders in the community that could indeed make not only our communities more healthy but all the citizens more healthy and in the long run save us a lot of our health care costs?

Mr. Ernst: I do not think, Mr. Chairman, I need to go at it very hard. I think everybody recognizes the value. How you reach that or attain or concentrate or focus your efforts is another matter. If not everyone, most people recognize the value of better physical fitness of the human being, that it is going to translate into healthier lifestyle and, ultimately, less demands on the health care system down the road. We are looking at, as we have said before, partnerships in the community through a variety of sources: municipal recreation,

sport oriented, regional, a number of stakeholders in those areas.

In terms of the provincial government departments, we are talking with Education with respect to the outcomes of the physical education program. The Department of Health has instituted a number of wellness programs, wellness centres, such as the one that Seven Oaks Hospital is in the process of creating. You know, a number of things like that. All those things will work toward the ultimate goal of a healthier society and result in savings in the health care system. That is a long-term project. That is not going to resolve issues for people that are 60, 70, 80 years old who have not led a healthy lifestyle up to this point, but that is not to say the goal is not laudable and that we ought not to be pursuing it. We should.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Chairperson, \$6.5 million per day. Does that not get you excited, Mr. Minister, that you could have that kind of impact? So little enthusiasm. This is an exciting area. [interjection]

Well, what gets the minister excited about this area? I want to know that. What gets the minister really revved up about the opportunity to make some pretty dramatic changes? He is not going to answer my question.

* (2320)

It is late, I understand, but I want to go back to and tie this all together with the minister's comments about the approach that the government was taking on physical and how backward that is. I am wondering, if given this statistic that we can save millions of dollars by having more people involved in physical activity, does the minister not think that there could be other approaches in looking at other influences, particularly when we were talking earlier about having an increase in the hours that kids watch TV?

I would just like to suggest that perhaps the way to approach it is not throwing out the baby with the bathwater as they almost did with eliminating physical from the secondary curriculum, but in looking at some of those other influences on young people. I think this would tie in with what the mandate of this division is,

of this directorate is. The media is a tremendous influence. I look at the increase of kids playing video games and pinball games or computer games, Nintendo, and I am wondering if there is any attempt by the department to take a look at some of those other influences, if that is part of the approach that we might take in dealing with this whole area.

Mr. Ernst: Well, Mr. Chairman, kids are going to play video games or computer games and so on. This is a computer age we live in. There are other benefits, educational benefits, coming from the use of that equipment and so on. What we have to do is determine that they can play, they can watch television, or they can play all kinds of video games or Nintendo or whatever else, but they also should look at the benefits and try and have, at least, instilled into them the benefits of an hour of physical activity every day too.

If you have an hour of physical activity every day out of them, it would not matter whether they watched television or not. Rather than try and look at preventing somebody from doing something, I think we need to be proactive and look at encouraging them to do something. That encouragement is that hour or whatever of physical activity every day.

Ms. Cerilli: I guess I look at it as we are up against a lot. What I am getting at is, he has got the division here with three staff. They are up against a lot, they are up against an entire culture, I think, that is more technological and therefore in a lot of ways more sedentary.

I am concerned, and I guess the final point that I want to make is that I think we have to be investing more than \$284,000, roughly, into fitness promotion, keeping in mind that in the long run it has a net saving, particularly when you are talking about younger people.

I am concerned that this government is not taking that challenge on, that it is not truly integrating that into its health reform strategy. I know that I have advocated in the committee before and on panels before that there is a role for a directorate promoting fitness and healthy lifestyle in health reform. I do not see that happening to a very large extent.

I am prepared to pass this section on. If the minister wants to take issue at all with anything I have said, I do not know.

Mr. Ernst: Just in concluding this section, I want to say that the staff may be small but they are excellent. The resources are limited, yes, but they have a fantastic minister who provides amazing leadership, carries the flag for these issues, not necessarily do as I do but do as I say. Leadership is the quality that counts here and they have got fantastic leadership.

Ms. Cerilli: I was remiss in missing one of my issues I wanted to raise. That has to do with initiatives in the area of workplace fitness. Can you describe any initiatives that you have had in the area of promoting fitness in the workplace?

This seemed like it was a big trend 10 years ago and it sort of petered out. There was lots of advocates for transforming workplaces into being fitness friendly so that they would have change facilities and shower facilities and bike racks and that kind of thing. [interjection] The Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) says this is not a good example.

I agree that this building is a horrible example. There is not a shower for any of the hundreds of staff that work here even though we are right on the riverbank and we have a wonderful recreational path right at our doorstep. You could go down to the river and go for a canoe ride at lunchtime if you had the facilities.

That is one of the areas that I am interested in, especially, any government initiatives, again, having some leadership within our own workplace here.

Mr. Ernst: I have had some discussions with the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pallister) with respect to some issues related to this particular building, but we are available to consult as required. We have met with, for instance, Mike McCandless with respect to the creation of a fitness centre in downtown Winnipeg for use either as part of an existing building or as a free-standing building. I met with him and discussed a number of issues, tried to find funding as a matter of fact to assist him in creating that. Ultimately, I never did succeed, but you know, from time to time

there are people in the community who are coming forward to try and promote those activities.

At the same time, every time we do that, spend 11 million bucks on the downtown Y for instance, as an example, to create a first-class fitness facility for people who work in the downtown, then we get dumped on by the private sector owners because they undercut the prices of, for instance, Supreme Racquet Courts who also provide a service to people.

There are a number of those kinds of activities that we support that will provide for facilities for people in the workplace or make it available to people adjacent to their workplace. It may not be right in the workplace, but it at least is available to them, within close proximity.

I know that the use of, particularly by people who work in the downtown, facilities like the downtown Y, like the Reh-Fit Centre, where I go three times a week—as a matter of fact, the number of people that are there at six o'clock in the morning is quite amazing and it seems to be growing all the time.

Those kinds of facilities are available, and we try to encourage and assist wherever we can. We have not gone out and analyzed a particular area and said, we need a facility here and this is how we are going to do it and so on. Those initiatives have to come from the community to do that.

* (2330)

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 1. Fitness and Sport (a) Fitness Directorate (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$134,900.

Ms. Cerilli: I just want to ask the minister more directly if there have been any initiatives within the civil service for the Province of Manitoba.

Mr. Ernst: As an example, in this SummerActive program we happen to have a recreation student working with the fitness director for the summer. In fact, they are in the process of organizing, for instance, the entire 155 Carlton office building, which is 90 percent government staff, trying to get them involved

in active living for the summer program. We will see from that what kind of results we get and then we can expand that to other departments and other places within government.

Ms. Cerilli: Just to clarify, that was a STEP student?

Mr. Ernst: Yes.

Ms. Cerilli: Way to go. I can pass this now.

Mr. Deputy Chairperson: Item 1. Fitness and Sport (a) Fitness Directorate (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$134,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$87,200—pass; (3) Grants \$62,500—pass.

Item 1. (b) Sport Directorate (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$435,000.

Ms. Cerilli: This is the section on the Sport Directorate. There are a number of issues I want to discuss here. We will just get a chance to sort of get started tonight unless it is the will of the committee to call it midnight. [interjection] No? Okay. [interjection] No, I do not want to go to one o'clock. I will go to midnight.

I just want to take the opportunity to thank the staffperson from the Fitness Directorate. I also realize that he does an incredible job. I just wish he had more help.

* (2340)

I think I will start off with asking some questions about the plans for the Canada Games in Brandon. It is unfortunate that we do not have a little bit more detailed information in the Estimates book. I see that there is a line for the Pan Am Games. I am wondering why there is not a line for the Canada Games. Is there any provincial funding responsibility or is it entirely federally funded?

Mr. Ernst: We are providing approximately \$3.17 million as our contribution toward the 1997 Canada Games in Brandon. The current year's amount of \$650,000 is contained in line item (5) Major Sport Initiatives.

Ms. Cerilli: I will just ask the minister to repeat that for me so I can make a note of it.

Mr. Ernst: Well, if you look under the Sport Directorate there are expenditure areas (1) to (6), (1) being Salaries and Employee Benefits; (2) Other Expenditures; (3) Grants; (4) Best Ever Program - Grant Assistance; (5) Major Sport Initiatives and; (6) 1999 Pan American Games - Capital, for a total of \$5.488 million. Those are the categories of expenditure. Category No. 5. Major Sport Initiatives \$650,000 is in fact the contribution to Brandon for 1995-96.

The reason it is not classified as Brandon is that major sport initiatives, for comparative purposes, last year contained more than the contribution for Brandon, so there was a contribution there toward Pan Am bid, so it was contained under Major Sport Initiatives last year as an overall contribution but, this year, because we have won the bid and are now required to provide funding under our agreement with the 1999 Pan American Games Society, we have a line in there for 1999.

Ms. Cerilli: So for this budget we are investing \$65,000 towards the Canada Games in Brandon.

Mr. Ernst: \$650,000.

Ms. Cerilli: \$650,000. I was just waiting. I thought the minister was going to clarify that.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Chairman, we are providing approximately \$3 million toward Brandon. We provided some money already. We will provide additional money over the period of time leading up to 1997, including 1997, to the total tune of that amount of money. So this is the contribution for this year.

Ms. Cerilli: So I would like a breakdown for this year how the \$650,000 is being invested. I am particularly interested in a description of the facilities development in Brandon.

Mr. Ernst: We are providing a grant to the 1997 Brandon Host Society for operating costs and capital expenditures. How Brandon spends—we are not

spending the money, we are giving the money to the Brandon Host Society and Brandon Host Society is spending the money and they will spend it how best they think is appropriate within the guidelines of the Canada Games Council and their Host Society operation plan.

* (2350)

We are in a partnership with Canada Games Council, the federal government, the Host Society, the City of Brandon and individual sports, so the finalized business plan should be available soon, but they have gone on with the process of—either the City of Brandon or the Brandon Host Society has had engineers and designers looking at improvements to the playing surfaces, renovations of existing facilities that are needed to accommodate the '97 Canada Games in Brandon. But we are not spending program dollars, we are not spending \$650,000, other than by way of a grant to the Brandon Host Society.

Ms. Cerilli: So are there any conditions that go along with that grant? What are the requirements for the use of that money?

Mr. Ernst: Well, I guess it starts with the bid. There is a bid document that outlines in some detail what Brandon intends to do should they be awarded the games. Then there are funding partner contributions created by formulae related to the Canada Games through the Canada Games Council and so on as to how they will contribute, how the federal government contributes.

There are bid guidelines with respect to the overall operation and then, ultimately, you wind up with an agreement with Brandon based upon all of these things as set down in that agreement to determine how the money is going to be spent and if there is a surplus what you are going to do with it.

Ms. Cerilli: Was there any impact on the Canada Games money coming from the federal government with the cuts from the federal government to Sport Canada?

Mr. Ernst: No.

Ms. Cerilli: Can the minister tell me what the total budget is for the Canada Games in Brandon?

Mr. Ernst: The finalized business plan is anticipated in the next day or two, so we do not have a finalized number and I am just trying to recollect what it was in the bid, \$10 million, \$12 million or something like that.

Ms. Cerilli: Can you tell me how much of that \$10 million or \$12 million will be used in facilities development?

Mr. Ernst: Six million dollars. I should also point out that while that is the expectation, if it turns out that through a variety of other sources or other users or other facilities becoming available to them or they make a change—you know, one of the big issues is, do they build a diving tank in Brandon? They do not have one.

They spend \$2 million or \$3 million building a diving tank to be used pretty sparingly or for the one day that they need diving facilities, or do they bus everybody into Winnipeg and use the Pan Am pool? Or, alternatively, do they scrap the diving activity totally? The latter is pretty tough to do.

Or do you build an outdoor diving facility and be at the whim of the prairie winds and everything else when you are trying to dive off a 10-metre board. I am not so sure I want to do that in a 20- or 30-mile an hour wind. I am not so sure I want to dive off it period, no matter where it was.

So those are the kinds of issues that they have to address, and if they have to conduct that activity, 10-metre tower diving, then what is the best option? If they spend the money on capital, they do not have it available for other things. If they decide the Winnipeg option is the best option, then they have the money available for something else. So there is some flexibility built into it. It is not terribly totally rigid.

They have identified a number of facilities that need upgrading. Again, it will depend on, ultimately, when they call tenders if their estimate and the estimates of their consultants were accurate. If they said they needed \$300,000 to build a field hockey facility and

find out that it is going to cost \$500,000 after all is said and done, then they have some decisions to make.

Ms. Cerilli: I appreciate what the minister is saying, that there is some flexibility. The diving facility and an outdoor track are two things that have been mentioned to me that are going to be expensive items on the list. I do not believe that Brandon has an international calibre outdoor track athletic facility, and I guess what I am concerned about is the kind of consultation that this facilities development process is going to have with the Manitoba Sports Federation and the different sports governing bodies.

Mr. Ernst: Well, if you ask the Manitoba Sports Federation what their mandate is, they will tell you that they are a conduit providing money to their individual sport organizations, which does not leave a very large role in terms of the technical development of facilities in Brandon. What you do have is the national sport governing bodies for those individual sports who will be displayed in Brandon, who have assigned technical representatives to ensure that the facilities in Brandon meet the national requirements of that sport for each individual sport.

So if field hockey needs—and interesting, field hockey is the one that has created the big problem. It was originally estimated at \$800,000 and has turned out to look now like it is going to cost \$1.7 million to construct a field hockey facility in Brandon, which may never be used again. But they have, you know, a major problem there, but the technical reps for field hockey from the national sport governing body are the ones who set the criteria and who will judge the project based upon the design.

Ms. Cerilli: This is posing a problem then. We have got people from Ottawa deciding on how the facility development is going to be undertaken for the Canada Games in Brandon.

Mr. Ernst: Well, they are the technical representatives of the sport, whether they come from Ottawa or Calgary or Vancouver or Winnipeg or Brandon; it does not matter. They are the technical representatives of the sport. Most will be from Manitoba, those representatives, but by and large they are the technical

representatives of the sport. So where they come from—if they have somebody here in Manitoba who is available and adequate and trained, and so on, then they will employ them. They are not spending money for the sake of spending money, either, by sending people from Halifax to come here to decide. They will use whatever resources they have available to them at least cost.

Ms. Cerilli: I understand what you are saying then, but these are people who are from the national organizations for the sports, and I do not understand. I guess I want just to make sure that there is going to be a local influence in setting the priorities, and I want the minister to be able to assure me that there is going to be local influence, as the minister said, in choosing what kind of sport facilities are best going to serve the long-term interests of the province, so that can be balanced with the short-term interests of the Canada Games.

Mr. Ernst: Well, it is a little late now. That is what you do in the bid process, but these are national games. These are the Canada Games. These are not Manitoba games. These are not Brandon games. These are the Canada Games. So you have national requirements. You have a partnership with the Canada Games Council which is a national body housed in Ottawa. You have a partnership with the federal government who are the initiators, originally, of the Canada Games and provide significant funding.

But when you bid, you bid on set criteria for a number of sports. Those sports are required to be housed, and the tech reps from those individual sports determine the playing surface, if you will, or the playing field associated with those individual sports whether it is an outdoor facility, an indoor facility, whatever. They will decide, ultimately, the technical requirements, and then Brandon can decide how much, or how little, they will provide around that.

So if you are building a baseball stadium and you can provide 1,000 seats as opposed to 2,000 seats, that, ultimately, is the choice of Brandon, based upon the availability of money and their ability to raise money from the corporate community because a large portion of the \$4 million, I think it is, of Brandon's contribution is to be raised corporately, or at least raised by the

Brandon whole society by whatever means. You know the bid is based on X numbers of sports who have to be housed with appropriate facilities for the conduct of the games.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order please. The time is now 12 midnight. Committee rise.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

* (2000)

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Good evening. The hour being eight o'clock will the Committee of Supply please come to order. The committee will be resuming consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training.

When the committee last sat it had been considering item 2. School Programs (b) Education Renewal (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 39.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I believe before recessing for the dinner hour I had asked a question of the minister. The minister was about to respond but time had elapsed, so perhaps the minister could respond at this point.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I am hoping I am answering the question that I recall being asked just before we broke, in terms of whether or not it is the French policy, whether or not there had been any changes. There have been no changes in the grants program and no change in the policy regarding that issue. They have three to five minutes flex time just like any other subject, but the program and the grant and the policy have not changed in that regard.

Mr. Reid: What my constituent was worried about was, and I believe the previous Minister of Education had referenced it in the document that he had released earlier this year where the divisions were free to make some alterations to the core subjects that were part of the curriculum, my constituent was worried that the French language instruction, which was not part of the French immersion program but was part of the English

language instruction as one of the subjects, could potentially be eliminated from the curriculum as one of the core subjects. She was concerned about that because it had been in the discussion document, I believe. I would like to know if that is still the intent of the new minister, if that is a policy of her department now that she has assumed those duties or responsibilities.

Mrs. McIntosh: There is time within the given allocations to have the French language instruction taught as with other subjects. I do not know if that is an answer. Time is in there for that provision.

Mr. Reid: The minister can correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that, yes, there may be time allotted, but I believe there is time allotted for a number of subjects which would be strictly at the discretion of, I believe, the division itself, the division trustees in making that determination, which could potentially eliminate French language instruction as one of the core subject.

I believe that French language instruction is currently defined as one of the core subjects. Is that going to remain as one of the core subjects? If it is not, when does the minister anticipate that change will occur?

Mrs. McIntosh: There still is at the elementary school and at the junior high level time for French to be taught. In fact, staff has just indicated to me that they did consult with divisions. One of them was Transcona-Springfield. They indicated that because the division was also concerned about it, would there be enough time to do this?

It was going back to emphasizing the four basic areas. They consulted many school divisions and, as I say, one of them was Transcona Springfield. They indicated that, yes, they still had enough time to teach French as a basic subject of the 30 minutes allotment that is sort of normal at the elementary and junior high level.

So there is no shortage of time, if that is the will of the community to have that. They have time within the time allocations to include that as a subject that they want to see taught in the community.

Mr. Reid: The current school division trustees have indicated that to the minister, from what the minister has indicated here. The trustees now are prepared to include that French language instruction as part of the core curriculum. With the upcoming elections for trustees this fall, that position could change with the election of new trustees.

Is French language instruction as part of the English language programmings or schooling going to remain a part of the minister's department core subjects in the curriculum area?

Mrs. McIntosh: I am just a little perplexed at the use of the word remain, because it is not compulsory now.

Mr. Reid: Okay. So it is an education for me too then. I thought it was part of the core curriculum and that it had to be part of that. So then it has been at the discretion of the trustees for a number of years in whatever school division throughout the province, and with the election of successive trustees to the different school divisions, there could be a change in that policy then, and the trustees themselves would have to determine in consultation, hopefully, with the parents of the community.

Mrs. McIntosh: They will have to have consultation with the parents of the community, and that is the big difference now. They did not have to before. So if it is of importance to the people of the community, they now have a much better chance of having it than they did before.

* (2010)

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): In a similar vein, there have also been questions about the time available for music and art at the junior high levels. Is the minister giving the same response?

Mrs. McIntosh: The department did a survey of schools, and what they came back with was information that there is still time in the allotment for a full program offering in those subjects at the junior high level with one sort of qualifier, and that is that it may be, if they are teaching six classes, it might be five and a half, depending how they flex the time, because

they do have that three to five minutes sort of flex time where they can free up some time or add in some time. Schools have indicated that they would still have time to do those particular subjects.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us how many schools were surveyed and when they were surveyed, because I think the predominant understanding in the community still is that the times for these programs have been reduced by the new requirements for additional math and language arts.

Mrs. McIntosh: There were about 15 schools and they were not surveyed in the usual sense of the word surveyed. They had consultations with those 15 schools. So they had dialogue and discussion as opposed to fill in the blank, you know, written form. It was actual verbal communication with these 15 schools, and it was done this spring. It was just completed a little while ago, this spring here of 1995.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us on what basis those schools were selected? For example, were they all schools who had contacted the minister with difficulties about the changes in regulations? Were they selected on the basis of representativeness, regional, in terms of transportation needs, those kinds of things? What are we to take from this survey of 15 schools?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, it was an urban-rural mix looking at different configurations, such as nursery school to Grade 6 or Grade 5 to early years, middle years, urban, rural, trying to look at different configurations of schooling. They did talk to divisions that had expressed concerns so that they could see specifically what—not only just divisions that expressed concerns, but they made an effort to make sure that if a division had expressed a concern or asked a question about which they were puzzled that they made sure that those divisions were amongst those that were consulted so that they could, you know, cover off anything like that that might have been expressed in terms of dialogue and consultation with those particular divisions.

We have indicated that this year, this year coming up beginning of September '95, would be a transition year

and that in that transition year divisions should make every effort that they can to move to these new allotments and to put more time on the core subjects, the English language arts, the mathematics, those subjects which parents, industry and the community in general have said they felt required more emphasis and more time. So we are asking divisions now to respond to that great outpouring that has come from the public, to which government has responded, and begin to put more intensive effort into those basic subjects and, at the same time, move to the new time allotments as much as they can in this transition year to become in a state of readiness. The feedback we are getting is that divisions are moving to try and do that.

I do not want to forget and it is slightly off topic, but I am afraid I will forget. I have got some things here that, if I could just take a moment, that were asked for. One was the Enhancing Employability Skills that you had mentioned earlier, and I have this booklet here that is the report from the Conference Board of Canada that you had requested.

If I may, Mr. Chairman, just table that for the member's benefit. That is what we had indicated for those who are just hearing this particular one for the first time. We based a lot of our decisions regarding the science and technology centres around some of the things that were said in the Conference Board of Canada's report, which has just been tabled.

* (2020)

I also have the information that was requested regarding the information on distance education pilot projects. You had asked the question, how many distance education projects were received and how many were approved? This indicates that 28 applications had been submitted, with 13 approved, 15 rejected. Of those rejected, the reasons for being rejected were that seven were already covered under the Infrastructure Works application to create a long-haul distance education network in Manitoba, that six did not meet the criteria of the program as well as those that were approved, and that two were not reviewed as they had not filed a letter of intent to apply to round 2. Those were some of the stats in response to the question that the member had asked prior to our break.

Ms. Friesen: I am continuing to look at the junior high curriculum difficulties that many schools contacted us about in the past few months. At the end of the transition year, that is, if we look at September '96, can the minister assure us that schools in Manitoba will be able to continue to offer the same amount of basic French, industrial arts, home economics, music, choral music, band, all the subjects which they have told us, and presumably told the minister as well, that they have difficulties with at the moment?

Mrs. McIntosh: This takes us right back to the whole concept of education renewal that is sweeping this nation coast to coast to coast. The whole idea of placing greater emphasis on the fundamental essential skills and knowledge, literacy, ability to communicate well in all media, the ability to compute, problem-solve and do mathematical skills, which are seen as areas that have lost time and attention from them as we move into compulsory family life, compulsory essential skills for living, so many compulsory subjects that people are saying they no longer now have the full time that should be allotted to subjects that used to get more time and attention.

So the other mood that is sweeping the nation is the desire for more choice by those who have to bear the implications of education, the students and the parents and the guardians who care for those students, who will be the ultimate beneficiaries of any education system put in place. And so people are saying, we want back our ability to choose what people have.

So the member is asking me as minister to choose what we in fact are saying will become, to a degree, community choice, the choice of the people who will be the ones who benefit from the education system, the consumers of education in the popular jargon of the day. And we will be looking at the end of the transition year for feedback from the schools.

I cannot tell you at this time what the feedback from those schools will be. It may be that they will ask to have as compulsory the subjects that she identifies or that her constituents wish to have compulsory. It may be that they ask to have compulsory subjects that she has not identified. It may be that they ask to have as compulsory the subjects that are in place right now, and

certainly we know there are some subjects that will be valued that in all likelihood will have a high probability of being chosen by the consumers of education.

Divisions which have been offering all or most of the noncore subject areas at the expense of the core subjects—English language arts, science, mathematics, social studies—will have to make some choices about their offerings now. It may be that if they make choices so the core may be increasingly emphasized, as consultations with educational partners has indicated as being necessary and desirable, at the end of this transition year we will have a better sense of how people are feeling about those things. But I indicate to the member that the same problem has existed for many, many years.

I can recall being intensely frustrated in not holding to the letter of the law back in the '80s when we realized that if we taught every subject to the mandatory requirement, we would have to add to the length of the school day and that the method of dealing with it at that time was that divisions just simply ignored the guidelines and taught what they could. Hence, there was no full abiding by the guidelines for time on task in certain subjects at that time, neither was there any ability for the community to choose those areas that they might feel as ones that should have priority over others.

People have said they want their principals to be educational leaders in the schools. The parents, the community and the schools have indicated they want to work together to make choices, and we have agreed with them.

So we will continue to mandate the core areas to give the students that strong foundation that they require, and we have designated kindergarten through to Senior 2 as those years which will have a more prescribed foundation in terms of courses that are offered, and the years Senior 3 and Senior 4 will be the years of specialization in which there will be more opportunity for choice by the consumers, the students and their guardians, and so on.

I will just indicate to you that for Grades 7 and 8, that phys ed with have 30 minutes a day, the arts will have

25 minutes a day, and there will be an optional course for .4 minutes a day—40 minutes a day—just teasing somebody here. So we still are showing a fairly hefty emphasis on those particular categories at the junior high level, because if you spread that out over the six-day cycle at 30 minutes a day, or 40 minutes a day, or 25 minutes a day, you are talking about a fairly good amount of time spent on physical education and the arts, on each of those subjects, equivalent to what might be spent on an optional course. There is an increase in the core at the same time in the science and math area in the middle years, and we feel those are very important areas that we will mandate as being absolutely essential.

Ms. Friesen: The minister began by expressing her frustration with the skills for independent living, law courses, and she did not use the terms, additional ones like sociology and health. But those are the new courses which have been added over the last, say, 10 years. [interjection] Well, the minister says she did not express frustration. That, I think, was the word that she used in having to deal with all of these additional mandated courses.

The problem that I think people in junior high and their families are looking at, and the school divisions are looking at, is that it is all very well for the government to say our new program offers you choices, but in fact what they are saying is our new government offers you choices, but it gives you no time to exercise those choices. Essentially, the generations—well, my own children and I assume the minister's children, the last two generations of students have been able to take in the junior high not an additional level of courses, but basic French, art, band or choral music, and industrial arts or home economics, a combination of those things.

What concerns people, I think, is that their younger brothers and sisters now will not be able to have that range of choices in the junior high school, the point at which, I would think, that you begin to develop the taste, the interest, maybe even some basic skills that will enable you to pick up on them and give you the opportunity to choose them at the senior high level.

I understand the government's policy in looking for specialization at the senior high level, but the point, as

I think about all the systems which offer specialization at that level—a number of systems across the world do offer that, and it is a particular educational framework—is that they offer it on the basis of having had a very broad range of courses available to students at earlier levels.

So, if you take some of those systems, for example, where students are only taking two and three and four courses in the senior high grades, the Grades 11 and 12, those are students who, in their earlier years, have had the choice of, for example, three languages in addition to their own. They have had the choice of drama and music, of technology, et cetera. What concerns me is the limits of choice that are going to be available to people in the junior high school.

Mrs. McIntosh: Just for clarification. I did not express frustration with courses such as Family Life or Skills for Independent Living or any of those in terms of their content or their applicability or their appropriateness for the age level. I expressed frustration that the department had mandated as compulsory more courses than there was time to teach within the allowable time. Exactly the problem the member is referencing right now. There were so many courses made compulsory that there was not enough time to teach them all. So what divisions were doing is simply just not teaching them all, even though they were all compulsory. We are saying, that is not what we are going to do.

* (2030)

The courses that you were referencing when you talked about music, when you talked about bands, when you talked about art and all of those things, are all senior years' courses in terms of choices. They will still be able to choose those at the junior high level in the middle years. They are still there, and there still is the same amount of time in the school day. The department's analysis of the time allotments, and the feedback from the schools and communities, indicates the schools will be able to continue to offer the middle years' choices.

I am not sure that we are talking apples and apples. We are talking maybe apples and oranges, because the

choices that she refers to are the same choices that are there now, that are going to be there now.

When we get to those last two years of high school and they are going to start specializing—and I appreciate that she is talking about the way things are done in other countries in terms of, you know, three and four languages and those types of things. I am wondering if she has any sense of the time allotments that are allowed in those particular schools for the teaching of classes. How many days in the school year? How many hours in the school day? What kinds of rigours are there on the discipline, you know, in terms of the time that is spent on task?

My recollection, and I am going back more years maybe than I should acknowledge if I want to maintain my image as a reasonably youthful person, but attending school in Europe, as I did as a child, the time on task was far more lengthy than it was in any Canadian school that I had attended. You know, our days were very long. Our tasks were very rigorous. We did not have a lot of free time, and, yes, indeed, there were many languages. There was strict, very strict emphasis on the basics, strict emphasis on language, mathematics, science, history, very little time for other subjects. Music was a subject that we spent a lot of time on, but we did not have any of the modern courses that we have introduced in North American schools, and, mind you, I am going back, but we would have all of that. Then we would take the stuff home to do at home if we could not get it finished in school.

We do indicate that schools are going to have to make choices much the way they have been faced with making choices before, but this time they will have the parents involved in making those choices. Those that have tried to offer all of the options at the expense of the core subject areas will find that the core subject areas will have to receive the prominence that society feels they must have, and society as reflected by this government and the many people with whom we have had contact.

So schools which have had a balanced approach in terms of timetabling, between the core and the choice subject areas, will be able to continue to do so, and I see no lack of opportunity for schools to have those

very valued subjects of music and art. Indeed, as I have indicated, we have 30 minutes a day or 25 minutes a day assigned to arts and 30 minutes a day assigned to phys ed. Forty minutes a day for the optional, and the optional will include a list of approved subjects, many of which are ones that are currently being used.

If you want to make comparisons with other countries, you look at China, which has school six days a week, 7:30 in the morning to 4:30 in the afternoon, and maybe they have three languages, but they have tremendous more time on task than we do in our North American society, and they have homework on top of that. So different jurisdictions will have different ways, but those countries whose students are starting to dominate in the world economy are those countries with rigid disciplines in schools. They are taking off, they are getting first choice in the international universities, and they are dominating, and we do not want to see our students starting to slip behind.

Those of our students who excel, really and truly excel, and we have programs for students who have gone through, such as the International Baccalaureate program and so on, where students have rigorous academics. I am not saying it is for every student, and we are not going to bring all schools up to the International Baccalaureate level, but, clearly, that advantage of being able to start making choices has a proven track record.

With the scheduling of physical education and the arts, Grades 7 and 8 at the junior high level, the middle years level, will still have 240 minutes for optional subjects, and that is a lot of time. We have also provided flexibility by allowing those three to five minutes flex time, and that gives time for emphasis on core and a balanced program of options. I think the sense that because we are going to have choice and because we are going to have increased emphasis on the core subjects that somehow students in Manitoba will no longer have access to these very valued subjects that she references is not a correct implication.

Ms. Friesen: Principals of schools I have spoken to in southwestern Manitoba believe that they are going to have to choose between band and basic French. That

is the choice that they see before them. That choice was not there before in the sense that they were offering both and believed that their communities were satisfied and, in fact, demanded both. Now that choice that the minister speaks about is no longer available to them to make. Their choices are much more limited.

A second example that was given to me was from the private schools, Mennonite schools in particular, which see choral music as very much a part of the ethos of the school. They believed that they were going to have to make choices between choral music and other programs which they had valued before. Now, is the minister saying this is not the case. Did she include, for example, some of those private schools in her survey?

* (2040)

Mrs. McIntosh: Schools can still take band and basic French. The Mennonite schools can certainly still have the music that they currently have. If that is their desire and that is their option, they have time allotted to be able to do that and we would encourage them to do that because that is the reflection of their community's desires.

There is no question but the Mennonite schools have an incredibly good focus on music. There is no reason they would not continue to have that focus. If that is their desire, they have time within their allotments to make that their priority if that is their priority.

Similarly, if divisions wish to have band and French and that is their priority, then they can have band and French, because they have got 240 minutes of optional time.

I am pleased to hear the member indicating that she feels it is important that schools get what they want, because that is the whole basis behind our thinking here, that schools should have what they want, not what somebody else decides they should have. By the way the member has phrased her question, she has indicated support for that principle.

She is concerned that the Mennonite schools might not get their full complement of music. That indicates

she supports their right to choose—that is a choice—and so do we, and that is behind our thinking here. There might be some situations where schools have offered all of the options for significant amounts of time at the expense of core subject areas, and then those schools will have a more difficult choice. But those schools that have always placed a good amount of time on the core subject areas will not have that problem, because they have already been offering a balanced approach, including core subject areas such as band, basic French, choral music, and will be able to continue to do so.

All we are saying is that we do feel there now has to be some emphasis on those core subjects, but there is no inability for schools to have both band and basic French.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, the minister should be careful not to read more than is actually stated into my questions. I am reflecting the critiques and problems that have been brought to me as a member of the opposition. My concerns are that the apparent offer of choice is a phantom, that in fact schools which believe that they have been doing, schools have chosen to spend a certain amount of time on core subjects and believed that they were doing well, now they are being told that their choices will be more limited, because they must expand the amount of time that is being spent.

This is not results based. This is not outcome or benchmark based. This is the government saying you must spend more time in this area no matter what your results have been, no matter how satisfied your community is with the kind of program that you have been running.

My concern is that what is expressed as choice, in fact, and has been represented to us—and I know to the minister as well—is in fact a limitation on choice for a number of schools.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the member has indicated several times that she has been approached by various schools and school divisions with concerns and critiques. I would be very, very grateful if she could table for the committee—unless she has the same courtesy procedure that we do—but if she would not

mind taking advantage of that courtesy and give those people a quick call and ask for permission to table those concerns, critiques, criticisms, worries, fears, disappointments and all of the things that she has referenced in the last few days about individual schools and school divisions being concerned, if she would not mind sharing with us that information so that we can communicate and consult with those people directly.

We would be very grateful because when someone speaks in broad generalities and says things like I was talking to some people and they told me they are worried, it does not really help us to get at the root of the discussion. So if the member would be good enough to table those for us so that we can communicate with those people and be more specific so that we know exactly what it is that people are worried about, rather than sort of the vague generalities and the generic statements that do not really tell us exactly what it is they are worried about—you did be kind enough to mention the Mennonite school and the concern of the private schools that have music programs that might have them curtailed, and I have been able to reassure you that if music is their priority they would be able to continue to have it.

What other schools, what other divisions, what specifically have they said that is part of all of this critique that the member indicates she is receiving on a constant basis?

I think, as a good critic, it would be helpful if we could have that tabled so we could deal with it by communicating with them and having them come in and sit down and go through it, so we can support those schools in trying to resolve their specific concerns or maybe some misinformation they might have been given or that. We would appreciate that, if you would not mind.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I think the minister has already received most of them. Most of the ones I get indeed have been copies of ones that have been sent to the minister. On basic French I know that she has had, or her predecessor has had, communications from the University of Winnipeg French department, University of Brandon French department, the teachers of basic French, for example, on that one issue.

I think if she consults her correspondence with the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, she will find that there are representations there about the implications of the timetabling changes. I believe in the discussion document the superintendents' association developed around the renewal program this particular issue was made reference to. I believe she has had correspondence from the Association of School Trustees as well as from particular groups of trustees that have also been copied to us.

At the meeting I attended, at which the deputy for this area was present, in Brandon, discussing a variety of aspects of the renewal program, these kinds of issues were raised, both in writing, in the round table discussions, as well as in some of the questions.

So I do not think it is that I have any special knowledge, although in fact the Mennonite issue was raised with me privately, and that is certainly something I would want to check with the individual.

I do not think the minister can be unaware that schools, superintendents, area interest groups, teachers and parents all have difficulty with the proposed changes to the junior high curriculum. It is one of the reasons, I understand, that the government has enabled the junior highs to have a transition year. My concern is at the end of that transition year, are we going to be in any different position, or is the government continuing to say that the schools will have less choice in the range of programs which they have been enabled to offer?

If that is the case, it seems to me far more straightforward for the government to say, yes, you are going to have less choice. You will be able to choose between one out of three instead of two out of four because we are going to put more emphasis upon the core subjects. If that is the issue, then let us say it and let us be straightforward about it instead of saying, well, there is three minutes here and there is five minutes there and there is a bit of recess there, and, yes, of course, if you want it, you will be able to have it. It really seems to fudge the issue for people, and I think it makes them more frustrated about what is happening.

* (2050)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I thank the member for that clarification. If I am reading her correctly then she is saying that any critiques that she has received, with the exception of the private school that she is supporting in its endeavours there, which we also support, but with the exception of that one person for the private school, we already have all of the critiques that she has received, and she has not received any others that we have not been copied on.

So she is not giving us any new information; rather she is giving us the information that the staff had received earlier and that the staff has been working to resolve with divisions, because I have received very little, if anything, since I have become minister.

I know the staff has been working with schools or those particular schools who have identified that they may have some timetabling concerns or scheduling difficulties. Staff has been working directly with those divisions to address those concerns and help resolve them. So we are doing that. Any division that has contacted us, any superintendents who have said, well, with this timetabling dilemma, or whatever it is they have identified, the staff has gone back to those people and said, okay, now, what can we do to help.

The member says, you know, why do we not come right out and say that we are going to be putting more time on core subjects, and that may mean that some divisions that traditionally have not placed a lot of time on core subjects may find that, if they have been offering all options, may not be able to offer all options any more because we are going to insist on increased attention to the core subjects. She says, why do we not just come out and say that. Well, madam, we have been saying nothing but that for many, many months. I mean, that is the whole point of this whole discussion. To say, why do you not come out and say that, I do not understand why you would say that when we have been saying it and saying it ad nauseam until the point that we have had some people say, why do you not stop saying that.

As I indicated before, there are many schools that have this sort of approach right now, where they have had a fairly strong emphasis on the core subjects, and the choices they have traditionally made will not differ

very much. But schools offering optional subject areas at the significant expense of the core subject areas will indeed have to make a few different choices than those they have made in the past so that we can ensure all Manitoba children have a solid foundational grounding.

You will find quite a diversity from community to community with the way in which school boards have structured themselves. I can recall with the family life education program, for example, many years ago being on the school board and deciding that we would involve the parents in that particular curriculum because the subject area was somewhat controversial and sensitive, and so we struck what we called a family life review committee.

We had on that, schoolteachers from the division and school administrators from the division and a couple of trustees and some parents of children attending school at that grade level and went through the curriculum and devised what we thought would suit our particular division. So we had involvement from the teachers who had been working with the students, from the principals who had been working with the teachers, from the parents who had the ultimate responsibility for children at home, and together we took the existing family life program and we modified it.

We put in place something that was tailor-made for our community. It worked well for us. It would work well for another community who may want to put a different emphasis on the same material, the same content. When everybody works together like that, you can adequately and accurately reflect the community.

I am quite confident with the way the range of options are being laid down. You have to take four from a list of six or whatever the breakdown is that you are going to end up with basically the same options that are in place right now being selected because you are going to see people valuing music, valuing the other subjects we were talking about earlier, industrial arts, all of those things which are still in place in the middle year schools at the junior high level. These are not going to be wiped off the map so to speak.

I think there has been a lot of misinterpretation or unnecessary fear about the changes we are introducing

which really and truly are not the huge massive changes that people seem to be led to believe.

What we are saying is that we will make this next year a transition year, so that people can come to grips with some of the things we are talking about, so that people can find their comfort level, so that people can work through what we are doing. We are just asking for one consistency and the one consistency which is not in the schools that have been reaching for excellence—really very much difference than what is happening in many of the schools right now, that is that we are now wanting to ensure a solid grounding in foundation skills. Once that is assured through timetabling, schools will be able to fit their other choices around that.

They can fit it around in a variety of ways. Some may have no need to make any change because they are already doing it. Others may have to make some changes, but they are not the overwhelming changes that people have been led to believe.

When we talk about foundation skills of logic and critical thinking and deductive reasoning and thinking, problem solving, computation, learning how to learn, these are things that can permeate all subject areas. You do not sit down and say, okay, students, today we are going to learn how to think or today we are going to learn how to use the English language well. This will permeate all subject areas so that you can take science, and in science you can learn how to use the English language well during your science class, during your physical education class. You can learn how to do deductive reasoning in other courses besides English language arts.

I do not know if the member catches the drift of what I am trying to say here, but it is a renewed emphasis. As I indicated earlier, in many, many schools these things are being done as a matter of course. They just have not been labelled as such. We are now saying we will label them, we will identify that this is what those schools are doing, and we will be asking all schools to do them as well.

Ms. Friesen: Does the minister have a sense of how many schools will require to make changes as a result

of these new curriculum mandates at the junior high level? I am not sure I have a sense of the minister's answers whether the vast majority of schools will stay the same or the vast majority of schools will have to make a change. Vast is probably the wrong word to use, but where does the balance fall? Does this policy have an impact upon only a few schools? Are she and I only hearing from those few schools, or is it having an impact on a much broader range of programs?

Mrs. McIntosh: Division officials inform me that to date, while we do have some schools who have said they are worried about timetabling—and as I said the division officials are working with them, with those particular schools. Division officials have informed me that our feedback to date indicates that the majority of schools are "on side," in that they are saying this is not something that is different from their goals and their objectives, and essentially they are saying let us get on with it.

We are saying we will take the transition year because there are some who said this is different from what we have been doing, and we would like some period of adjustment. We are saying, let us take the period of adjustment. Everything does not have to be done over night. Let us make sure that everybody is coming along with us on this in such a way that they have a comfort level, that they are not going to be suffering from future shock syndrome.

* (2100)

I have talked to some of my friends who are involved in the system either as trustees or as teachers. I still have some friends who are young enough to have parents in the system, still. A third sort of perspective that I get or that we are hearing, I am getting personally and that other people are receiving, is that there is a third category of reaction that would appreciate a transitional year just so they have more time to consult with their communities.

I am talking now mostly of trustees at this level and some school division administrators who would like the chance to have time to have—leisurely is probably the wrong word to use in this context, but to have a fairly good amount of time to dialogue with their community

and their advisory councils on what exactly is our school going to be all about, what kind of atmosphere do we wish to have, what kind of emphasis do we wish to have in terms of the discipline, the goals and objectives of the school, the subjects that we wish to really emphasize.

The example you used of the Mennonite school is probably a very good one because there is a school which has had a very strong emphasis on music. It is very much a part of the atmosphere of their school. There will be other schools that do not have that same emphasis on music, but through that particular vehicle the Mennonite school has reached a lot of educational—I am trying to think of a word here. It is on the tip of my tongue, and I cannot recall it.

They have been able to emphasize an awful lot of things about education through music. Because they are a faith-based institution, they have been able, through music, to emphasize the religious aspects of their school. They have been able to emphasize the use of language in more than one language. They have been able to actually increase mathematical understandings through the spaces between notes and those types of things. They have also been able to bring in to bear the ability to communicate publicly in front of a large audience through their choral programs. There are a lot of things they have done. It is a very important part of their school, and that is a choice that they currently make that they are not likely to deviate from. It is still likely to be their choice because of the emphasis placed upon it in their school.

You will find other schools that also make choices in that regard. You will find schools that have really top-notch science programs right now and have become leaders in that area that may wish to emphasize that. I am thinking of a school that the member beside me and I are familiar with that has done a tremendous amount of work in terms of botany and has, in effect, actually built a greenhouse and done a lot of things in that area. They are not likely to want to give that up. It has become an important part of their school.

We say those choices should be there for them. I do not see it as interfering with the ability to do anything that they currently do.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I think the concern of the person I spoke to was that the choice they might be faced with was, in fact, a very difficult one. Choral music, yes, very much a part of the faith. Basic French, very much a part of the nation. The issue there, in the bluntest terms, is faith or nation. Those are choices which might not have to have been made before.

If this is not the case, if schools are not being asked to make that choice, then perhaps there is not an argument. Those were certainly the concerns that were expressed to me.

It is not necessarily a choice of drama or industrial arts. Basic French is an issue of nation and of a bilingual nation. Students who do not have access to basic French, as the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) was suggesting, may indeed be at a disadvantage in employment and certainly in their ability to deal with the issues that confront a bilingual nation.

It is the nature of the choice, particularly surrounding basic French and other issues, that I think do concern many families. Perhaps we will see these debates as indeed schools and communities are forced to make those kinds of choices.

I do not know if the minister wants to respond on that, but I wanted to move on to another issue that I think she has been contacted on since she became minister, and that deals with the music curriculum. There are, I believe, letters which have been written to the minister to suggest that in the new curriculum proposals the arts are being treated generally as one category of subjects. The music educators, music teachers in particular, are concerned that this is not appropriate, that music has had its own curriculum, and they would like to see that particular music curriculum retained as a separate subject area.

I wonder if the minister has had a chance to respond to those letters yet and what her response is, or what she plans to say.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, the arts, as the member knows, will be treated as a subject area with four strands. It will be four separate curricula, four separate strands, music being a very important strand

because, as just indicated, there are traditions in Manitoba in particular where music has always had prominence. One only has to look at the Music Festival to see the degree to which Manitoba schools participate in music to know how important it is to people. I suspect that the member knows, as well as I do, that music is going to continue to play a high role in Manitoba schools because of its many attributes.

I want to just quickly jump back when she said that people are going to have to choose in the private schools between faith or nation. I am just wanting to indicate to her that they can have both of those choices. The member seems to imply that they will be precluded from having both of those choices. They can have both of those choices. I just wanted to clarify that.

I also want to emphasize that there is nobody, and I mean nobody, who has been more supportive of music education in Manitoba schools than me. The member can go back and look through everything I have done to understand how very important music in the schools is to me. I want to say there are probably a very small number of people who are more devoted to music education than I am, so for her to think that I would willingly or knowingly do anything that would allow music to slip out of existence from Manitoba schools is a fallacy. It just is not so.

As I say, the arts will be treated as one subject area with four separate strands, and they will have separate curricula for each of those strands. The reason it is being categorized that way is because if you talk about the sciences, you talk about the fine arts, you talk about the language arts, it used to be that you would have English grammar and English literature and then we just put it down to language arts. At the same time that we went from having grammar and literature and we started talking about language arts, there was the same kind of concern that the member is raising when you go now and call music and the visual arts fine arts.

* (2110)

I can remember when we went to using the words "language arts" people saying, you are not going to teach grammar anymore, or you are not going to teach literature any more. Of course, it was nonsense. You

still teach grammar, you still teach literature. It is just that they were seen under this umbrella of language arts because nothing is in isolation from anything else. So we talk about fine arts, we are talking about a particular type of learning experience which is different from the technical subjects. It appeals more to the sensitivities of the mind in terms of inner feelings, inner expressions, creativity. Not that the technical things cannot be creative, they can be, but, in terms of the arts, we will be talking about music, we will be talking about visual arts, we will be talking about dance, we will be talking about drama.

There was a time when drama was not even considered in the arts. Drama was always something you did after school. I think the fact that it is being looked at as something—I am just going to pause here, because I do not mean for a minute to imply that having something done after school lessens the worth of it, but to bring it into curricula I think is significant. I mean, all of us have seen incredible school productions.

School productions in my division rival those at the Manitoba Theatre Centre, and I am not exaggerating when I say that. We have had performances that could not be bettered at the Manitoba Theatre Centre. Those are very important aspects of the school life. Many of those things have been done by teachers volunteering on their own time after hours. They are very meaningful to students.

I think it is significant that it is being included in curricula, and it certainly does not de-emphasize the arts. To me it places increased emphasis on them. It is not being done at the expense of music. Many of the dramas are musical dramas that have tremendous impact in terms of artistic musical endeavour. When you hear an orchestra and when you hear a chorus and when you hear individual voices in solo performance during the course of a musical production you are getting a very clear and meaningful application of music as a performing art in relation to drama.

So you know the attempt to imply that these things are going to take a back seat I think is maybe not a very effective attempt and not accurate in terms of what I anticipate is going to be happening. As people make

choices I anticipate that those things which have been valued are going to continue to be chosen. It is just that you will now have opportunity in the Senior 3 and Senior 4 for extra options in those same areas for enhanced skill learning, and I think that is not so bad.

Ms. Friesen: I am glad to hear the minister's personal support for music education, but she should not take raising of questions in that area as in any way personal. None of the questions I raise are personal. It does not matter who the minister is. The issue is, what is this government, what is the minister saying to the music educators who I know have written to her, because they have written to me, with their concerns about what they see as a shift in government and departmental attitudes towards music education.

* (2120)

The concerns that they expressed were the ones I was trying to express to the minister in that they do see that a shift has occurred when music becomes seen as part of a group of arts curricula. And my question was, what is the minister saying to them? Are they wrong to believe in that? Are they correct in believing that? Does the minister have some explanation that will satisfy them about their concerns, very legitimate concerns I think, about the prospect of changes to the time-honoured position that they believe music education had in the schools in Manitoba. I think they are worried that there has been a change.

Mrs. McIntosh: I should indicate first of all that this is not a shift. The music educators had believed that there would be just one arts curricula and this is not so. This is being communicated to them, being communicated to the music educators so that they are aware that the government is talking about four strands, separate curricula under the category of the arts. There will still be emphasis in their music curricula, as there always has been, on the instruction of band, how to read music, how to sing in a choir, how to play a musical instrument, how to do all those things that they do so well right now.

They will not be part of one master curricula that has—I do not know what there was some thought it could be—but one sort of curricula that would have maybe the

first 15 minutes on dance and the second 15 minutes on drama and the third 15 minutes on singing. That is not a very good way to describe how somebody would devise a course that anybody in their right mind would put together curricula that would look like that. I just cannot think of how else the fear might have gotten to them.

I can understand that people would be apprehensive and nervous about hearing certain terminology coming down the tubes without a clear understanding of what it meant. I can completely understand how they would feel a little puzzled and worried and bewildered. I have no quarrel with them for feeling that way. I think in terms of communicating that we still have some communicating to do, because we are sharing that information with them now and I feel badly that there was a moment when they felt that they did not know what was happening.

So I think that is another reason why we need a transition year so that we can all come together and questions of uncertainty and bewilderment and worry can be put forward saying, does this mean we are going to no longer have a particular curricula just for music—just to use this example—what does this mean, and to be given the answers so that they can deal with the answer.

They may say, well, good that is an answer I like, or gee, that is an answer that makes me feel a bit better but it still has this aspect I want a dialogue on, or they can say, well, that answer is no better than the first or whatever they are going to say. We need to have that communication going because we are going to have at the end of the transition year a move to a slightly different way of doing things.

As I said, for some schools it may be no different, but for other schools it may be different, because we are saying we are going to have this emphasis on those four foundation skills, and if there are schools that have not been spending the time allotments on them that they should, then they may have to readjust some of their optional courses. Some may not have to, some may have to, but for those that have to, there will be an adjustment, and we need to work together to make sure that goes smoothly.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Item 16, 2.(b) Education Renewal (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,225,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$2,253,500—pass.

Item No. 16, 2.(c) Assessment and Evaluation (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$686,400.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, the financial Estimates that we are considering here, will this cover the assessment and evaluation under the new curriculum or is this for the continuation of existing programs?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, it is a combination of both, because it is integrated into all the components of Education Renewal. So it is both.

Ms. Friesen: Can the minister separate out for us the financial implications of the new testing processes involved in the new curriculum? Just to clarify that, I meant separate it out in financial terms. We have already discussed some of the elements of testing, so it is not the process, it is the financial aspects.

Mrs. McIntosh: Just in answer to the member's question, for '94 and '95, we spent a total of \$1,037, I mean, I beg your pardon, we are in thousands here, \$1,037,000. For '95-96, we spent \$1,214,000, and taking '94 and '95 as a base year, the incremental costs of switching to a standards testing system are, for '95-96, \$177,000.

Ms. Friesen: What would the minister anticipate would be the cost of continuing standards testing, just using existing dollars? Has the government looked at a plan? What is likely to be the annual cost once the program is up and running at 3, 6, 9 and 12 in all core subjects? What is the estimated cost of that, for a year, per year?

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not have a figure that I can give you right now. We will be working on developing those estimates for the '96-97 year as we go through this next year of transition. We should have a better handle on what the final figure will be as we do that. I have been able to break out the current figures, the amounts we spent right now, but just am not able to give an accurate projection on that at this time.

Ms. Friesen: This particular section of the division, of the department, also looks at other methods of evaluation and assessment.

I wonder if the minister could give us an account of the past year, and perhaps the projected year's work in developing alternatives to standards testing for classroom use or for divisional use.

Sorry, just to clarify. I do not mean alternatives in the sense of either/or. I assume the government is going ahead with standards testing.

What additional means are being made available to parents and to students? What additional alternatives of assessment and evaluation are being developed by the department that will accompany, that will enhance whatever is being developed in standards testing?

* (2130)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I believe I mentioned this the other day, but as part of the answer to this question, this also applies because as we develop curricula, all curricula documents are now required to include assessment and evaluation strategies as part of the curriculum development.

So during the development phase, they will also be developing the evaluation and the assessment, so the two will blossom together, so to speak. We are going to be developing teacher support documents at the same time, so as you go through, you will have that other stream being developed, as well, so you have the teacher support documents being developed as the curriculum and as the ways in which we are going to do the assessment are being developed, as well.

We will do that in a variety of areas, including, as I said, assessment and evaluation so that the whole package emerges at the end of the process with here is how you do everything you are going to do about assessment right from teacher preparation to student readiness to, you name it, it is going to be in there.

So you will see all of that appearing in the curriculum framework's implementation documents, and it will be a complete guide for all parties who are

involved, so that no one will be left out in that. So the curriculum framework's implementation documents will outline all of those details.

Ms. Friesen: What is the connection between this section of the department and the production of those curriculum implementation guidelines? Will those implementation guidelines be coming out of, I have forgotten how many people there were on it now, that eight- or 12-member committee? Will there be input from this section of the department?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, it will be a collaborative effort, and you will have a widely diverse group on the collaborative effort. They will also be working with teacher committees. Remember we talked about the teacher committees the other day. They will play a role here, so they will keep key stakeholder input at these stages.

Ms. Friesen: I am looking here at a section of the division which has, over the last two years, I think, decreased its budget, not over the immediate year but over the last two years and where there has been a loss of at least one professional staff. I am curious about that, given the government's emphasis upon evaluation and assessment.

My concerns were the longer-term prospects of this section of the department. Over the last two years, there has been a loss of one professional staff and there has been, I think we are looking at '95-96 in the professional staff area at \$428,000, whereas in '93-94, which is the most distant year I have with me, it was \$476,000. So the decrease in position, the decrease in the budget over the longer term is not huge, but it is unusual, given that that is the thrust of the government's new program.

Mrs. McIntosh: We are referring to a vacant SY, and it was kept vacant for a period of time, but this year, we have brought in four new positions from the Ed Renewal line and that sort of eliminates the problem with one vacant SY, because it gives us four new positions to deal in that area.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, in the lines that I am looking at, which is 16.(2)(c), I do not see any difference from

last year in the number of staff, either professional or administrative. Is that difference in professional fees—no, there is no difference in professional fees either.

Mrs. McIntosh: If the member may recall, yesterday, or Friday, rather, we were talking about 25 positions—I do not know if you recall that area of the Estimates—and we had gone through naming all of the different categories. Four of those positions are the ones that we are talking about, and they have been integrated as we indicated. The Ed Renewal staff has been integrated to make it integral to all areas, and those would be the curriculum consultant, the statistical analyst, the word processor and the casual markers. Those are the four positions that I am talking about.

Ms. Friesen: I am still not understanding it. Last year, there were four staff years that are this year in Administrative Support. I assume those are the categories we are talking about.

So were four people lost from the department and that these four of the 25 have now been added and, hence, we have got a zero sum. Is that it?

Mrs. McIntosh: On page 47—is this the page that you are looking at? Okay: You will see under SY it has 8, and then it has 4, and a total of 12. What we are saying is, you add to that 12 another 4 that come from the ed renewal. So that would give you then 16, which is not written in there, but that is where you would add them on.

Ms. Friesen: I want to go back to the questions I asked about alternative methods of assessment and evaluation. I wonder if the minister could give me an idea of the kinds of recommendations which may be included in the new curriculum. I have already looked at the math curriculum, for example. I guess it is ready to be piloted now. What alternatives are being suggested to classroom teachers and superintendents in addition to the standards testing?

Mrs. McIntosh: Staff has identified a series of alternative methods of assessment. They would include student portfolios, exhibitions, demonstrations, journals, those types of projects, and those could be expanded upon.

We will also be collaborating with classroom teachers and university scholars and so on to develop the best instructional practice and tools in assessment and evaluation just to ensure consistency and fidelity across the curriculum instruction and evaluation.

* (2140)

So there is a variety of tools that can be used if you start including things like portfolios, demonstrations, diaries and journals, and if you are working in collaboration with the classroom teachers and university scholars on these types of endeavours. You can get a fairly good assessment in a nontesting type of way, but still extremely valid in terms of assessing a student's ability and knowledge and understanding of a particular subject area. These are types of things that have been used for many years in education to assess students' ability. A thesis, for example, is not unlike some of these. Although a thesis, of course, is for older students, it is an ability.

We have a project underway at a school level that is funded by us in terms of alternative evaluation procedures at Antler River. They are looking at alternative methods of assessment of at-risk students, oral testing, observation classroom assignments, presentations, and that is a collaborative effort between schools, universities and the department. It is not new. It is not new historically. I can recall, and I am sure the member can as well, having periods of time in the public schools where part of your final mark would be your term paper that you would produce and that term paper would be maybe 25 percent of your mark or some portion thereof. So, it is tried and true and has ability to be used in a new order of things as well.

Ms. Friesen: I would be interested in talking a little more about that in a minute, but I did want to finish up my earlier line of questioning which dealt with alternative methods of evaluation being proposed in the current mathematics curriculum for Grade 3 for which the pilot will begin soon.

Mrs. McIntosh: Between the Kleenex and the menthol supplied very kindly by the Chair, I have been distracted for two of your questions and I apologize.

Would you be kind enough to repeat that for me, or just the main message.

Ms. Friesen: I just wanted to complete the line of questioning I was suggesting earlier, and that dealt with the current Grade 3 mathematics curriculum which is about to be piloted and tested. I was asking what elements of alternative testing, evaluation and assessment were being suggested in that curriculum since that is the point at which it comes, the package with the curriculum.

Mrs. McIntosh: There are several ways that you can do that and we were just talking with staff here about applying different methods of problem solving and critical thinking to the traditional ways of solving a mathematical problem, for example, that would illustrate creativity and a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts. The illustrative examples in the curriculum frameworks of outcomes for math will demonstrate that teachers can link teaching and learning with assessment and evaluation. That particular framework which is called the Curriculum Framework of Outcomes Implementation Documentation for Math and the Teacher, a very weighty title—those support documents will give teachers further support in that area.

A specific example is using a dialogical journal, which is a two-column type of journal where you have two columns in the set-up of the journal. In one column the student can solve the problem, going down and solve it in one column. In the second column the student would explain his or her thinking in solving the problem. So you have two columns side by side, one with the solution and immediately beside it in the second column an explanation of the thought processes that the student went through to solve the problem. That is another way of getting at answering the question, does the student really understand why they have multiplied here? Did they just multiply because the teacher said that whenever you get this kind of problem you always multiply, or do they understand exactly what that concept of multiplication means in terms of solving the problem and they could apply it even if the teacher had not said, whenever you get that kind of problem you always multiply.

That deeper understanding which many teachers currently do, what we are saying is that, first of all, we want to ensure that that kind of learning takes place, period. Secondly, this would be another way, in answer to your question, of doing some alternative methods of assessing in terms of reaching a standard. We want to emphasize and provide suggestions that will help teachers see the assessment and evaluations as an integral part of teaching and not as something that will come at the end, that it has to go all the way through. We will want to emphasize the demonstrations of performance that get at that higher order of thinking and get at that type of problem solving. We want to see how language is used in learning in all subject areas, et cetera. I think I have mentioned that before.

I do not know if that addresses one way that they could get at looking to see if students have that deeper understanding in the area of mathematics, and that two-column approach is just one example of a variety of approaches that could be used. Of course a lot of those elements will be ones that teachers may opt to choose if they find they fit the needs of their class or of its value to them in developing alternative methods of assessment.

* (2150)

Ms. Friesen: I understand what the minister is explaining, but I have difficulty understanding it at the Grade 3 level. Is it possible to look at that pilot curriculum? Is that available on loan from the Education library?

Mrs. McIntosh: The western outcomes document we hope to have available later this month, so we are talking now a matter of a few weeks. It should not be that much longer before you could pick a copy up.

If we are able to have it available before the end of June, which is what we are hoping, and I always hold my breath, as I indicated before, when I say we expect to have it by the end of June in case something happens and it is not until the first week of July or something, but the target date, it looks like it is on schedule. We should be able to have it ready for you.

That western outcomes document will be the basis that we will use to develop the Manitoba curriculum frameworks, and that will be for kindergarten to Grade 4, and we should have it ready before the fall.

Ms. Friesen: I wanted to go back to the Antler River example that the minister gave me. It sounds like an interesting project. How long has it been going on, and what is the collaboration with, and when does the minister expect an evaluation report?

Mrs. McIntosh: It has completed its second year of funding. It will have one more year, and at the end of that year, we should have an evaluation, and the partner that is in on that is Brandon University.

Ms. Friesen: Is it Brandon University, Faculty of Education?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, it is. Brandon University, Faculty of Education, and Turtle River School Division.

Ms. Friesen: One of the things that occurs to me from that is, it is dealing with at-risk students and the use of oral testing for at-risk students. One of the elements of the International Baccalaureate program that has always intrigued me has been the oral testing at senior levels in English, for students whose first language is English, and I wondered if the minister was looking at that for senior levels testing in Manitoba?

Mrs. McIntosh: I have been informed that, while the oral abilities and the oral assessment would definitely form part of that assessment of the year's work, it probably would not be part of the standards testing at the end of the year's work, but it definitely would be a factor in the term work.

I agree with the member. I think the oral testing is a very valid way of assessing an ability to communicate. We have all known people who could do a wonderful job writing and then kind of break down when they try to transmit the information verbally. They cannot take time to pause before writing and so on. That will be assessed as part of the ongoing term work, not probably in the final exam.

Ms. Friesen: The educational information system is made reference to here as one of the roles of this particular section of the department. I wonder if the minister could give me a sense of what questions are being asked by this section of the division of the educational information system. What material is being collected, what information is required to presently conduct the work of the division, and what is anticipated in the future will be required?

Mrs. McIntosh: Student marks are recorded in the EIS system, and I think that basically answers your question.

Ms. Friesen: Is that likely to change in the future? For example, I am assuming that in the past the results of evaluations have been communicated to school divisions. Is there likely to be any change in the communication of results or the comparable nature of results or the comparing of results across divisions, the comparing of results vis-à-vis economic statuses of particular schools, the kinds of things that have happened in other jurisdictions where standards tests have been involved, have involved, as a matter of course, a different approach to the reporting of results?

In some cases, some people have essentially created league tables of schools or school divisions. In some cases those have also been tempered or moderated by including in those tables or hierarchy of schools, whether you would call it mitigating information but certainly socio-economic or cultural or linguistic information that has some explanatory role vis à vis the information being communicated. So I am looking for a larger discussion of where these results are going to go and how they are going to be reported and to whom.

Mrs. McIntosh: We discussed some of this the other day, particularly with the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), who was really concerned that this was taking too long and that we really needed to have a system such as this to better provide data for the benefit of the students. And I understand her concern and the question you have raised.

We have an EIS steering committee right now that will be giving advice, that is giving advice and will be giving advice to government about the kind of data that

can be used and about the types of applications and capabilities that can surround that type of data.

We still have not got this thing up and running for a variety of reasons. First of all, we do feel that there is tremendous benefit to be gained by being able to track a student, for example, in terms of a highly mobile student, to have all that information be available, not to have records being lost, and new teachers, in areas where children move in and out, being frustrated by records that do not follow in a timely and appropriate fashion or maybe do not follow, in some cases, for a variety of reasons.

We have a number of things that we need to be comfortable with in assuring ourselves that we obviously are very supportive of the process because we think that it could have ultimate great benefit to students.

We have concern to make sure that privacy provisions are well attended, that material is not misused or abused in any way but that it be there to fulfill its function, which is to be able to help follow a student through the course of their schooling so that never at any point is one educator or one set of guardians or whoever important to that child at a loss for information as to historical data that might be needed to help the child progress from any given point.

* (2200)

So we see tremendous benefits in the capabilities that are here. We will be up and running as soon as we can and, to our satisfaction, address those two outlying concerns, and we think they are rather important concerns. So we will be continuing to get advice on those two areas and, hopefully, we will not be too much longer in being able to provide an EIS system for the benefit of the students in this province.

Ms. Friesen: My specific concern, however, was with the assessment and evaluation and the way in which that data will be collected in the future where a great deal more information will be available both collectively across schools and individually on particular students. My concern is, how is that information to be communicated to school divisions, to

schools, to parents, and this is particularly the area that concerns me, the broader public, the information about evaluation and assessment results, exam results?

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

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I thank the member for the question. Right now individual school marks of any sort are sent to the division, and that is how we intend to proceed. I am not sure if the member is asking, like, will we be putting out a big news release and saying, you know, here is school No. 1, here is school No. 2. No, we do not intend to do that. What we will be doing is sending the results, individual school marks, to the division for the benefit of the individual school student.

We will be able to release or to make generic statements such as, Manitoba schools now rank, you know, in the top 25 percent of schools across the province in terms of their mathematical assessment or things like that, but we are not going to be putting out, okay, everybody come on, line up, come on down, here is school No. 1, everyone come on over here and enrol type thing. We are not. That is not our purpose.

Our purpose is to be able to better understand how students are faring, to make sure that those individual school marks are made available to school divisions for the benefit of the individual students to whom those marks are assigned and to give the province a better feel for an overview of how we are doing on a comparative basis with other provinces and other jurisdictions in the nation and indeed with other jurisdictions internationally.

The individual schools will be the ones that will be the working on school plans, and they may wish to report on school achievement. Through their school plans they may wish to say, our students did very well in the exams in science or whatever, but that would not be the department's role nor is it our intent.

Ms. Friesen: Those are representative of the fears that are there. In the case, for example, of Quebec, Quebec has recently, within the last year, certainly published what is called a league table of high schools and I am not sure if it included the colleges, but it certainly

included high schools, both English and French, in its jurisdiction. It has led to many, many concerns.

* (2210)

Should there be any change in the process that the minister is suggesting here, that is, that the marks continue to go as they do now to the school division, would that decision go back to that steering committee? I think that is the steering committee, I understand, where there are representatives from trustees and superintendents and other groups. I am really asking two questions there. The steering committee on EIS, is that where any changes in policy on the reporting of school divisions would go? Would the minister be seeking advice for them, or would this be strictly a ministerial decision?

Mrs. McIntosh: The EIS talks more about what kinds of data to collect as opposed to saying what government should do with data. As I mentioned before, we have concerns about privacy, use and misuse of information. We want to have a sense of understanding what our schools are doing vis-à-vis other jurisdictions so that we can ensure our students come out competitive with what is going on. We do not intend to rank schools.

I think that was the underlying fear I detected in your question. That is not our intent. I do not think that would be anything the EIS steering committee would make comment on. They would be more indicating the types of data that we would require to have a really good understanding of the implications of any assessment or standards testing. Any decisions regarding policy would be government decisions, and any such decision involving an issue such as the member has just indicated would be one that would require tremendous amount of consultation.

That is a pretty big thrust that she has identified, and I would be very reluctant to proceed in that vein without a lot of consultation. It is not on our agenda.

I appreciate the concern and I am sensing that the concern is being brought forward not as, why are you not doing it, but rather as, please do not do it. I think I am reading you correctly in that.

Ms. Friesen: I think the fear, as always, in this kind of a situation is that those kinds of numbers, where numbers exist, where numbers are comparable, can be compared. Those comparisons will be made inevitably, whether the government makes them or not, and particularly in a situation where you have a choice of schools where that might indeed be one of the legitimate questions that parents might ask of a variety of schools that they are considering.

So the government may not, as the Quebec government itself in fact has done, publish that ranking. But the ranking then does begin to emerge. I think the fears that are being expressed are that the ranking may emerge in a variety of informal ways and may not take into account, I cannot even say they are intangible factors, but less measurable factors.

Mrs. McIntosh: I understand what the member is saying. It is a very valid thing that she is saying. I think, though, even without any knowledge of how a school might rank in terms of measurable standards, our thing that we are so intent on determining, you will find that good schools—by good schools I mean schools in which learning takes place—become discovered regardless of whether information goes out or does not go out just simply by word of mouth of the people in the schools.

We know this because we have all had personal experience with people saying, I do not want my child to go to School A because there is a rough crowd of kids there who take dope, or bad kids, or whatever, or there is, you know, in that school there is some other negative influence or whatever it is.

You will also hear the opposite: I want my child to go to School Y because in that school we know they have a wonderful band program or they have a really good French teacher or they have really nice kids, or whatever it is that will attract people to a school or dissuade them from wanting to be in attendance at a certain school.

People develop preferences with or without data that is an indication of measure for a variety of things that are less tangible but, nonetheless, very real. What we are looking to find out and wanting to be assured of is

the comfort level that as government we know, not just because of the things that I have mentioned but because we have measurable standards that tell us, yes, our students on the whole are measuring up compared to what is happening in other provinces, compared to what is happening in other nations.

Our students are going out into this world economy onto an international stage, and they are going to measure up, and they are going to be accepted in the best post-secondary institutions. They are going to be sought after to work in a global economy, and they are going to be perceived as Canadian students, because so much of our work now is Pan-Canadian, with a good reputation inside and outside this nation. That is our goal.

So we do not need to misuse that information in any way once we have got that comfort level, that it is okay, our kids are measuring up. The parents themselves and the people involved will ascertain for themselves from their comfort which school they want their children to get those learning experiences from.

Ms. Friesen: I see how we can draw comparisons with other western provinces using a western consortium and the evaluation methods that come as part of that. How is the minister making that comparison to other jurisdictions where the curriculum is different and the testing is applied to that particular curriculum? Is there a stage somewhere in the western consortium development where curriculum and evaluation are placed in a national and international context? How are those comparisons to be made?

(Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson in the Chair)

Mrs. McIntosh: Right now in terms of Canada, in terms of what we are talking about, the School Achievement Indicators program—we talked about that before—is the only assessment project that we are looking at in terms of Canada for that kind of assessment. Math, reading, writing, science—we discovered last time that in math, in terms of trying to analyze where we needed to concentrate our efforts, problem solving and data management were two areas that we determined we should be putting more emphasis just in terms of picking up some speed on

them, because vis-à-vis the others, those showed areas where we needed to do some work. So we were able to pinpoint areas that we should be concentrating on in terms of the performance of our students.

* (2220)

When we talk about internationally we are not talking about this type of assessment which is a national one. We are talking internationally; we are talking about a different kind of thing. For example, I think the member will recall the international assessment of educational process which caused some stir and got everybody kind of agitated there for a while in the spring of '91 when they were talking about math, science and geography at the 13-year-old age level.

They had—I do not know—25 or so countries involved, and Manitoba came in at the Canadian average, and Canada scored in the middle. Scoring in the middle is not as bad as scoring at the bottom, but it is not as good as scoring at the top.

Now, their method of assessing 13-year-olds in those technical areas of maths, science and geography were not ones that we chose, but they were ones that were used, and that kind of information was put out then and reflected on Canada. For better or for worse, for right or for wrong, the figures stood there internationally as a signal that we were, someone once said, mediocre, because we were in the middle of the pack at neither really high nor low

That type of thing is something that, if we can change that perception around through measurable standards here in Canada using the SAIP as an assessment tool for national assessment, the western consortium that we have talked about in terms of developing curricula, working with the other provinces in the west, that western consortium has identified assessment as a potential area of collaboration. They are working on curricula development. They are talking about assessment, but they have not undertaken any specific activity at the present time regarding assessment, although we talk about assessment development in conjunction with curricula development, so that is a distinct possibility.

But I guess when the member asks what type of assessment, what type of criteria, not all of those assessments or all those criteria are ones that have been developed here. They are ones, however, that are impacting on our reputation whether we like it or not, and they are ones that I think are relatively easily changed.

I think we have got some very bright and good minds in our students, and I think we have got some very dedicated people in our teaching force, and I think we have got political will, and I think we have got enthusiastic parents. So you get those four factors put together, I think that it is quite an easy matter to change that perception internationally and give our kids that little leg up.

Ms. Friesen: One of the problems with those international perceptions, international measurements that is commonly made, one of the critiques that is commonly made, is that the range of students who are being compared are not comparable, that quite frequently, particularly the European context, the students who are being compared are often ones who have been selected, whereas in the Canadian and North American context generally there is a broader range of abilities which are being tested. Are there ways in which the minister is anticipating, in a sense, challenging the bases of those international assessments?

Mrs. McIntosh: The Canadian ones, the SAIP, the students were comparable, and we were able to identify a couple areas that needed extra work. The staff indicates as well that in the terms of the IAEP that while there may have been some few systems that had some selection by age 13, most of them participating in IAEP did not have that selective component. So the vast majority were, in fact, not selective in the way the member indicated.

The other thing that staff has indicated to me is that in the test development process for the IAEP, there was a consensus process used for developing these tests, and so if two jurisdictions objected, a question was out. So, you know, I think the comparability may have been a little better than the member envisions.

Ms. Friesen: The IAEP process, I am not familiar with it. Is that the one that the OECD developed? Those are the evaluations that I have read, and the ones that are often seen as not comparable. So perhaps we are talking about quite a different system here.

Mrs. McIntosh: This one does not have anything to do with OECD. Those two are not the same tests, so the one that you are referencing may well be one that is out in terms of good comparative value. But the IAEP, which is the international test that had the 25 countries, had Canada coming in at the middle, did use that consensus process for developing the tests. I think it probably has a better reputation for being accurately comparable than the other one you referenced.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): It was not going to be my question, but just following up on that, my understanding also is, because in many of those countries children are tracked into different tracks, apprenticeship track, vocational track, different tracks, that regardless of how the questions are developed, who you are sampling is not the same broad spectrum of the youth populations of those countries.

In Canada, because of our public school system, we are not into tracking children in vocational, into different groups. We have a broader range of student than in those countries. For example, in Germany they have an apprenticeship track and a vocational track, and Sweden. So I think we still have to be careful with the comparisons.

* (2230)

Mrs. McIntosh: The staff indicate to me that students who are into specialized programs, individualized programs, et cetera, were not part of this testing, but they were testing students in the regular—whatever regular means, because I always have trouble when I use the word regular—but students in the standard stream. So point well made but not particularly applicable to this specific test.

Mr. Kowalski: I think that many educators spent many a cocktail party discussing these tests at length, and I do not think we will resolve the debate today on the comparative international test tonight.

The subject that I wish to bring forward is in alternative assessments, specifically portfolio assessments, and I will again be very parochial about it. Within my constituency there are a number of schools that do use portfolio assessment, and I have received concerns from parents about the portfolio assessment. I have personal experience in that my daughter has attended a middle school where she received portfolio assessment.

The minister mentioned that portfolio assessment as a teaching tool. It is an excellent tool for teaching, but assessment serves another purpose. I know many educators bristle at using these terms, but as consumers of the educational system, whether it be the parent or the student, the assessment serves another role in letting the consumers of the educational system know how the system is working. In many of the phone calls I have received concerning portfolio assessments was the fact that it is something new, something they have never experienced. They are used to either a grade or a mark, and suddenly they have a portfolio, and when their co-worker or the grandparents ask, well, how is your son or daughter doing in school, their answer is they do not know.

I realize that knowing where they are in the continuum we talked about earlier may not be useful as a teaching tool, but I think this is what parents, students are looking for. Has that been considered in the department's review and acceptance of portfolio assessment being used in the public school system?

Mrs. McIntosh: I thank the member for those comments. I think we need to distinguish between tools that are effective for assessing and evaluating, which I believe he is pointing out, and those that are effective for grading purposes. Within schools we need both kinds of tools, and I have a sense that the member and I would agree that development of a portfolio would have some kind of uses.

It maybe not always be applicable in being utilized for other purposes—or maybe not be as effective is the word—in being used for other purposes. Many employers and post-secondary learning institutions are now requiring portfolios of student work as part of the application process, and if that portfolio system is

correctly designed it can serve a very valuable assessment role. I think where I agree with the member is that, although he has not stated this explicitly, it is implicit in his question—I think what is too often lacking are clear criteria for including items in the portfolio or for judging the students' products or for summarizing student achievement. Curricula documents will provide helpful guidelines for this type of thing.

I think assessment strategies have to be comprehensive. That is why we have gone with provincial standards tests as well as a range of testing procedures at local classroom level. We do feel that the standards test, those measurable standards, will be most effective, and your comments on portfolios are appropriate in that context. I say there are tools we can use; that is one of them. It may not be applicable in all situations, and, indeed, we are saying that standards testing will be our basic way of doing that assessment.

Mr. Kowalski: I know that one of the things many of the parents were looking at when portfolio assessments were introduced in a number of schools was, although they were very open-minded, and they were willing to accept it, that they wanted some way to the bridge the way they were used to receiving assessment about their children with the new form as an interim, whether it was, along with the narrative and the sample of the child's work, that there would be a letter grade, a mark or something, to help them eventually translate what they were seeing with what they traditionally know. Is that something that we could look forward to if the department is going to accept portfolio assessment as an assessment strategy?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes. I just want to indicate that if using the portfolio as an assessment tool was the only tool that was going to be available, I think I would be quite concerned. In terms of the question you asked, I think it comes back to—I have this irresistible urge to use, to keep using the term "future shock," and I do not want to overuse it, but I sometimes feel that we are living through it in almost every segment of our lives.

For people who have been immersed in a particular system and are suddenly confronted with change without having had the opportunity that we have had,

you and I and the other people involved at this level where we have a chance to sort of go in depth into the exploration of issues and be advised by experts and consult around the province and do these things—for people who have not had that opportunity, to be suddenly faced with all of these different ways of doing things, it is really disconcerting.

I think this transitional year may help somewhat with people to come to understand exactly what some of these changes are, why they are being put in place, the rationale for them, the improvements we expect to see, the problems we are trying to address. I find that, once people have a chance to do, they usually go: Oh, I see, oh, that is right; well, you know I have always kind of thought. Then they will tell you why they always agreed with that concept, but they just did not know what you were talking about. I do not mean you. They would always know what you were talking about, but some of them did not know what I am talking about.

They just needed it put in language that was understandable or in a frame that made sense. For example, one of our portfolio projects links the research on effective use of portfolios with the Conference Board of Canada and their employability skills profile. That is an interesting linkage there that would maybe take away some of people's—first of all, what does the word mean. A lot of people say, what is a portfolio, what does it mean? A couple of years ago I think most of us might have been asking that. We get more exposed to it.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: There has been a request for a five-minute break. What is the will of the committee? Agreed? We will resume at 10:45.

The committee recessed at 10:38 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 10:45 p.m.

Mr. Kowalski: I would like to carry on about portfolio assessments again. Another aspect of portfolio assessments is, I do not know if it is happening in other

divisions but in the area I represent, they are looking at using portfolio assessments in the senior grades, and one of the aspects even at the middle school years level was, if portfolio assessments continue to be accepted, how will it be used by postsecondary educational institutions to determine their acceptance into different faculties, different programs.

Now that the Department of Education is looking at this as an alternative assessment strategy, has the department talked to the universities in Manitoba, the community colleges, realizing of course that not all our students go to the Manitoba universities and colleges but a great majority of them? Have there been any discussions with the deans and the presidents of post-secondary education as to the possibility of portfolio assessments being presented for entrance into their institutions?

Mrs. McIntosh: I just want to clarify first of all that our modus operandi, so to speak, would be the standards testing and the whole reference to portfolios as one alternative came up in response to a question from the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) who had asked, are there any other tools that might be used to help assess students' progress, and I ran down a list of things that could be done in the classroom as alternatives to either enhance the standards testing or that teachers might wish to use during the course of the year on coursework and that type of thing, not in place of standards testing but rather as one other alternative that teachers could use as tools.

I do not want there to be a misperception or a misconception that in place of standards testing this would be what we would do. It is just one other thing that can be done in the course of evaluating a student to assess their progress and their depth of understanding on any given issue.

* (2250)

I do not know if that helps clarify what I think the member was trying to ask. We will consult, however, on the other point in your question, with all potential users of assessments. As we develop assessment portions of curriculum documents, whatever they may be, we will do that type of consultation to make sure

that anybody who is going to be using the assessment results will have had prior consultation on methods that might be employed by Manitoba schools, but standards testing is our aim and our goal.

Mr. Kowalski: I do not know if we can—misunderstanding of terms and that—standards testing can be portfolio assessment, can be oral testing, the way we determine those standards. We heard early in the Estimates process, standards testing is not necessarily multiple choice, computer marked, and portfolios could be a standards test, as could an oral examination, as a test in physical education.

So the fact that the emphasis is going to be on standards tests, I do not think I have heard so far that standards tests will mean a certain type of test, and portfolios could be a way of testing standards, and it was mentioned here as an alternative assessment. It is being used in some middle schools now. I do not know if it is being used in any senior grades. In some universities they are using portfolio assessments, and I would not want the tone of my questions to indicate that I do not support the concept of portfolio assessment. It is an excellent tool. I have had experience about it, and it might be a better indicator for post-secondary education and which students are best qualified to go into certain faculties as opposed to a letter grade or a mark in that a portfolio might be a better indication of the possibility of that student's success or failure.

I do not think the present system, with the high number of students that drop out or finish after first year education, is totally acceptable. So I am not saying that portfolio assessment takes the place of standards tests. A portfolio assessment can be a standards test.

Mrs. McIntosh: I understand what the member is saying. I just want to indicate, just by way of clarification, our intentions here that standards tests would have to be written within a set time frame, for starters, and the research on the use of things, one of the other alternatives such as, say, oral testing in large-scale testing situations is not yet solid in terms of reliability and viability. This is also true for large-scale use of portfolios.

If I may just read to the member some of the things that we have with standards tests that may help further clarify this from our perspective for his information, when we look at standardized testing versus standards testing, because they are two different things, under standards tests we will look at criterion-referenced as opposed to norm-referenced under a standardized test, and we will say that we will be looking for students' results reported in relation to descriptions of what students are expected to achieve as defined in curriculum documents.

Similarly with standardized tests, they will be commercially produced for a mass market, whereas standards tests will develop locally, in this case provincially, with the help of classroom teachers. So they possess a higher degree of curricular fidelity than a commercially produced mass market type standardized test, because a standards test would be based completely on outcomes and standards found in provincial curriculum documents.

Standards tests require extended responses on the part of students as opposed to in a standardized test, the multiple choice type. Again, under a standardized test you will see most questions focus on the recall of rote learning and the application of lower level skills, where under standards testing we would have the emphasis on questions requiring the use of application and interpretation of knowledge.

Again, it is a different approach. Under standardized tests you would have them often referred to as objective. They can say that questions can be marked unambiguously right or wrong, but a standards test is not quite that objective. It is also not as subjective as commonly supposed.

The objectivity by an intermarker agreement—and we are talking about training our markers. That can be achieved by training markers on carefully developed marking schemes. Periodic checks are conducted in this type of marking to detect and correct any marker drift that might occur.

Under standardized tests there will be one best answer, but under standards testing you might find

alternative solutions that are possible, that have varying degrees of rightness and wrongness.

Two other examples: on the standardized tests you will have proxy measures for complex skills. For example, you will have the measurement of writing skills through sentence correction exercises. Under standards testing, as much as possible, you would direct or authenticate measures of skills. Authentic measures of skills are employed requiring students to write an essay or perform a laboratory experiment or complete a research project.

The last one that we have indicated is that standardized tests are used mainly for measuring the end product of student learning, as if it has an end. Under standards testing you will find it possible to measure process as well as product, as long as the students are able to show all the steps used in arriving at a final answer. That gets back to the two columns I talked about where a student will solve a problem in the one column and in the second column explain the thinking process that was employed to arrive at the answer.

Those things under standards tests that I have identified in terms of your concern, if we attempt to meet all those things I have just identified under standards tests, then concern about portfolios and those types of things become lessened. Clearly, with portfolios you can not do all of these. That is what I think was meant when staff indicated that use of portfolios on a large scale will not give the reliability and the validity that is as solid as the standards tests.

* (2300)

I do not know if that clarifies or confuses. When we look at the different types of testing processes, one we will be using when it is upcoming in the language arts test at Senior 4. Students will be given four 60-minute periods over a four-day period—four days, four periods, 60 minutes each—to develop a piece of writing. That is different than just requiring a single demand piece of writing, where you go in on Monday and you sit down and write your essay. It is probably a more realistic approach to the way a piece of writing might be used in

the real world upon graduation. So that is just one example of an application of skill.

Mr. Kowalski: I think I want to move from standardized. It is a subject we could go on about some more, but I think I would just like to move.

Earlier we talked about the comparison of schools, the test results. The minister mentioned that people, whether or not the results are published, always find out which schools have a better reputation. That is not always true. It is not a level playing field in that I was told one way to decide which school was the best school in your division is look at which schools the teachers who live in your area are sending their kids to, because they have the inside information, they know where the best principals are, they know where the best teachers are.

So the test results themselves will not tell us which are the best schools, because there are many things that make up a good school, the climate, the safety of the school, the quality of the program, the physical qualities, a number of things.

With the educational renewal reform, the blueprint indicating that parents will have more choice as to which school they can send their children to, would it not be a legitimate purpose for the department of Education in some way to give information to parents so they can decide which are schools that have better programs, which schools are safer schools, which schools have excellence in one area or another?

If I have a child that is very interested in a band program, the best band program in the area, if I have a child that is very timid, which is a very—so the minister said, well, people just seem to know. That is not always true. Is the department looking at some way of assessing the schools in Manitoba?

Mrs. McIntosh: Very good questions. I should indicate to the member that comment was made in reference to the fact of my belief that even in the absence of publishing a list that ranks the schools in terms of best to least, parents would still make selections for their schools based on reputations that they had acquired about particular schools. In terms of

rating a school, how do you rate a school? As you pointed out, there are different things that people will look for in schools.

One way that we have said parents will be able to better exercise choice would be the development of school plans. Schools will be asked to develop school plans that will indicate to the people who will be attending schools what type of schools they can look at. The school plan will indicate very clearly what a parent could expect in that school for the academic year.

We have developed characteristics of effective schools. We have not developed ourselves; there are many learned researchers, writers, scholars, et cetera, who have identified the characteristics of an effective school. Listing the things that are known about effective schools we will find several characteristics, one being strong instructional leadership at the building level in each of the schools. So a strong instructional leader, strong principals, strong teachers, very important in terms of the building level at each of the schools, a clear and focused academic mission so that there is no guessing about what the school plans to accomplish in terms of the academics. That is a very important component of an effective school, that people know what the academic mission be.

High expectations for both students and staff—those schools that place high expectations on their students and on the people who teach those students tend to become very effective, and it is like any area of life, many of us who have lived a bit, just a little bit, know that the more that is expected of you, inevitably if you are a person of normal abilities, whatever that means, you will rise to the level of expectation.

Now, we are down to the level of expectation. You just have to look at how children develop, and with your background in police work I am sure you have seen this with children who have gone astray, that you can place some high expectations on them and affect dramatic changes. Similarly you can reinforce the negative expectations and see no improvement whatsoever.

Another characteristic of an effective school is the sufficient opportunity for learning, and I have my little

favourite example that is just sort of my little pet favourite thing, that I believe that schools are for students and nobody else, not for teachers or professors or ministers of Education or whomever, schools are for students. I believe that with all my heart and soul.

The other thing that goes along with that is that nothing should interfere with the student's ability to learn or a teacher's ability to teach.

So we talk about eliminating disruptive personalities from the school, giving the principal authority to get rid of dope pushers and unsavoury elements from the school—those are distractions from the learning experience—similarly, the teacher being able to suspend a student from the classroom for disruptive behaviour. It gets right back to, students should be free to learn and teachers should be free to teach without distraction.

The other three characteristics—frequent monitoring of student progress, we get back to our standards testing plus all the alternatives that we talked about; extensive parental involvement; and a safe and clean school environment. Those are carefully researched characteristics of effective schools. Those things become self-evident to any interested observer.

It does not take long to witness that a school offers those kinds of things if you are investigating, for want of a better word, an appropriate school for your child. You will almost invariably ask those particular questions. Schools that perform well in them and are known as effective will become schools of choice whether or not the Department of Education issues a statement saying, this is school No. 1 and this is school No. 2, how do you rank them?

Mr. Assistant Deputy Chairperson: Item 16, 2. School Programs (c) Assessment and Evaluation (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$686,400—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$359,700—pass.

2.(d) Native Education Directorate (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$160,300.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I think I have been voicing some concerns about this particular section of the department for a number of years now, and the issue is

not so much what is being accomplished but the fact that there are so few employees in this division that they must connect with so many other departments and committees and now new curriculum areas that the needs of Manitoba's educational system, which must respond perhaps more extensively than in any other province to native education concerns, is not as great as we would like to see it.

* (2310)

My first question really is to the minister. What plans are there for expansion of the Native Education Directorate? I noticed that in the lines we are considering there is an overall decrease from \$238,000 to \$217,000 and that follows on a slight overall decrease from the previous year.

Mrs. McIntosh: We had 13, we still have 13, and I will give you the breakdown.

I should indicate first of all that we have done some restructuring so that we can better integrate the curriculum issues and implementation issues. I will just give you the breakdown and show you. At this time last year, the end of March last year, 1994, the Native Education branch staffing complement was comprised of eight permanent full-time employees, one who was out on long-term disability and four vacant SYs. In the following month, in April of '94, the former Program Development and Support Services division was reorganized to become the present School Programs division.

The Native Education Directorate was established with three SYs and the former Native Education branch was redirected to ensure aboriginal representation in all areas of the division, not just isolated in one branch. They were redirected and it was redirected so that we now have those three in the Native Education Directorate and the rest dispersed, for a total of 13 all together. Those positions were, we now have one in the Program Development branch, in the Parklands-Westman regional team, in the Program Development team, in the Winnipeg regional team, two in the south-central regional team, one in the Program Development branch, another one in the Program Development branch, another one in the Parklands-Westman regional

team, one in the northern regional team and another one in the Parklands-Westman regional team.

We still have two positions which have been advertised but successful candidates have not been found and those positions are being held. They are designated for aboriginal staff. You can see the breakdown of how we have redirected those people to integrate in with all aspects there instead of just being isolated out from the everyday.

We are going to continue to provide leadership and co-ordination for departmental initiatives on K-S4 aboriginal education, and the redirected staff will be providing their services in their new respective roles within the entire division.

Ms. Friesen: At which point were there 13 people in the Native Education branch? I am looking at three sets of estimates and I can still only find three in each year, so at which point were there 13?

Mrs. McIntosh: I know that as of the end of March last year, there were 13 positions that were in that area, but as I indicated one was on long-term disability and four were vacant positions. So there were 13 positions. When it was reorganized, the 13 positions were reorganized to go to different areas and some of those positions then they were no longer—we now had 13 real people, actually I should say 11 real people because we are still waiting to find two. We have not yet found suitable people. We are designating them for aboriginal people. We actually have 11 real bodies now in those positions, but there were 13 as was apparently in our last Estimates and debates in 1993-94.

Ms. Friesen: I am looking at page 49, Subappropriation 16-2D, Native Education Directorate, and it gives three staff years, which includes one managerial, one professional, one administrative support for 1995-96, exactly the same for 1994-95, and exactly the same for 1993-94 in the previous year's Estimates book.

Should I be looking elsewhere?

Mrs. McIntosh: In the 1993-94 annual report you will see 13, and even though this year you only see three in what we now call the Native Education Directorate, those other positions are still fulfilling that role but dispersed throughout the department so they are no longer in one area. The technical work, due to the restructuring, is shown in the Estimates book.

Ms. Friesen: I think we are back to same problem that we had right at the beginning of the Estimates, and that is the difference between the estimates, both numbers and in this case staff years, in the Estimates book for 1993-94 and what is shown in the annual report. I have the page in the annual report, yes, and it does show 13 staff years. In the Estimates of Expenditure for 1993-94, it still only shows three. In the annual report it shows an underspending of \$236,000. Does that then account for the extra 10 people?

* (2320)

Mrs. McIntosh: There is a timing problem here again. To find that change you would have to go right back to the '93-94 Estimates, and in that vote then you would see this change occur. The division was reorganized in May '94, so our reconciliation has already occurred. In March '94 you saw the layout that I have described before, but then they did the reorganization in May, and now, of course, the reconciliation has already occurred, so there is a problem with the timing of the reporting for the purposes of following the path of how these changes were made. And I appreciate that it probably is somewhat confusing unless you have got the books all the way back to the '93-94 Estimates, which makes it hard to follow in the Estimates for this year.

I guess the long and the short of it is this: there were 13 positions, some of which were filled, some of which were not filled, in the former Native Education branch that was reorganized. It became the Native Education Directorate with three people in it. The remaining eight positions were disbursed throughout the regions and the Program Development branch and to give it that perspective in more than just one segregated area. We have two positions yet to be filled. They are being held and are designated to be filled by aboriginals.

Ms. Friesen: Could we go over again how those people were redirected? As I understand it, two went to Program Development, two went to the Parklands.

Mrs. McIntosh: Two to Program Development, three to Parklands-Westman, one to Winnipeg, two to south central, one to northern region, and three to the directorate, and two yet to be filled.

Ms. Friesen: One to Winnipeg strikes me as odd, given the concentration of aboriginal populations in Winnipeg. This must be the largest concentration in the province, yet only one of a possibly eight or nine was assigned to Winnipeg.

Mrs. McIntosh: There is one formally assigned to Winnipeg, but because the directorate itself is located in Winnipeg, there is a lot of support that goes to this area through the staff.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister indicate how the directorate staff offers support to Winnipeg? What are the mechanisms for that? What kind of support is offered?

Mrs. McIntosh: Staff is just jotting down a note there for me.

While they are doing that, I would like indicate that there are a number of other things that have gone on in terms of Winnipeg and the support for aboriginal education there. Winnipeg 1, for example, was the only division which has received funds to hire an inner city consultant and an aboriginal education consultant. Those positions assist the administrative and instructional staff in the areas of program and professional development.

So they were given, in terms of the funding, to provide for their own aboriginal educational consultant plus an inner city consultant, which does a tremendous amount of support work to help with the number of aboriginal students that are in that division.

As well, they have two division-wide staff development programs in the areas of inner-city education and aboriginal awareness, and that is also a tremendous help to them in terms of inner-city schools

and the inner city education, which has a large aboriginal component.

In answer to your question, staff has now just passed me a little note indicating that they have assisted with the school planning to the two aboriginal schools that Winnipeg 1 has put forward as alternative schools. They have done a cultural awareness consulting in terms of language development process with school divisions and the Manitoba Association for Native Languages. They have worked with aboriginal teachers circle and summer institute. So there are a number of areas there that they have assisted, and I am quite certain that that assistance is very much appreciated by the Winnipeg region, the city of Winnipeg, and the City of Winnipeg School Division No. 1.

Ms. Friesen: I am looking at a report from the Winnipeg School Division No. 1 dealing with the number of curriculum units which have been developed in this past year. I will read some of them, and what my concern is, is this being duplicated in the other regions? For example, at the elementary level, and this is in this year, materials for a Grade 3 Fisher River Cree community kit, Grade 4 the Ojibwa community kit, Grade 6 the Autonomy of Aboriginal Peoples, Grades 1 to 6, a language arts resource guide, Grades 4 to 6 The Metis.

Then at the secondary level, language arts from Grade 7 to Senior 1, a program involving beyond April Raintree, Language Arts with an Aboriginal Perspective, Grade 7 Spaceship Earth, a Look at the Earth as a Self-Regulating Organism, presumably involving an aboriginal perspective, and a social studies in Grade 8, The Development of the Metis Nation, and then at Senior 1, Issues in Geography dealing with aboriginal land claims, precolonial America and Canadian history and then Native Voices on the Environment for the world issues area.

That seems to me a good list for a year. It is very, I think, quite ambitious and would be very helpful not just for native students or native teachers but throughout the curriculum. Is the process which the government has set up of these regional committees, regional specialists, are we duplicating this? Was not

the whole point of having curriculum development at the ministerial level a common curriculum, common standards, common resource-based materials? Has the move to the regional groupings, in fact, led to a great deal of duplication or the potential for it?

Mrs. McIntosh: No. It has not. The aboriginal units developed in Winnipeg 1 have been developed with support from the Manitoba Education and Training staff. It is not a duplicate of Manitoba Education and Training work. It is consistent, and I want to indicate, as well, in terms of are we doing things for Winnipeg 1 that we are doing for the other regions, Winnipeg 1 gets \$1.5 million for special support for hiring staff for aboriginal, for aboriginal staff. It is a whopping big sum that is given for special support for aboriginal staff. I think it is quite significant and certainly a very valuable thing for them.

Winnipeg 1 uses the Manitoba curriculum in answer to the concern you expressed just a minute ago. It uses the Manitoba curriculum as the foundation for developing instructional units. So there is that consistency that we are looking for at the same time that they are getting special attention because of their identified needs in this particular area.

Ms. Friesen: What I am trying to get at is, for example, are the three former staff members of the Native Education branch who are now in the Parklands-Westman Region, are they similarly developing a similar list of materials for use both by aboriginal and nonaboriginal students? For example, why do we have current aboriginal land claims being developed here in Winnipeg? Is that material communicated to other divisions or is everybody reinventing the wheel on aboriginal land claims for use at the Senior 2 Level?

Mrs. McIntosh: That is one of the reasons we have the directorate. We have those three that we felt it was still important to have a Native Education Directorate because they are co-ordinating all those kinds of issues and work. So in addition to other things they are being co-ordinators of those very types of issues that you have identified. The resources which are developed in the various divisions and regions are shared across the province so that they have consistency of approach.

* (2330)

In terms of the aboriginal content—and you just asked the question about land claims—both urban and rural, 48 programs in five divisions were funded to integrate the aboriginal content into the curriculum in instructional practices. By accurately incorporating aboriginal cultures into the curriculum, schooling becomes more relevant to aboriginal students and also educates nonaboriginal students. Accuracy is of benefit to all. It is very important. It is particularly important if there have been areas in the past that have not been as clearly portrayed as they might have been in terms of aboriginal issues, and particularly important for aboriginal students to make sure that they are getting a more accurate portrayal of the history of this part of the world.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, is there a similar list of curriculum work that has been done in each of the other regions, the South Central, the Parklands-Westman and the North?

Mrs. McIntosh: The short answer is yes, but I somehow think we need more than just a short answer here, but the short answer is yes, and maybe I will just ask if the member seeks further details on that yes.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I am not sure how much detail the minister would have with her tonight. I would be happy to look at it tomorrow afternoon.

The focus of my concern is how—the minister says the role of the three people who are left in this area are, one of their roles is to co-ordinate the curriculum research and materials being produced across the province. So I am looking for complementarity in each of the three or four areas. If there is a co-ordinating role, one would anticipate that other regions are producing different kinds of materials and that there is a mechanism for correspondence, there is a mechanism for transmitting the material from one region to another, and I wanted to understand how that is happening.

Mrs. McIntosh: I can give you some indication of the role of the directorate, and in addition to the things that have been discussed so far, the directorate has an

emphasis on facilitating and monitoring school program planning and providing services as members of an interdisciplinary team.

The directorate will be participating in lead roles and program development in co-ordinating the integration of aboriginal perspectives. They continue to provide leadership and co-ordination, as I mentioned before, for departmental initiatives, kindergarten to Senior 4 aboriginal education, and the directorate is attached to the ADM's office in order to ensure that the needed attention to aboriginal issues is kept current and before the minds of the ADM and the staff there. The regions work very closely with the director of development and the Native Education Directorate and there is a significant role for sharing information and for deploying resources in that particular directorate.

They have a number of things that they do. They have in their mandate, as we do in our mandate, as a result of the reorganizing, we indicated that what we wanted to do in terms of restructuring was to strengthen the school program division's focus on aboriginal education. We wanted to ensure that all division programs reflect the aboriginal perspective, which is why the integration, why the reaching out of the eight people as opposed to keeping them together and removed from the others who needed to benefit from that perspective.

Ms. Friesen: The five programs I mentioned at the elementary level, the Fisher River Creek community kit, the Ojibwa community kit, the autonomy of aboriginal peoples language arts resource guide and the Metis, how has that been communicated to the other regions?

* (2340)

Mrs. McIntosh: First of all, the regional managers do attend the superintendent's monthly meetings in their region, and so there is a very good communication going on there, and staff informs me that it really is a very good communication that they experience at those monthly meetings.

Where there is shareable activity with curriculum adaptations on projects wherever it can be shared, then

we are in a position now with a mechanism that will enable that to happen effectively because of the directorate.

I understand that Winnipeg 1, just to name one division because we were talking about it earlier, is very good and open about being willing to share documentation and projects and so on that they are working on. So that sharing and that shareable activity which is structured, programmed so that it happens on a regular basis is probably the most effective and common way of accomplishing what the member was asking in her question.

Ms. Friesen: I can see how it could be accomplished, but we have now had this regional structure in place for two years. One of the costs of that regional structure, at least on paper, has been the Native Education section of the department, that it has diminished at the expense of regional structures.

So my concern is, how has that changed, enhanced—one would expect it to enhance the availability and diversity of curriculum materials available. So I can see how it is possible to exchange material, to have lots of people working at it from different perspectives, but what I want to know is, has it happened?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, and I should indicate it has not been in place for two years but in place for one, a year ago May. It has been an actual physical change. We believe it is a really good improvement. The member indicates that the branch has decreased at the expense of the branch. I prefer to phrase it not in the negative but in the positive, that the outreach has been able to grow because of the reorganization as opposed to the branch having something happen at the expense of the branch, the ability to reach out has grown. It is just a case of, is the glass half full or half empty? I am saying it is half full and filling up, as opposed to half-empty and becoming further depleted.

It is just a different way of phrasing it, but it has been a year, and over the last year, working collaboratively with school divisions, we have, I believe, done a fair amount to improve a situation where we really do have to focus on a segment of the population that to date, for a wide variety of reasons, has experienced high

statistical figures in terms of lifestyle problems, in terms of societal problems. Education is the way out, education is the answer, not the only answer, not the only way out, but very important. We believe this reorganization will give us improved opportunity to assist.

I just want to indicate the purpose of the—Parklands Region has developed a project over the last year, and I just would like to indicate the purpose of that. They have done it collaboratively with the school division and they are being supported by Manitoba Education and Training in the Program Implementation Branch in this regard.

They are attempting to bring out a better understanding of aboriginal issues to schools and communities throughout the Parklands and Westman regions by bringing parents and schools together through advisory councils for school leadership to deal with aboriginal awareness. They will be establishing a committee with representation from the school divisions, the Program Implementation Branch, which will be over a two-year period. We are providing \$1,000 this year for some planning for this project.

We are impressed with their enthusiasm and expect that, again, if they are successful in their goal of bringing out a better understanding of aboriginal issues to the schools and communities in their area that the Parklands and Westman regions will be very well served by this initiative, this project of the Parklands Region.

So we are providing support to them. Those are the kinds of things that areas and regions will come up with, projects that work collaboratively with school divisions. The regional approach has allowed regions to develop these kinds of priorities that we can hopefully see some positive results from.

The native studies curriculum support documents for those three areas—kindergarten to Grade 4, Grades 5 to 8, and Grade 9 to Senior 4, or S1 to S4—will be available to schools in the fall. Hopefully then they will be picked up and looked at. In our *Renewing Education: New Directions*, the Foundation for Excellence, we do have commentary in there on

aboriginal perspectives, and in the future our new curriculum will have aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum.

There is quite a lengthy section talking about aboriginal perspectives indicating some history, some goals, including goals of aboriginal perspectives for aboriginal students and goals of aboriginal perspectives for nonaboriginal students. We are wanting aboriginal students to develop a positive self-identity through a number of things that we are doing. We want nonaboriginal students to develop an understanding of and a respect for the histories, cultures and contemporary lifestyles of aboriginal peoples.

We would like to see both sets of students develop informed opinions on matters relating to aboriginal people and to be able to be participating in a learning environment that will equip them with knowledge and skills, particularly the aboriginal students, with knowledge and skills that they need to participate more fully in civic and cultural realities in their community, either if it is an aboriginal community or in a wider centre such as, for example, the city of Winnipeg which is multicultural in terms of a wide diversity of ethnic groups.

The aboriginal students are not experts in their culture. They are learners, they are participants. We make it an error if we assume that they are the experts. They have learning that they need to do. Their knowledge about their own culture may be no greater than other students in the class, but if they do have extensive knowledge of their culture it could benefit the entire class.

But we have information for them that they need to learn in order to see themselves in a good self-image, in a positive framework to understand themselves, to respect themselves, their culture, their cultural heritage and all that is unique and peculiar to their learning experience and to their own self-esteem. We have all of those things that we are looking at.

With all of this, of course, we are not looking at lowering expectations for aboriginal students. We are saying high expectations, measurable standards will be applied to all students. It may be that you need

supportive learning environments for certain students, but I think you do no one a favour if you lower expectations for them because certainly the world out there will be expecting them to measure up. So I think we have an obligation to see that they are strengthened and empowered and given the ability to measure up to those standards that we will be setting.

* (2350)

We have a process for the development and integration of some of this content, for all of the content, and we will have an aboriginal perspectives resource team which will comprise itself of targeted aboriginal educators. That will be established soon, and it will support aboriginal educators in a diversity of roles.

That, I think, will be a very important step in the development of curriculum and assessment and all of those things that go along with aboriginal education. So the directorate and the eight people who have been dispersed throughout the program area will be very important in helping us achieve this.

The assistant deputy minister had an advisory committee on aboriginal education during the development of renewing education, and you will see that influence surfacing in the work that is being put forward.

I will maybe stop there because I am starting to take too long. If we were in the House the Speaker would be rapping me on the knuckles right about now.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Chair, the minister indicated that there are three people who have been appointed in the Parklands to deal with the regional structures of native education. I would like the minister to indicate where those three people are located and which school divisions they are working with at the present time.

Mrs. McIntosh: In the Parklands Region we have three, as the member indicated. One of those has been appointed and filled. The other two, right now, are under competition for filling, and we are looking for aboriginals for those two. We have already had two

competition go-rounds but have not yet found people to fill. Hopefully, with this current go-round, we will end up with those positions properly filled.

The position that has been filled is located in Dauphin and is currently serving the whole region, not assigned to just one area but located in Dauphin and working out of Dauphin. We do not have an expected date for when the other two will be filled. We are, as I indicated, in the middle of that process, having had two rounds without success and are in the middle of another round, which, hopefully, this time will give success in terms of finding two people who could fill those vacancies for us in that region.

Ms. Wowchuk: When the other two positions are filled, where will they be located and which divisions will they be working in?

Mrs. McIntosh: I have just been informed that we are down to one vacancy because we have a support staffperson filling one of those three roles. The other vacancy, once it is filled, will also be located in the Dauphin area and working out of Dauphin. They will be fanning out from the Dauphin area, but the office will be in the Dauphin area.

Ms. Wowchuk: Since it appears difficult to fill these positions, can the minister indicate where they are advertising? Is it a lack of skilled people here in Manitoba, or is it possibly the fact that the salary is not attractive enough to bring people to the area?

Mrs. McIntosh: We first of all indicate that we have advertised in all the normal places, the Winnipeg Free Press, the local papers, the standard places that are advertised to fill positions, and the salary range would be equivalent to that of a teacher or an educational consultant.

We have been having trouble with the two rounds they had finding someone with the qualifications required to fill that position. The department even considered at one point maybe underfilling and training a person once they got in the role, but there was no suitable candidate, so they feel that putting out another call, which they have done, ultimately we will find the right person.

In the meantime we do have the two, and we are optimistic that we will get it filled. It is just taking some time: (a) it is a sensitive and—it is not an easy job; (2) we have people with qualifications in other areas who do not wish to relocate. It is important that we have someone who has an ability to know the area and be there. It will get filled ultimately; it is just taking a bit longer than we had hoped. We do not want to just hire for the sake of hiring. We want to make sure we have got the right person.

Ms. Wowchuk: The minister indicated that these staff people will be working out of Dauphin and fanning out to the whole region. In the north end of the region we have two new schools that were started, one in Shoal River Reserve and the other one in Indian Birch, both new schools that will need a lot of support staff and both schools that are interested in aboriginal education. The Shoal River School is located in Pelican Rapids where there is also a Frontier school, also in need of support.

Can the minister indicate whether the person who is filling this position is working with the schools on reserve as well as the schools in the other divisions?

Mrs. McIntosh: Just a question. Are those band schools under federal jurisdiction that you are referring to?

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes, the Shoal River is a reserve, as is Indian Birch, both new schools. The Pelican Rapids school is a Frontier Division school.

Mrs. McIntosh: Frontier of course we would be working with, because Frontier School Division and the schools that are part of that division come under our authority, so those are schools we would be working with. Band schools on reserve, however, we do not work with, because they do not come under our jurisdiction.

We have a federal authority that deals with them. The consultant in Dauphin will be working with the public schools if they require her expertise. Schools can call the regional manager there if they need her, but as far as the band schools are concerned, we do not interfere with the federal jurisdiction.

Ms. Wowchuk: In light of the fact that these are new schools and schools that do need a lot of support—and they are Manitoba children, they are Canadian children, we want to see them have the best opportunity for an education—it is in the best interest of everybody in this province that we help these children get an education and instill in them some pride in their native culture and all of the things that the minister mentioned.

Has any consideration been given, if a request came, to offer or share resources since these schools are just new schools getting started? They are lacking in resources and need help where there is any kind of expertise. They need help to get started, and it is very important that we work along with them. Is there any consideration given to sharing these resources, or has there been any contact made where the department can also help in these areas?

Mrs. McIntosh: You are talking about band schools.

Ms. Wowchuk: The band schools, yes.

Mrs. McIntosh: From time to time on a cost-recovery basis we will provide services to band schools, but we do have a cost-recovery system from the federal government. They also have access to our curriculum. If they choose to, they can use that.

They do not always choose to, because they are not bound to use our curriculum. Like, they do not have to do anything we tell them. They do not have to have Manitoba teachers. They do not have to have certified teachers from Manitoba. They do not have to have our curricula. They do not have to do anything we do unless they feel like it.

If they would like to have access to our curriculum, we are always pleased to provide it. If they need services from us on a cost-recovery basis, we are pleased to enter into that, but we simply cannot afford to pick up the federal costs, especially when they are chopping so much money from us right now for the schools for which we are responsible.

Band communities right now are looking at self-government, and education is an important part of this, and I agree, they are Manitoba students, but we do not

get a lot of calls from them asking to participate in Manitoba.

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

HEALTH

* (2000)

The Acting Chairperson (Mike Radcliffe): The Committee of Supply will now come to order, and I would like the staff of the minister brought into the Assembly.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I understand we are in the section of the Estimates dealing with the SmartHealth card. Is that correct?

Unfortunately, I am still unpacking boxes, so the notes I had and the documents I had—I mentioned earlier my brother just completed his doctorate in computer security and he had briefed me on this. Unfortunately, I cannot find my notes. If you have already talked about this subject in the Estimates, I can check Hansard later.

I mentioned earlier in the Estimates that my question would be: What criteria and what international or North American standard were used for establishing the security protocols for the SmartHealth card?

I understand there are international standards and North American standards. They have names. I do not have access right now to those names of those standards. What is being used in Manitoba?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Mr. Chairperson, thanks to the honourable member for raising this very important topic. It has been touched on very briefly in various parts of the discussion today, but that is about it that I can recall.

It was on May 30 that the honourable member for The Maples advised us, very kindly gave us notice that at the time of the debate on the health information services Estimates he would be asking whether there is a clause in the SmartHealth contract that addresses

whether international or Canadian computer standards will be considered in the building of the health information network.

The honourable member may know that the contract for the health information network is not yet final and as a result has not yet been signed, so therefore any advice he gives us is timely as we work our way towards signing the contract. We certainly want to do that and we are happy for any advice that he or other honourable members might have for us in addition to advice that we are getting from various stakeholder groups.

The answer the honourable member is looking for is, yes, the draft contract, and we are just in draft form at the present time, does include clauses that specifically address computer standards which are inclusive of ISO9000 standards. Now, I am simply passing on information that I have been given. I would not be able to shed very much light on what an ISO9000 standard is, just to be perfectly honest with you. In addition, we are looking at HL71EEE.

In addition, various encryption methodologies are being looked at, and I say all of these things are looked at, because we have not signed a contract, but certainly it may well be relevant which type of standards are employed for which types of applications.

In fact, I understand that the HL71EEE standards have to do with patient records, and that would be one of the standards that we are looking at. I understand that encryption methodologies include ways of scrambling the information so that inappropriate or nonauthorized personnel cannot, even if they do access certain information, it would be scrambled in such a way that they would not know what it was anyway.

That is important, because from my point of view as a layperson, but as minister, who has been listening to the opposition and listening to members of the public who have expressed concerns about the issue of confidentiality, I am going to want to make sure, probably as much or more so than anybody else, because I am going to be the one who is going to have to answer for it if it does not turn out right. I am going to want to be very sure that encryption methodologies

and confidentiality standards are up to the job that is being asked to be done here.

In addition, I would remind the honourable member for The Maples that, getting away from the technical part of it, we have various stakeholders involved in helping us design the system that we are going to contract for or that will be delivered to us as a result of the contract. We want the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties and the professional organizations like the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba, or the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses, we want them, or the Consumers Association, to be involved in the overview of what we are doing so that when we do come out with a resulting system we can have some comfort that there was significant input from interested parties or people representing the public into this and other areas of the putting together of this very, very major and very, very important health information system.

* (2010)

Mr. Kowalski: I thank the minister for that detailed information. That detail will allow me to pass it onto my brother in Sweden. I am sure he is going to give me a critique on the standards. I would respectfully caution the minister to avoid the Peter Pan principle of computer security, and that is, if you believe it is secure, it is secure. That goes throughout the industry that there is always that hacker out there, there is always that inventive mind that, the more secure a system is claimed, the greater challenge it is for some people to surpass the safeguards and get into the system. So I would caution the minister about that.

In the initial stages of it, when this system is being put in place and there will be a lot of monitoring, is there anything in the draft contract or any procedures that his department will be looking at ongoing monitoring of the computer security of this system? I would compare it to if the government was buying a car, the original car you would take a look at and you could make sure that it meets the specifications, but ongoing to see if it continues to meet the specifications and the standards. What in the contract or the government's procedures will assure that computer's security continues over the years?

Mr. McCrae: I think it must be the honourable member's background in law enforcement that causes him to ask that question, because as he knows, and from my own experience in the justice system, I know that justice officials are always doing their best to be one step ahead of the bad guys or the criminals. As criminals are getting more and more sophisticated, then so must the systems that we have to deal with them.

Similarly in this particular field, perhaps even more so, we see technological change happening on almost a daily basis, and there are those who make it their full-time hobby or vocation to understand what is going on in the computer world and the automation systems and to, for whatever reasons, make inappropriate use of their ability to access information. The point about the ongoing monitoring ability is a good one and an important one. I am satisfied, to this point at least, that all of us are looking carefully at that particular part of the operation.

It is not so different I suppose from other programs that we have put into place except this one is more technological. We like to monitor programs and gather information about them so that we can make evaluations, make sure that we are achieving what we set out to achieve, and making sure that we are doing so while respecting those inviolate sorts of principles like certain confidentiality rules that have applied, even though there have been breaches of the present system. In my view, preventable breaches should not have happened, but they did.

What can we do to actually enhance the security of patient information especially? I believe that is mostly what we are talking about here. Individuals ought to be able to deal with confidence with the health system knowing that the professionals in the system will not breach their professional obligations, and certainly that any technological aspect of the system does not let us down.

I am mindful of the problems that develop from time to time in the human aspect of any system, and this system is not going to work without human input. So we have to make sure the people that are using the system and equipment and so on are knowledgeable in the bottom line confidentiality rules that are going to be

there. Anybody who has legitimate access ought to be properly trained so that, either intentionally or unintentionally, the chance for them to abuse their powers is diminished so significantly as to be nonexistent. That would be my wish, and I do not suppose anybody can make absolute statements about anything in the light of the Leon experience which was reported widely with respect to the use of the Pharmacard system.

While here I am satisfied today that those people, who are in a position to do so, are taking appropriate steps to deal with the lessons learned from the Leon experience, regrettable though it was, there did appear allegedly to be a human aspect of that whole case, which if it were not for that human part of it, there might not have been a problem.

That being said, we learned some things about our system as a result of that too, and some of the concerns that I heard from some pharmacists is that, you know, goodness' sakes, we have got so much information, so many warning signs. There are too many warning signs on the system, so therefore the suggestion was made that perhaps some professionals were possibly ignoring all of the messages.

Well, that is not the way this is supposed to work either, and we want to ensure that the partners that we have involved in any health network, including the Drug Program Information Network, are using it the way it was designed. So, unfortunate story as it turned out, but I do believe that we will end up learning something from that and come out stronger as we pursue the development of the new system, but the human training aspect of it is a very important aspect of it too.

You know, I remember a year ago around this time being very impatient, when are we going to get our Drug Program Information Network? Poor Mr. Alexander, I do not know how many times he had to answer that question about this time last year, but to his credit and that of his associates in the pharmaceutical industry, they got there ducks in a row, as it were, to put together, on July 18th of last year, a package, a product that, notwithstanding the Leon incident, has served us better than we were served previously.

Seniors are happy about it. The honourable member may have heard reports that, you know, this instant rebate system is kind of nice, and it is very, very convenient. We do not need to worry about filing our rebate applications before a deadline and all of those issues that used to come up. So we are going to see a reduction in that. We have a lot of—especially senior citizens who use the Pharmacare program perhaps more than the rest of the population. It is very nice to get mail and telephone calls, things like that, and messages from pharmacists that, you know, my customers really like this new system. And for the most part I do not hear too many complaints from pharmacists either, so that whatever problems there are out there appear to be getting worked on, and I think that we learned some valuable lessons from the Drug Program Information Network which we can take forward to the development of the larger health information system.

The honourable member does not have to—he can go ahead, but he does not have to remind me too many times about the importance of confidentiality. As a professional working in the justice system, he knows all about that already.

* (2020)

I will just add a couple of more things respecting the health information network measures relating to security, privacy and confidentiality. It has been said that, once implemented, there could somehow be a threat to the security, privacy and confidentiality of health records contained within the system. That concern is paramount to the government. In fact, it would be enough of a concern to stop various aspects of this project if the concern could not be properly addressed. And the government will ensure to the greatest extent possible that privacy, security and confidentiality measures are integral components of the project.

To ensure the necessary security in the project, Manitoba Health plans to follow four key steps. First, we want to identify very clearly and understand what information must be protected, and from whom. It is one thing for all of us to say, oh, confidentiality is a big concern, and I am sure it is, but what is it we want to keep from getting out, and who do we want to keep it

from getting to? Well, we are going to address those questions, again with extensive consultation with consumers, health care providers and regulatory bodies. Regulatory bodies take their responsibilities in Manitoba very seriously indeed, I have found, and I expect them to ask tough questions, like the kind we get in this place, or even tougher sometimes, so that we can be sure that we have the right answers, and if we do not, that we get the right answers or we do not move forward.

We have already set up a privacy and confidentiality committee, and on that committee we have the regulatory bodies like the MARN, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals, consumers groups such as the seniors, MSOS, the Consumers' Association and the MARL, the rights and liberties organization, and as required other members can be added to that committee depending on what part of the system we are looking at.

Secondly, we will examine broad alternatives, and it is quite likely that action will be taken on all of the following items. Legislation, we have not said there will not be legislation. We have said otherwise, as a matter of fact, and it appear we might even be leaning in that direction to make sure that we have covered that part of it. It may be that we will want to amend existing legislation to tighten access rights and provide for stiffer penalties for breaches of security. You have to be really careful about the balance you draw because we do not want now to make it tough to impossible for health professionals who now are able to access information on a legitimate basis. We do not want to make it so tough that we create a problem that could have an unfortunate health result. We do not want to do that either.

So you can imagine the kinds of discussions that are going to go on in this privacy and confidentiality committee. We need to determine what new legislation might be required, and Mr. Alexander has already done some travelling and some consultation in other jurisdictions on this point, or at least one I know of. We have to do research on a worldwide basis relevant to legislation and regulations on privacy. We have to look at management practices. There should be the

signing of nondisclosure agreements. There should be oaths of—how should I say, should there be these things? Should there be oaths of confidentiality? Should there be punitive action including the firing of people who misuse confidential information?

With regard to technology, the whole encryption process needs to be looked at very carefully, card technology, dedicated lines, passwords, systems security. Again, the balance has to be there. You can make this ridiculous, too, and it is not very user friendly then. So that balance will be sought after.

We should be talking to experts; maybe the honourable member's brother is one of those experts. We should be talking to them to gain their opinions about the technology that can protect the confidentiality. Manitoba Health and the vendors, SmartHealth and their partners, have the expertise to deal with the technology required. We know that there is a lot of expertise in SmartHealth to ensure that the necessary security for health records is in place.

Again, and very, very importantly, all of the matters that I have referred to already will be guided as we go through the process. The monitoring of what we are doing will be guided by consumers, by health care providers and regulators. So, with those kinds of assurances, and I believe that what all of that amounts to is a reasonable assurance, and that being the case, having achieved that and having made up our minds about how important these matters are, we should proceed, and we should proceed carefully.

Mr. Kowalski: I do not want to leave on the record any impression that members from this side of the House are Luddites and do not want technological advances and all the efficiencies and greater services that could be provided, under scaring off the public and others with these security concerns, that we should not do it. No, these technological advances are something that we could all benefit from, and, as you say, security right now—under the previous paper system we had security breaches. In locked drawers and filing cabinets we had security breaches.

As legislators, we sometimes cannot keep up with the technological advances, with some of the laws that we

create and some of the advances. I guess there is a concern where under the paper system, someone broke into a filing cabinet, an area where there were security records, there is a limit to how many records could be seen in that.

In a matter of seconds, complete databases could be obtained by someone who should not be able to gain access. That is a concern, not just the spectre of fear that has been raised, but there is a legitimate concern. I did not want to leave on the record that we are trying to make people fearful of the confidentiality records, to slow down the technological advances that can be achieved through this SmartHealth card.

Mr. McCrae: I accept what the honourable member has said. I had never felt that the approach taken by he and his colleagues was in any way obstructionist. I still do not feel that way yet. I do not believe they are members of the flat earth society or anything like that. I think there is a recognition that there is room for progress, there is room for automation, but simply to raise the question has never been interpreted by me to mean that members in the Liberal Party were against moving forward in, if it is done properly, what can be a tremendous improvement to our health care system.

The honourable members know too; they have certainly taken their share of heat for it. They know that the financial ability to carry on in an inefficient way is just not there anymore in this country. They know that and I know that. It is too bad that we sometimes feel that we are doing things because we are forced to by financial imperatives. In this case I do not even feel that way. Certainly we have our financial problems everywhere in this country, but this is the right thing to do. Manitobans like the idea that their health care system will be amongst the most modern in the world and that the quality will also be attached to it. Now it is our job to deliver that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I wanted to continue on from the last remarks of my colleague from The Maples. I can recall a number of years ago, in fact when I was first elected, the whole Pharmacare issue back in 1988, and I like to believe that the Liberal Party was quite progressive in its thinking when it made the suggestion that what we need to have in today's society

was computerization of pharmaceuticals and providing seniors, at the time from many different arguments such as fixed incomes, the benefits of having technology brought into health care.

When the then-Minister of Health, Mr. Orchard, had talked about the health care card, the former member from The Maples was actually quite delighted. The Liberals as a caucus said, well, you have taken our idea; you have put a new word on it. Mr. Cheema would say, no one owns a good idea. A good idea is something that should be acted upon and governments should be applauded when they take some significant action.

* (2030)

However, having said that, there are a number of very legitimate concerns that have come forward. The member from Maples probably brings up the most significant concern, that being of privacy, of confidentiality of those files, access, who is going to actually have access, and to what degree of access will they have. For example, earlier this afternoon we were told that we are going to have these computer terminals in hospitals, in doctors' offices and laboratories, in health care facilities that are out there.

I guess it is a question of who is going to have access to what kind of information. For example, we make a reference to the doctor, and to use a specific example, the doctor that is wanting to send a patient, patient X, for lab tests, and pops up in the computer, and then we find out patient X was just over getting their blood tested three days ago. Is it going to say, patient X had the blood test on such and such a day? Will the doctor be able to gain additional information other than the fact that patient X had a blood test, some of the reasons that were used for having that blood test, or patient X visited another doctor yesterday, and what sort of information is going to be put into the computer in which another user of the terminal is actually going to have access to the detail?

We do not want to stand in the way of change, but I think that this sort of change, and it was pointed out from the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), here you have a filing cabinet, you break into the filing

cabinet, there is a limited number and a considerable amount of photocopying that you would have to do in order to spread this information out, type thing.

With computer technology it is a matter of seconds or minutes in which you can consume a great deal of data. Not only do you not require to put it onto paper or hard copy, you can virtually put it on the information highway and that is definitely very, very real.

We also have to take into consideration what sort of things we are going to allow to go into the data bank. Myself, personally, especially when you are just getting something up and going, the only program that I have really worked on is the access as a data bank, which is a very small data bank, virtually irrelevant in terms of the size that we are talking about obviously. But if you are going to err, I would think that you should err on a minimal amount of information that is going into the computer to pick up, for example, on the lab tests.

It is more important to know that, yes, that individual might have had a blood test two days ago and then leave the onus on the doctor to ask the patient as to why it is that they had a lab test, as opposed to any sort of reasons or detailed breakdown of the lab test. The minister made reference to a committee. I would imagine that they have an implementation committee, and he did make reference to it in his response. He might have referred to it earlier in terms of just what sort of information would be put into the data bank and not saying, well, look, we are going to have lab tests in the data bank.

To even expand on that, are we talking about the results of lab tests? Are we talking about Mr. X had some results, Mr. X attended or had a blood test on such and such a day?

It is important that all of those questions are answered prior, and this might have been a question that was asked right at the beginning. The minister will have to excuse me if it was, but can the minister give some sort of an anticipated date on which he sees this being put into place so that when you go to the doctor's, your doctor is actually going to have the access to this information or other health care facilities and so forth?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, in the first year of this five-year contract, which begins on the day that it is signed, which is going to be happening before very long, one of the three identified projects is to get the physicians into the system. How long that will take I would not know exactly, but I would expect near the end of that year to start asking myself, when will the doctors' offices be tied into the system? That is when we will be there.

I certainly appreciate the concerns the honourable member raised. I do not know how many times I have used the word "conservative" today, but I will use it again. We will begin conservatively to build the bank of information that is going to be available to the health professionals.

I agree that liberal access at this time or in the early stages without knowing—if we do not know exactly what we are doing in the minutest detail, then we should err on the side, as the honourable member said, of being conservative in terms of what we load into the machine or into the system to make all that information available to the various health professionals.

I do say, though, and I take account of what we said a few minutes ago when we were discussing this with the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), that the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) was around at the time when the former leader of the Liberal Party and formerly Justice critic Paul Edwards raised with me the issue of security and confidentiality in relation to an agreement I had got into with CSIS, the Canadian Security Intelligence, or the spy group or whatever they called it.

It made for interesting reading, but what was being done at that time was that Mr. Edwards was taking his argument to somewhat fanciful extremes, to the point where he was being so fanciful I was able to respond by saying, well, why would Mr. Edwards want to be protecting people who would blow up aircraft and burn down buildings and stuff like that? The spy association is trying to get after people like that and we are trying to help that spy organization, because we do not like the idea of airplanes blowing up and people being killed.

That is the way the extremes can go in an argument like this. I would only take the honourable member's points and those of the of the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) to be a warning about being cautious and to take all reasonable steps that a reasonable society should take to protect peoples' personal medical records from being viewed or accessed by the wrong people. I am not the one nor is the honourable member, I suspect, to be the judge all by ourselves of the technological security of the system.

We are going to have to take advice from the Manitoba Association of Rights and Liberties, the Manitoba Consumers' Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba, the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses, the Manitoba Society of Seniors, those organizations who have every bit as much a stake in this as the honourable member and I, or more, in representing their members to ensure that we indeed have a very secure system.

* (2040)

So I am going to take the honourable member's advice very seriously about, as we are getting going here, let us be very careful that we have everything running the way we think it is supposed to run and, if it is deemed appropriate by the various committees involved with giving us advice, you know, there may be some information that we may want to exempt. I do not know yet until I get further advice. There may be some information that can be shared amongst professionals in a different way. I do not know that, but I am not saying that we want to have very much outside the system. The more we can use the system, the better because the better we are going to fare when it comes to population health outcomes across the province.

I do not, frankly, think it should be that interesting to anybody what my cholesterol level is. I go around telling people all the time and they say, oh, yes, that is nice. They do not really care. What information is it we want to make sure is protected? We can obviously say, all health information about a patient. I think that is the way we proceed now and, as the member for The Maples pointed out, there are serious breaches. Also,

as he points out, a breach of a computerized system can be a very, very significant breach depending on how much information you might be able to access all at one time.

So here again I am not the expert on this. I know there are encryption methods that can be employed, and I am not going to tell the honourable member what those methods are going to be, because then that will be on the public record and some hacker somewhere along the line will read Hansard and figure out how to access our health system.

This is all very interesting business for me, but I just want the honourable member to be very, very sure that any concern he feels about this I suggest will be represented by the groups, organizations I have named in their role. I put on the record, maybe, perhaps just before the honourable member was able to hear it, the various steps that we are seriously considering.

It goes all the way from, as I say, the encryption methodologies to the potential for legislation. I have said that my advice to this point is that we probably will be looking at legislation to ensure that should there ever be any breach that the wrongdoers could be very severely punished for doing such things.

To ask for ironclad guarantees is a tall order, but I say that in the light of what we have now, which is a very insecure system. You need only remember the incidents of medical records becoming seemingly, very carelessly, just laying around for people to find and view, and that is not something I want to see continue either. I want the honourable member to know that I take whatever concerns are being raised very seriously and I do not take from his raising them any inference that he and his colleagues are in any way opposed to moving forward either.

Mr. Lamoureux: I bring it up because I sincerely believe it is the whole question of privacy. If this thing is not managed properly that could actually see it come to a halt.

Earlier the minister even made reference to the fact that if there is something that is going to sidestep or prevent it from turning into reality, it is some of the

shortcomings on privacy, and I guess it is just to re-emphasize the importance of that issue from our perspective.

It was interesting listening to the dialogue that was going on between the minister and the opposition critic when they were talking about the financing of this whole program. I too was somewhat surprised, like the member for Kildonan, in terms of just how the minister had broken it down.

During the election I guess I had somewhat envisioned this \$140-million sweetheart deal with the Royal Bank, and here is a big private company that is going to be making millions upon millions of dollars at the expense of the Manitoba taxpayer on health care. I was somewhat surprised in the sense that for the first time—at least that I am aware of, and we were chatting with the member for Kildonan as he was giving some of the explanation, even for him—to hear the type of breakdown, because it is substantially different than what was being talked about.

We are talking about \$100 million, what looks like will be around \$100 million, and a substantial portion of that is just the setting-up costs, if you will. I am pleased to hear that, even though it is very hard for any one of us to conceptualize just exactly how extensive a job it is to set up a system of this magnitude. What I am interested in doing a bit of a follow-up on is some of the actual ongoing operational costs.

Does the minister have some sort of projection in terms of what kind of cost we are looking at. He mentioned earlier from year one the operational cost is going to be not as great as it would be in year five, because in year five there is going to be that much more to the system. Do we have some sort of an idea exactly what sort of projections are being forecasted for ongoing operational costs of the system for the next five years?

Mr. McCrae: As we have described this contract in the way we have, it is so very hard, Mr. Chairperson, to talk today about what will be the operational costs of the system five years from today when (a)—and this is less significant, but we have not signed any contract yet, but (b)—which is very significant—is because there

are various components to this system and there is room in the contract for go, no-go decisions along the way. I can only answer hypothetically and say, well, what if we end up putting only three-quarters of what we are talking about today actually into effect by the end of the five years? Then we will have only three-quarters of the system initially contemplated.

So I do not know if we can estimate that kind of cost on an annual basis once we have our system up and running or not. I will do some thinking on this and some discussing but it is a very hard question, because five years from today—look what has happened in five years in the whole area of computer technology and throw your mind five years ahead and let us ask ourselves, well, what will it be like? It boggles the mind to see the change that has happened in this information age in the last 20 or so years that it would be dangerous to hazard any guesses about what the operational costs will be. However, I will take the question back and do some thinking on it and see if there is a better way for me to answer the question than I have.

The honourable member needs to be reminded again about the project itself coming in a number of components. I do not know if I have broken this down this way for the honourable member for Inkster before, but picture in your mind a wheel and the Drug Program Information Network is one spoke in that wheel. We can have a lot of spokes in the wheel or we can have a moderate number of spokes or we can have a few. I think we will not have a few. I think there will be moderate to a lot, depending on the quality of our consultations and how well we are able to move along.

The wheel will work better when it has its hub in place and its spokes. It will provide so many more services, and all of the players involved, the hospital system, the emergency system, the pharmaceutical system and the medical system—who knows what all else—might find a place as a spoke on that wheel at this point.

All of those players will be better off, so I would hope to be arguing for the more participation on this wheel the better. I do not know what it costs to run a personal computer for a year, but the more spokes on

there the more computer terminals, as the member said, will be in existence in Manitoba sharing information with all of the various parts of the health system.

* (2050)

As I say, I will try to get a better answer for the honourable member. I know that it must be very hard to put finite numbers on it.

I am just trying to remember what the honourable member was saying in the early part of his question that I should respond to. If I have not responded to everything, he should tell me.

Mr. Lamoureux: Actually, what I am going to do is I am just going to proceed ahead because I did have a couple more questions and I know we want to move on to Mental Health.

To get a better idea in terms of SmartHealth and how it is going to actually be functioning, I am wondering if the minister could give some sort of indication on just exactly what role, let us say, the private sector would have in it, in as concise as possible way, in terms of administering and managing.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, certainly during the course of the five years we would expect SmartHealth and its partners—I keep forgetting who they all are, but KPMG is one of them—to manage the technological aspects of this. At the end of those five years, at that point the contract would be over and we would have to review and examine what the best way is to run it in the future, whether it should be done by contracting it out or what actually should be done.

I remember what I was going to say to the honourable member. I have to say to the honourable member that after the five years is over it does not really make any difference as long as the public continues to get a good product or a good service.

If it is more appropriate at the end of five years to issue some kind of call for tenders or proposals or something like that to find out what is the best way for the management of the system at that time or whatever way, at this point it does not matter. It is going to

happen one way or another, and if there is a cost no doubt the taxpayers will shoulder that cost. Our minds are quite open on the point.

The point that needs to be made, though, is that whoever is managing the system is managing a technology, and they have no better access to the data in the technology than Joe Q. Public. Here is another piece of misinformation that has been floating around that somehow—[interjection] Oh, pardon me. [interjection] Speaking of people who float certain information around—

There was a misconception, shall we say, to put it very generously. This information that the Royal Bank of Canada would have access to your health records or my health records is an absolutely ridiculous suggestion and has no foundation in fact whatsoever, and never would. I am not about to share my health information with bankers. Give me a break is all I can say to that.

The foolishness of it should be patently clear. The trouble is in the rush of all of the things that get said in the space of 35 days, it was just another very shocking and alarming thing for people to weigh in their minds or maybe to distract them from other positive aspects of this.

The honourable member in his earlier comments made reference to various numbers floating around. He had to acknowledge that even he was under the impression that all these dollars were going to go to the Royal Bank and never mind the suppliers of services, subcontractors, never mind the suppliers of product and so on. The point is so very well made by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) that surely in our business we should all look a little behind the so-called facts that are being put on the record by certain of the parties in the scheme of things.

Unfortunately for the poor old taxpayer out there, he or she has to just read the headlines and hope that they are reading the truth. It so often is not, but you know what can you do.

An Honourable Member: Especially about the hockey team.

Mr. McCrae: No doubt we are going to get into a discussion of hockey yet tonight. It happens every day.

The point that I make to the honourable member is, indeed, if the honourable member feels the way he does, can you imagine how I felt with all that misinformation floating around and hoping that people would just naturally soak up the true stuff and reject the untrue stuff? It does not work that way, and so we are left in a debate. We are debating in a factual vacuum so to speak.

The beauty, I guess, of the outcome is that you can fool all the people all of the time and—or some of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people some of the time. You know how that goes. I did not get it right, but you know how it works. Thankfully enough, people could see what was really going on and the result was as it was.

I guess I should not be so sensitive about these things, but when you are a minister in charge of an important undertaking like this, I would love to debate publicly the merits or otherwise of the SmartHealth proposals. But please let us do so in the light of the true facts, rather than the ones that people make up from time to time.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, the reason why I brought up the question in the fashion that I did is that the minister made reference—actually, I think it was the member for Kildonan—as this being a general contractor of sorts and, in fact, MTS playing a fairly significant role.

I am wondering in terms of that role if it is going to be enhanced, what happens at the end of the five years when it comes time to renew? Is this something that is going to be exclusive to a company? Is there a tendering process?—because, after all, this is virtually starting from go, if you like, in a relatively short time span of sorts.

I am curious in terms of, if I use the general contractor—reference was made to earlier—of who some of those subcontracts are MTS has made reference to. Is there, in fact, more of a detailed list in terms of who all is involved in this?

Just to continue on, the next part of it would be, of course, what role is it that they are actually playing, MTS is playing, in terms of transmission as the major contractor, so if he can just comment on that. Listening to just the MTS, wonderful, but expand just very briefly on it. What is their primary role?

* (2100)

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, initially we know that SmartHealth, which is the wholly owned subsidiary of the Royal Bank of Canada, has partners we already know about, IMT, KPMG, IDT. MTS is not part of that consortium, but we know MTS will be providing transmission services.

I do not know personally, subject to advice, how the messages will be transmitted after the five-year period. I guess we know for the first five years MTS is going to be involved in all of that. We already know that and we have already attached some estimate of the cost or the share that MTS will be getting.

Now, in addition, remember we have not entered into this contract yet, so not all of these details are known. The general contractor will make a lot of choices in the future about whom they do business with, hardware manufacturers, for example, and whatever other suppliers of goods or services. A lot of this is going to be product or equipment intensive. There will also be a fairly labour-intensive component of all of this.

So I do not know today who all of the suppliers are going to be to this \$100-million undertaking, when the decisions about which component of it, or which spoke, is a go and which is a no-go.

It is basically impossible at this stage to say, four years from now, we are going to be doing business through SmartHealth with company X, company Y, and company Z, when our consultation committee has not yet passed a judgment as to whether that component, or a particular component, of the contract is a go or no-go.

We can give the honourable member, I am advised, that we fully expect to see Manitoba companies benefiting in a big way here because Manitoba has laid

some very important groundwork for this kind of thing. Manitoba has gone some distance on this information highway, and we have all kinds of suppliers right here in Manitoba who have demonstrated their ability to participate in this kind of a project.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, the acronyms like KPMG, IMT, IDT, I do not necessarily know the background of these. You point out, for example, Manitoba has a very healthy computer industry. Just a few months back, I believe it was MPIC had purchased a great deal of computers and it was through an American firm. This is one of the reasons why when we take a look at the general contractor that being, if you like, Royal Bank through SmartHealth and SmartHealth is the consortium—did I understand that correctly?—of what would be the Royal Bank, KPMG?

An Honourable Member: SmartHealth is Royal Bank only.

Mr. Lamoureux: SmartHealth is a part of the consortium then.

An Honourable Member: SmartHealth is contracting with these other groups.

Mr. Lamoureux: Then these other groups—in other words, how do we ensure that in fact local technology and local equipment manufacturing products, the Mind computers and so forth, are in fact given the opportunity to at least participate in some capacity? Given what we are talking about, it is literally millions of dollars of potential investment that are there. When you are sitting down and you are negotiating, is this all taken into consideration? If it is, how is it taken into consideration in the sense of the consortium and the people that are sitting around the table?

Mr. McCrae: A good point, Mr. Chairperson, and again a very timely point in the sense that, as we continue our negotiations to finalize a contract, it is good to know the honourable member's position on this.

Indeed, I can tell him that local content or Manitoba content will, in one form or another, be part of the contract itself so we will build in some assistance.

However, that cannot be at any cost. I mean, what kind of a signal would that be to Manitoba companies? It would be a signal for, it is a good chance for us now to abuse the taxpayer, which we are not interested in either.

We do want Manitoba companies to be competitive. We do not want, because they are Manitoban, companies to pad their bills or pad their bids, but there is going to be language in the contract to ensure Manitoba content in the delivery of the terms of the contract, but I say it no doubt will be worded in such a way that we will still be asking Manitoba companies to be as competitive as they can.

Mr. Lamoureux: It is not to say—with the MPIC I believe it was virtually split seconds that we are talking about, and it was a fairly competitive bid. I am a big fan of interprovincial trade and making sure that we are on level playing fields and so forth. My concern is more so ensuring that Manitoba businesses are given the opportunity to be able to participate in some significant way.

The minister made reference to this potential savings that is going to be achieved and estimates it to be around 20 percent. Is there something that the minister is looking at doing with that, or would that money just be going back into general revenues? Is he prepared to look at some form of additional initiatives in this whole area? [interjection] Yes, the 20 percent to MTS from that \$118 million to \$100 million.

Mr. McCrae: The other myth that we need to debunk tonight is that the \$100 million or \$118 million or whatever number—[interjection] 150, it has gone as high as 150. It makes me think of that bridge in Selkirk which some of us over on this side have now up to a \$140-million bridge. I think it started at about \$19 million.

Anyway, the myth that has to be debunked is there are no dollars on the table. Here we are debating at length the SmartHealth proposal and there is no money in this year's budget for that. [interjection] No. No money has been allocated for this contract in this year's budget, because the arrangement that we have struck is that no money will move for 18 months. In other

words, SmartHealth is prefinancing a lot of this work. In fact, some work is already being undertaken by SmartHealth knowing that there will be a contract. Some work is already being undertaken and not a nickel of taxpayers' dollars is financing this.

So this is another myth. It does boggle the mind, does it not, some of the things that we have to put up with around this place. Here we are talking about 20 percent less and we are already wondering how we are going to spend that money. It does not exist. The money does not exist. After 18 months, we expect to see savings accrue from our health care system that we can then use to pay SmartHealth for its prefunding of this and performance of this contract.

We have talked about savings accruing in the laboratory area which is one of the first items that we are going to be working on. We know there is room for saving there. It is out of savings that this contract will be financed. In any event, no money flows for 18 months and these folks here they have already spent a hundred million or more of it when none of it has existed.

It is maybe a minor little insignificant detail that there is \$100 million that they are going to save and spend on this, that and the other thing when not one nickel of it exists. That is what we kept trying to say—[interjection]

Yes, in some quarters. There are a few spots where it did not work for us because the myth was already far too alive and deeply engrained in some people's minds that here was a hundred million dollars that the government was going to squander by giving it to some rich profitable bank. This works very well with some people. It sells. I am sorry that it sells. It did not sell to very many, I am thankful. I do regret that anybody bought that line.

* (2110)

Mr. Lamoureux: The consortium that is there, run by SmartHealth, have they allocated any dollars? Has any money then actually been spent to date on this?

Mr. McCrae: I am advised that SmartHealth is staffing up for the project. So preparations will be

being made and some dollars would be spent. I would not think the bulk, but it is their dollars.

Mr. Lamoureux: So monies that have been spent, it is just more of a calculated risk then on behalf of the private sector that the government will in fact materialize on something that they have been talking about, or has there been some sort of an agreement in principle that was achieved?

Mr. McCrae: I think it is probably a very well calculated risk. We went to some effort. I think it was Room 255, was it not, that we used here in this building to appear on camera with the SmartHealth people to announce our intentions. The New Democrats made the SmartHealth proposal into a major election campaign issue. The election is over, and the people have said get on with it. That is what we are going to do.

I think surely dealing with a government that was prepared to go to those lengths pre-election, a government that is re-elected to perform what it says it is going to do—I do not know if there are any other assurances the SmartHealth people are using, but I have not made any other determination but that this should go ahead. The people demand it, so why would they not begin preparations? I do not know how much money they have spent, probably not the bulk of what is going to be spent. I am sure they are getting their own people recruited and trained to begin work on this project.

Mr. Lamoureux: I am curious as to if you would believe that you negotiate from a weakened position if in fact you have made the commitment. You are virtually locked into a particular company, and yet we are still sitting at the table negotiating in terms of all the complexities of the agreement in itself. Does that not weaken government's hand by saying, look, we are definitely going ahead so if they propose here is what we can do? Does he believe that is the case at all or there is any merit to that sort of an argument?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, I certainly do not agree with any characterization of the government's position as a weakened one. It is SmartHealth who—and I cannot quantify this—but undoubtedly have

made some reasonably significant preparations. We have not put anything into this yet. There has been a lot of work done by SmartHealth in the past, as it was involved in responding to proposal calls and that sort of thing.

I remind the honourable member, there were 33 invitations, 11 companies responded, and SmartHealth was the successful candidate as a result of a committee's deliberation on the various proposals. SmartHealth was chosen because of its technological abilities and its ability to consult with stakeholders. Those were the two main criteria for their choice and their ability to carry out the terms of the contract. There is no secret that after that process was through, a determination was made and an announcement was made, but that does not leave me or the government in any way in a weakened position.

SmartHealth has very, very much, may I suggest, to gain by going forward with this and doing a very, very good job. I would think that it would be to SmartHealth's benefit, SmartHealth no doubt wanting to expand its expertise. This is ground-breaking technology we are getting into, and they no doubt will want to do any job they do well, but this one of all jobs, if you want to seek a place in the health information technology market worldwide. We are dealing with a company that is fairly international in scope. I would think that the pressure would be as much on SmartHealth as the government. I do not accept that the government in any way is bargaining from a position of weakness.

We are talking about a \$100-million contract over five years with certain deliverables that would be capped at that amount. I feel that Manitoba is in a reasonable position to complete the negotiations for this contract. SmartHealth, like any player on the world scene, has its own record to protect just as governments do, so I would say we are both in a reasonable position for negotiations.

Mr. Lamoureux: I am not going to proceed too much further on that, but just suffice to say that if the minister was selling houses and he showed me a house and I said, yes, I am going to buy that house, now let us sit down and talk about the price, I would argue that,

ultimately, I might have weakened my position somewhat in the sense that I have told you I am going to end up purchasing that house. I do not have the experience in terms of dealing with something of this magnitude that the Minister of Health and the government has entered into. Ultimately, I guess only time will tell.

I would ask the minister, just how close is he to finalizing this agreement? Also, just to get the confirmation, did the government have any form of an agreement in principle, any signed documents that would have led to this thing going ahead? If the answer to that is no, then we will move on to the next line of when do we anticipate that there will be a signed agreement?

Mr. McCrae: Just harking back just a little bit to a concern the honourable member raised, which is a legitimate one, it should be of interest to the honourable member to know that Mr. Alexander of our information services branch comes to us from the Economic Development Board of government here in Manitoba. So he has a little better background than I do on the concerns that the honourable member was talking about. What is there in it for Manitoba besides just a world-class health information system or a world-leading health information system? We know that there is a possibility here for spin-offs and for our Manitoba business community, and we expect to maximize on that. That is why Mr. Alexander has been instructed as he has, and that is why he was selected as he was.

The provincial health information network will indeed generate building blocks for long-term economic growth and is going to do that by retaining and attracting professionals to Manitoba. I mean, the kinds of people who are going to be involved in this project are high-end people when it comes to the technological nature of the work. We are going to be creating new high-technology companies in rural and urban centres because of this. We are going to be creating, obviously, new and high-end job opportunities. We will increase trade and export opportunities. So it will benefit Manitoba. It will benefit SmartHealth, too, all the more reason for SmartHealth to work well with the government.

* (2120)

We will be positioning Manitoba's knowledge-based companies, something you will hear the Premier (Mr. Filmon), the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), any of our economic ministers, talk about knowledge-based industries in our province. We are going to be positioning those companies in Manitoba to capitalize on emerging opportunities in the area of health care information systems. It is going to be one of our very strong features here in Manitoba, one of our strong economic features.

We are going to strengthen and protect Manitoba's position as a major centre for health research. You know why that is? As we spoke earlier, not only are we going to keep better track of an individual patient's care and provide better service to patients, but our data information database respecting epidemiological concerns, the kinds of epidemiological information that we need to help us make quality health policy decisions, is going to be there much more rapidly. Imagine the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, how much more quickly they could get on with their job of analyzing information when the information is available so much more quickly than it is today. It is available today, but through SmartHealth we will be able to collate and organize that information in a far more user-friendly way for organizations like that one, but I am talking about other research, more pure epidemiological research institutions in Manitoba.

So those are just a few that come to my mind, and my mind is certainly not the best one to bear on the opportunities that are available to us, but I get additional information all the time about the possibilities that there are. When you think of SmartHealth as a company, that it now exists and it will begin its work here in Manitoba, it will also want to export what it learns here in Manitoba through the course of doing this contract. SmartHealth will have its worldwide headquarters in Manitoba. That was announced as well when we announced the SmartHealth project. Think about the jobs. Think about the income taxes. If we are still collecting payroll taxes, which I hope we are not, think about that and all of that kind of spin-off, and do not forget, too,

that government will obtain revenue from the sale of any software that is owned by us, by the SmartHealth company. Those are just a few thoughts on the economic spin-off aspect of this arrangement.

Now the honourable member has gone and got me saying all these wonderful things about this proposal. Does that mean now that we have made ourselves weaker? Absolutely not. We know that this is mutually beneficial. We know that, if this proposal works and this contract is made to work in such a way that it is intended to and the deliverables are there and we have quality in those deliverables, SmartHealth is going to benefit from that, and so is Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Chairperson, just to briefly ask and then we will move on, when does the minister anticipate that the agreement would be signed? Can he give confirmation that there was no agreement in principle or Memorandum of Understanding saying, yes, it was going to happen?

Mr. McCrae: I can give the honourable member the clear understanding that, contrary to anything else he might have heard about—I hear the expression back-room deals and those sorts of things said from time to time, not by the honourable member, but by others in this House—there has been nothing signed to this date, but there will be soon.

It cannot be soon enough to suit me because I think this is a very, very positive thing for Manitoba and actually for Canada, because this will help put our whole country on the map. For Manitobans especially, the positive outcomes we can look for, my wish is that we move right along with this. It will be happening fairly shortly without more detail than that, just soon, very soon, but nothing has been signed to this point.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Chairperson, I normally should resist and I know we want to get into Mental Health, but I do feel that I ought to respond very briefly to the minister's unbridled enthusiasm towards the SmartHealth proposition. I remind the minister, he was not the Minister of Health during the negotiation of a recent contract of in the excess of \$4 million that was negotiated by his predecessor in cabinet, in which the contract itself was to make us a

world leader and a Canadian-wide leader in a technology, that Manitobans were going to be trained and they were going to take that information and that knowledge and they were going to spread it around Canada and the rest of the world. That was in the contract.

The contract was designed with a series of deliverables, a modular delivery system, whereby certain aspects would not go forward. That contract was also ballyhooed as a contract that would save something in the order of \$45 million to \$65 million—undoubtedly, \$45 million to \$65 million—and Manitobans' investment was a mere \$4 million plus \$800,000 in expenses tax free. For that, we were going to become world leaders, and no deliverable would go ahead unless it was examined by a committee. We all know, Mr. Chairperson, that was a failure. The Premier admitted it was a failure, that the deliverables did not deliver, that it was nowhere near the realization.

So forgive us, Mr. Chairperson, for being a bit skeptical, just a trifle skeptical when the minister comes forward and announces \$100-million investment to save \$200 million. To go back to the proposal, actually the initial 10-year plan was a \$200-million investment to save somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$500 million. So the minister will have to contain his enthusiasm and have to recognize that given our experience with that most recent effort of the government to become a world-class leader in health care, we are a tad bit skeptical, and I think rightly so for the good of the public of Manitoba. For the citizens in Manitoba it is our duty and our right to be very inquiring as to this other venture that is being embarked upon by this government.

The minister may be right. It may be the be-all and the end-all and it may achieve everything that they are designed to achieve, but it will not go unquestioned and it will not go without examination, which is rightly our role of members on this side of the House. We will continue to review, if only to protect the integrity of the purse of Manitoba and the public and the future of health care in Manitoba.

So I just wanted to put that on the record—and I am sure the minister will respond—that there is very good

reason for members on this side of the House and all Manitobans to be inquiring of the initiatives undertaken by this government in this regard.

Mr. McCrae: I hesitate to respond because I know honourable members want to get to other topics this evening. Sometimes though you just cannot let something be left on the record without a brief response. I know the honourable member will not let me prolong this too long because I know he wants to get on.

I heard what was said by the Premier on this topic and the honourable member has not characterized that correctly at all. We will leave the Premier's words to stand on their own. I thought they were very well chosen. I thought they summed up the situation. They in no way acknowledged a failure of policy or anything of the kind. There is a certain view that large numbers of members of the public took of that particular arrangement, and I think the Premier acknowledged that many, many Manitobans did indeed have that view. I think he expressed his feeling that it was unfortunate that that was the way it was viewed.

* (2130)

There were some things that came out of all of that that were necessary to look into. There are hundreds of staff at St. Boniface Hospital and at Health Sciences Centre who have put body and soul into that project. It ought not to be left unsaid that this did not happen, because those people put so much of themselves into this. Whatever one thinks about APM or Connie Curran or all of that, you cannot deny that our fellow Manitobans did so very, very much as part of that project. That is the untold story here, and the reason it is untold is the honourable member would not let it be told or because it was not interesting enough or something. The fact is many hundreds of my fellow Manitobans made gut-wrenching decisions and made that kind of input into project improvement teams that indeed make the care of patients at those two hospitals improved and more efficient. That was an important thing to do, politically not popular, granted. That is what I believe the Premier (Mr. Filmon) was talking about. However, I would not want to do like the honourable member and put words in the Premier's

mouth. His words are on the record. They are there, and there is nothing the honourable member can say, nor I, that can make those words any more clear than what they already were.

Yes, I hear what the honourable member is saying, and I think that the SmartHealth proposal and the partnership that we have in that proposal will indeed lead us to conclude when it is all said and done that it was the right thing to do, but I have no doubt along the way there will be detractors, for whatever reasons. Unfortunately, political reasons get in the way of good health policy reasons sometimes, and they take control of the agenda. I do my best to control that but unfortunately sometimes those kinds of agendas can overtake whatever my efforts might be.

I accept that. I wish the department, SmartHealth and all of the people involved on the advisory committees the very, very best as we approach what should be perhaps an even pleasant opportunity to improve vastly our health care system here in Manitoba. I hope I will be there to be judged at the appropriate time.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Before we proceed, honourable member for Kildonan, I am deducing that it is the will of the committee at this point to stand down item 21.2.(c) Health Information Systems and 2.(d) Facilities Development and proceed with 3. Community and Mental Health Services. Is that correct?

Mr. Chomiak: That is correct.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): That is the will of the committee.

Mr. McCrae: I am willing, Mr. Chairperson, and I would like to introduce Mr. John Ross, Manager of Mental Health Services, to the committee this evening.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I assume that what we will be doing, just by way of clarification, we will probably be going through 21.3.(f) Chief Provincial Psychiatrist; 3.(g) Adult Mental Health Services; 21, 3.(h) Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services; 3.(j) Brandon Mental Health Centre and 3.(k) Selkirk Mental Health

Centre and probably pass those tonight and then move on and move back. So we will probably need leave to go through that. That is what I anticipate we will be doing.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): So you will be addressing your questions then commencing at 21.3.(f) Chief Provincial Psychiatrist?

Mr. Chomiak: I believe so. Yes, that is correct. We will just go through all those and we will pass them tonight, and then mental health will be done tonight. So we will go through all those.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Then is it the will of the committee, the honourable member for Kildonan, to by-pass items (a) Administration, (b) Program Development, (c) Home Care, (d) Winnipeg Operations, (e) Rural and Northern Operations at this time?

An Honourable Member: That is correct.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): That is the will of committee and the honourable Minister of Health? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Radcliffe): Good. Please proceed.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, just by way of understanding, is Mr. Toews still involved in this area of the department, or is he now exclusively on child health?

Mr. McCrae: The assistant deputy minister responsible for Mental Health Services is Sue Hicks, and she is with us this evening. Mr. Toews said to us the other day that some 80 percent of his work was with the Children and Youth Secretariat and 20 percent with the department, and that 20 percent now has to do with strategic planning and not with Mental Health Services.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I just wanted to clarify the arrangement. We are into a new

departmental structure with respect to the Community and Mental Health Services, and I will probably deal with that at a later date when we go back to that particular appropriation.

I guess I wanted to commence by just a quick look back to the Health of Manitoba's Children on page 55. We did not directly deal with the mental health issue when we dealt with this item, but I think that it bears repeating the two statistics that are quoted on page 55, and the first is that 18 percent to 30 percent of children aged zero to 18 have mental health problems requiring intervention, and secondly, 3 percent of this group experience severe psychiatric disorders.

There are recommendations for integration of the government's initiatives in terms of child and adolescent health with the healthy child plan. I wonder if the minister has anything he wishes to add in terms of the approach, given the very dramatic effect on these statistics we have seen before in other reports, given the effect this has on the overall approach to child health.

* (2140)

Mr. McCrae: Certainly we would agree with any emphasis placed on the mental health of our children in the report on the health of Manitoba children. I think we are in a good position to do that, not that we have no room for more work or some improvement, but we have distinguished ourselves here in Manitoba in the area of mental health services for all the age groups. We are making very significant progress.

Not all the steps were easy, but there seems to be quite a lot of support for the things that are happening in Manitoba where we are able to diversify services, where we are able to decentralize services. Goodness sakes there are people in far-flung regions of Manitoba that are or will be receiving services they never dreamed of having in those locations previously. That is a very positive thing to say, and it is an even more positive thing to deliver on. We are in the process of doing that.

You would think that being a Health minister was not that much fun, but there are times when one visits in various regions of our province and you get a pretty

positive welcome. It very often has to do with our performance or our initiatives in the area of mental health delivery. In rural and northern Manitoba virtually nothing in the past was there, virtually nothing, I say, but today we are making strong advances in areas outside the city areas of Manitoba.

Child and adolescent subcommittees of regional mental health councils have sought and received approval for more than doubling the number of community mental health workers for children and adolescents. Once all positions have been filled and deployed, there will be four child and adolescent workers in the Thompson Region, three new positions, where once there was one, now there are four; three in Norman Region, and there is one new position in that case; doubled in the Parkland Region to four from two; in the Westman Region five from zero, all of these are new positions; four in the Central Region where there were once two; a doubling in the Eastman Region, four from two, for a total of 28 positions.

An Honourable Member: Is that child and adolescent?

Mr. McCrae: This is child and adolescent mental health workers.

In Brandon—and the reason Brandon gets singled out is Brandon and Selkirk have, for a hundred or so years, been centres for mental health service delivery, but the delivery mechanisms are changing to meet the needs of mental health care consumers. It is the right thing to do.

Coming from Brandon, Mr. Chairperson, I can tell you it is not always easy to make change, but I am telling you these changes are appreciated by mental health patients and by those who speak for them, their advocate organizations like the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Manitoba Schizophrenia Society, the Manitoba Association for Anxiety Disorders, the Manitoba Association for Depression and Manic Depression.

The current child and adolescent mental health program housed at the Brandon Mental Health Centre will move to a free-standing child and adolescent

mental health centre which will serve western Manitoba. Services will include 10 inpatient beds, day treatment, school and an outpatient department. A community mental health worker for children and adolescents will be deployed to provide services in Brandon and the surrounding communities. Hiring and deployment are nearing completion in Westman and Central and is in the process in Parkland. Construction planning for the free-standing child and adolescent centre is at the functional program review stage.

In the city of Winnipeg, the Mental Health Division has completed an amalgamation of child and adolescent resources. It consists of an acute treatment and consultation team, a psychiatric component of the Child Guidance Clinic and educational support services and children's forensic services under the auspices of the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre's community Child and Adolescent Treatment services program. This also includes eight new Child and Adolescent Treatment staff for Winnipeg.

So it is not like nothing is happening. This is all good news. The other side of it, though, is the part that unfortunately we have brought to the public's attention. This news that I have just put on the record is too good, Mr. Chairperson, for it to last for more than a day and that is the trouble with this, but it lasts for much more than a day for the people who need these services. Those are the ones who need the care.

When psychiatric beds in Winnipeg are closed to make dollars available for these kinds of more appropriate services, well, you know the kinds of attention that gets. It is nice to check out the Child and Adolescent Treatment Centres and talk to the staff there and see the difference that we are able to make in people's lives. It makes it all seem worthwhile after all is said and done.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, is the minister able to provide us with any kind of an inventory or menu or list of programs available to children both in urban regions and rural regions? There must be an inventory or a list of services and programs available.

Mr. McCrae: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, we can make that available for the honourable member.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the department recently opened up some beds at the psychiatric centre for adolescents. Can the minister indicate what the status is of those beds?

Mr. McCrae: There were eight beds opened. They remain open and will remain open until the end of June at which time a decision will be made about what to do at that point depending on the traffic, the usage of the beds. They are there. The flexibility was there at a time when it was needed. They are open. They may close at that time, because they were only opened on a temporary basis to deal with a heavy period.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, if, for instance, they close at the end of June because of a decreased demand, is the plan to therefore have the flexibility in the system so that they could be opened on short notice in September if conditions warrant, or October or whatever?

Mr. McCrae: It is not our hope to be opening and closing and opening and closing beds, but the honourable member recognizes, I know, that we are in a period of transition. It is a good thing those beds are there or have been there because of that transition time.

When people understand the range of services that are being made available I see less emphasis being placed on the acute sector. It is my hope that we will not have to open those beds again, and that would be the hope of people who speak for mental health patients who would like to see more appropriate types of services available. More and more they are available, and now the challenge is to ensure that everybody knows they are available so they will make use of the alternative more appropriate services.

There is no question but that acute psychiatric beds will remain a necessity for some cases, and we have to have the right mix of acute and community services available. So as we are moving in this transition time we have opened beds. It is our hope that we do not have to do that again, but if we do, that option is there for us.

Mr. Chomiak: Earlier on the minister indicated he would provide an inventory of programs available.

Will I have access to that before we complete sitting tonight or not?

Mr. McCrae: I do not think I can get that for the honourable member tonight. However, if there are questions that flow from the production of that information, we would be happy to obtain the answers to those questions for the honourable member.

Mr. Chomiak: I appreciate that. The Children's Forensic Services, the acute treatment consultation team and the child and adolescent psychiatric component of the Child Guidance Clinic and St. James Educational Support Services were transferred to the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre, and that was part of an announcement made approximately a year ago, if memory serves me correctly. Can the minister outline for me what the status is at the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre? What component of programs and compendium of programs and continuing programs are offered, the varying degrees for children and how individuals access those programs?

* (2150)

Mr. McCrae: The Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre is the centre that the honourable member might be most familiar with, and it now has a community arm, if you like, located at Maryland and Broadway. I do not know if the honourable member has been over there. I have. He should go over there. It is a very important additional service. The traditional services at the MATC have been the school programming, more higher acute-care psychiatric-type services. The services provided at the new community Adolescent Treatment Centre at Broadway and Maryland offers the kinds of services one would expect from a more community-oriented service delivery facility, as opposed to an institution.

A look is worth a thousand words; unfortunately, words are failing me here. I have been over there. I was very impressed by the staff people with whom I spoke, committed to a different culture for the delivery of mental health services. The way of accessing the two different kind of services is—both of them are accessible through the traditional or regular intake process.

Mr. Chomiak: Can the minister outline for me what the regular intake process entails?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Ross is giving a little extra attention to that last question for us.

The honourable member asked a few days ago about nutrition services in Manitoba, the review and the inventory of services available in Winnipeg. I know the honourable member has a copy of this, but I will bet he does not have one that is bound as nicely as this one. I just want him to have this, the honourable member. I know that his usual channels get a quality product to him, but they are probably not as nicely bound as this one. So I would like to, with my high regards, turn this over to the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

I have another piece of information here for the honourable member. He asked, on June 8th, questions about the speech language pathology services provided throughout the province and funded by the departments of Health, Education and Training, and Family Services. I think because there was funding from more than one department, I undertook to get this information for him.

We have services funded by the Health Sciences Centre, the St. Boniface General Hospital, Deer Lodge, Seven Oaks, Riverview, Concordia, Victoria, Morden, and Westman through the Brandon General Hospital.

Services are funded by the Department of Education and Training. Every school division provides speech language pathology services for school children. Funded by the Department of Family Services are the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities, the St. Amant Centre, the Parklands Region through the Swan Valley Hospital, the Interlake Region, the Westman Region through the Brandon General Hospital, and Thompson.

* (2200)

The honourable member asked about the intake process for adolescent treatment. For the regular program, the application is made to the intake team at the Tecumseh Avenue site. For the newer community program on Maryland, there is an eight-person

treatment team there and the intake there comes from family, from the school, or from other services.

The youth forensic requirements, the intake for that is from the courts or the corrections system, the Child Guidance Clinic's psychiatrists make references, and they are generally referred through the Child Guidance Clinic intake process. Lastly, the acute treatment consultation team, the intake is done through their intake person.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, do I take from that that something relatively new is the ability to sort of access the system through the community intake process? In other words, someone could literally walk in off the street and access treatment that way.

Mr. McCrae: The main difference that I would like to point to is the way and the venue for the delivery of these services.

An Honourable Member: Venue or menu?

Mr. McCrae: Venue. I say venue because it has always made it a little harder, I suggest, for mental health consumers to access care simply because there is an embarrassing stigma associated with this. The more that mental health problems can be seen like other health problems the better, because I do not care which family you are from or which neighbourhood you are from, statistics show that a high number of people, a large number of people, at one time or another, need these sorts of services. It is the community-based sort of aspect of it. You can access it from your home. You do not have to be seen to be taken out of your community because you have this problem.

I will bet you everybody in this Chamber knows someone or knows of someone who really would feel differently about accessing mental health services if they were delivered in a different way. I feel very strongly about this. My predecessor, Mr. Orchard, felt very strongly about this. The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) agrees, I am sure, and so does everybody else around here that we have really started to see the light in Manitoba.

No one is gloating or bragging, but we should gloat and brag a little bit about the fact that we are starting to see the light. That is the point I am getting at. Having seen that, we will now know that there are new directions still that we can pursue that can make the lives of our fellow Manitobans, young and old alike, but certainly young in the case of this question, far more meaningful.

The honourable member knows and you, Mr. Chairman, know how much time can be lost through a poor start. You can get people on the right track and it can make so much difference not only to those individual human beings but to every person with whom they come in contact with for the rest of their lives. All of their relationships will be improved should the right type of assistance be made available at the right time in a person's life. I think it is the right way to go.

It is a friendly sort of atmosphere in this place that I am talking about. The staff from my visit there and my experience with them is very much understanding of what we are trying to achieve through a difference in approach to service delivery. They are basically with the program as it were, and it is really nice to see. I know that their results will more than likely be better, but probably also more people will access help at an early stage when it can do the most good.

The committee recessed at 10:06 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 10:19 p.m.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I have a whole series of questions that are not necessarily co-ordinated but dealing with this general area. I appreciate the fact the minister has been very informative and helpful, and I hope we can go through these last two hours and cover as much territory as possible to deal with these specific questions which are informational only in order to try to make best use of the time.

I just wanted to turn to some of the working groups. There are the Child and Adolescent Mental Health co-ordinating committee, the mental health impact evaluation advisory committee. Are those two bodies still functioning, and what are, briefly, their roles?

* (2220)

Mr. McCrae: Yes, the co-ordinating committee is a Winnipeg committee, and it was struck to follow through on the announcement of the development of the eighth member team, and that has been done, and their mandate continues. They continue to develop services and approaches to service that would be appropriate to the needs that exist in the city.

The other committee being referred to by the honourable member, the research is being steered by an intersectoral advisory committee with representation from consumers, direct service providers, the Winnipeg Regional Council, self-help groups and Manitoba Health.

Overall, the response of the mental health community to the evaluation research process itself has been very positive. Baseline information has been collected through surveys with, first, mental health service consumers and their families and informal caregivers; secondly, self-help groups; third, key stakeholders and; fourth, mental health service providers.

Work is now underway to develop the framework for long-term evaluation of the impact of major reform initiatives in the mental health, acute-care crisis response sector in Winnipeg.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, this announcement and these studies, will they be made public?

Mr. McCrae: It is in everybody's interests that the product of the work be made public and it will be done so. The work has been to collect baseline data before the reforms and baseline data after the reforms so that appropriate comparisons can be made so that we can evaluate how well we have improved the situation and also get a feel for if further changes are noted or indicated.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, is the working group co-ordinating committee of Mental Health Services still in operation as well? Is the working group co-ordination of Mental Health Services still in operation?

Mr. McCrae: Yes. The function is, for the most part, a trouble-shooting or problem-solving effort and work continues.

Mr. Chomiak: Would that mean that, for example, when a requirement or need was seen to perhaps open up the eight beds at the psychiatric unit, this group would have been involved in the recommendation or the process to determine whether or not those eight beds ought to be opened?

Mr. McCrae: I think it needs to be differentiated. The child and adolescent co-ordinating committee had to do with the Child and Adolescent Treatment Centre satellite, as I call it, the new eight-bed facility. The other has more to do with the other part of the mental health, the adult part of the Mental Health Services system.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, last year during the Estimates, the minister gave us an up-to-date assessment of what was happening in terms of the crisis stabilization units, the safe houses, the assertive case managers and mobile crisis units.

Can the minister give us data on those particular operations?

Mr. McCrae: There is one thing I need clarification on. It is not this latest question of the honourable member. We are getting that information together.

The honourable member asked about shared services, this was on a previous occasion, and an intersectoral group. Was he talking about something within the department, or was he talking about the urban shared services?

An Honourable Member: Urban shared services.

Mr. McCrae: We will be making that information available now that we have that clarification.

Mr. Chairman, I am going to deal as briefly as I can with the advent of crisis stabilization units in Manitoba. The honourable member's question I think talks about range of services made available. I have an eight-page answer for him, which I think he would appreciate if it was reproduced for him and made available to him. A lot of things have happened. They are not all big things but taken together they are pretty significant.

I would like though to refer to the following crisis stabilization units. The Salvation Army, with a total of 14 crisis stabilization beds from April 1 to December 31 of '94, had 581 people admitted to that facility, with the average length of stay being just over five and a half days, and the facility has been at or near full capacity during that period of time.

Sara Riel has eight crisis stabilization beds in St. Boniface. In 1994-95, 339 people were admitted to that facility with the average length of stay being three days. The facility has been operating at or near full capacity.

The Mobile Crisis Unit of the Salvation Army—this unit provides crisis intervention and short-term follow-up services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Between April and December of '94, that is just seven months, 4,279 contacts were made with consumers and a total of 848 individuals have received services.

* (2230)

With respect to intensive case management, eight regional staff are employed in a case management service targeted to people with severe and persistent major mental illnesses who have difficulty living in the community. Each worker has a full caseload of 15 clients, and a total of approximately 111 clients are currently being served. This is intensive case management.

With respect to options in supports and housing program of the Canadian Mental Health Association for the Winnipeg region, there has been a significant increase in funding to allow the program to increase the number of persons served from 25 to 110. The program now has 125 participants, 115 of those are active participants and 10 extended-support people, and there

is a waiting list of 20 prospective participants. Obviously it appears we are on the right track with these services. It is really remarkable the number of people who are receiving service. As I say, the true answer to the honourable member's question would take quite a while to get through, and I think it might be better if I just produced some documentary response for the honourable member.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that. I would appreciate the documentation for information purposes just to gauge the developments in terms of the services offered. Can the minister talk briefly perhaps about the housing options that have been developed in the last year or so?

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

Mr. McCrae: The efforts in this area have certainly been significant too, in areas like Winnipeg, Swan River, Dauphin, Brandon, the Interlake Region. I do not have any statistical numbers for the honourable member on this point in front of me, but essentially, and without dragging this out, I had the pleasure of having lunch at Sara Riel a week or so ago and being filled in by the staff there on the various options that organization is engaged in.

What it is essentially is helping mental health care recipients to find the independence they need through their own housing arrangements. So this would involve a worker being involved with a patient to make the necessary arrangements for your damage deposit or your rent or whatever is required, location, making sure that settlement happens. It is a support that is there for people living with mental illness. I think I can speak positively about it without bringing forward statistical data at this time, but that is the basic concept. It is to assist people to become more independent and empowering them to help them make decisions of their own.

Mr. Chomiak: Last year we talked about the expansion by Canadian Mental Health Association, Winnipeg, and Friends housing for 50 to 60 units and 20 additional subsidized units. Are those on stream?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, sir.

Mr. Chomiak: Does the minister have stats on how many adult acute care beds are presently available in Winnipeg?

Mr. McCrae: I can give the honourable member some numbers which reflect the before-reform numbers and the after-reform numbers and the change plus or minus.

The Health Sciences Centre, with respect to adult acute psychiatric beds: before reform, there were 76; after reform, 65, for a net reduction of 11. With respect to forensic beds: there were zero before reform; there will be 14 after reform and that would be an additional 14 forensic psychiatric beds. Child and adolescent beds: before, six; after, 10, for four additional.

At St. Boniface, adult acute psychiatric beds: before, 48; after, 24, for a reduction of 24. Adolescent beds remain the same at St. Boniface Hospital, before and after, at seven.

At Misericordia Hospital, adult acute psychiatric beds: before reform, 21; after reform, zero, for a net reduction of 21.

Grace General Hospital, adult acute: before, 40; after, 20, a reduction of 20. Adult extended remains the same at 20, before and after.

At Seven Oaks: unchanged, before, 20; after, 20; psychogeriatrics: before, 10; after, 10.

At Victoria General: unchanged at 20.

Now in the next few years, we will be opening acute psychiatric beds in Dauphin, Brandon, Portage, The Pas and Thompson, and child and adolescent beds as well in Brandon. In Brandon there will be an additional 25.

Now these numbers are separate and apart from changes at Selkirk or at Brandon Mental Health Centre.

At Brandon General there will be 25 adult acute beds and also at Brandon will be 10 child and adolescent acute beds. At Dauphin General there will be an additional 10 adult acute beds. At Portage General there will be eight additional adult acute beds. At The

Pas there will be eight additional adult acute beds and at Thompson 10 additional. When I say "additional," I mean from zero.

* (2240)

These are all new services in those areas, and they are acute psychiatric beds, but they also complement other increases in services in the communities of Brandon, Dauphin, Portage, The Pas and Thompson.

So when all things are considered in terms of acute care psychiatric beds, where there were 268, there will be 271, which is a net increase, not a decrease, but an increase of three psychiatric beds province-wide, acute ones. They are obviously in different places. That is where the patients are and that is what I support.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for those statistics.

On page 60 of the Supplementary Estimates book it indicates that the Department of Health deals with approximately 7,000 clients in the provincially administered community mental health program. Does that 7,000 clients mean 7,000 contacts? What does that statistic say, firstly? Secondly, do we have similar statistics for child and adolescent?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, we will obtain the numbers respecting child and adolescent. I think they will be available so whatever information we have in that regard we can share.

As it says on page 60, 7,000 clients, 3,000 patients of the mental health centres, so I am assuming the other 4,000 would be other services delivered in whatever way including in the community. Mr. Ross is nodding his head, so I think that is correct.

It might be of interest to the honourable member to know that there are a large number of community cases. We are dealing with cases in the community now, and in '93-94, for example, 922 in the Central Region, 799 in Eastman, 934 in Interlake—these are cases seen during the year—Norman, 680; Parklands, 732; Thompson, 273; Westman, 913; and in Winnipeg, 2,382.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, so those stats between the 7,000 and the 3,000 in terms of adult mental health services basically outline the total clients in terms of the province of Manitoba.

Mr. McCrae: These numbers do not reflect those people served by mental health agencies. These ones are served directly by government personnel.

Mr. Chomiak: I see. So they would not reflect the statistics from the Sara Riel Crisis Stabilization or the Salvation Army Crisis Stabilization units. The minister is saying no.

Mr. McCrae: No, they do not, and actually what we need to do is make a total compilation from the agencies and from the government to get a true picture. I think it would be useful actually to do that because —[interjection] Well, but it also demonstrates the amount to which we are relying on those agencies who have provided pretty good services.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, is the minister undertaking to provide me with those figures?

Mr. McCrae: Not in the next couple of days. That is one of those soon-answers, I think. This little point alone takes me back to our last discussion on the health information network and says to me that if we had that, we could probably get the information for the honourable member sooner.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, that is an interesting point. Will that mean that the Sara Riels of the world and the Salvation Army of the world will also be an entry point and will be tied into the process? If so, has that been—I will ask that tomorrow, because it is an interesting point that the minister has raised.

Mr. McCrae: Certainly, sir, from the point of view of the Community and Mental Health Services' staff who are here, they would be quite enthusiastic about that eventuality, because think how much they would be assisted in doing their jobs with that kind of information available.

Whether it is actually where it stands in terms of timing over the course of the five-year project, I do not

know today, but certainly there is lots of reason to think that information like this, which could be part of such a system, would be of great use to health planners and policy-makers and maybe others too.

Mr. Chomiak: Psychogeriatric patients are obviously, demographically, becoming a larger proportion of the population. I wonder if the minister might outline what initiatives are being undertaken in this area.

Mr. McCrae: In addition, Mr. Chairperson, to the information we will be making available to the honourable member in that eight-page document that I referred to a while ago, I would tell him that in place in the Central Region, in terms of community-based psychogeriatric services, the three-person community psychogeriatric team developed in 1989 remains in operation.

In terms of what is in implementation in the Central Region with respect to community-based services, two staff persons will be added to complement existing adult day programs in the region, allowing them to provide service to cognitively impaired seniors who require more intensive supervision and assistance with personal care. This respite will allow family caregivers to cope with continuing to provide care in the home. In addition, supported housing will add to the range of residential alternatives to prevent unnecessary institutionalization.

* (2250)

With respect to institutional-based services in the Central Region, there is a total of 18 long-term residents of the Brandon Mental Health Centre who have been relocated to two personal care homes in the Central Region and a registered psychiatric nurse position has been transferred to one of the facilities to provide ongoing care to these relocated individuals as well as specialized input for the other residents of the facility.

Additional geropsychiatric consultation has been made available and, in the implementation in the Central Region, with respect to institutional-based services, an additional RPN position will be transferred to the second personal care home.

In the Eastman Region, with respect to community-based services, there is a three-person community psychogeriatric team that has been put in place and an additional geropsychiatric consultation has been made available. There are no institutional-based services in the Eastman Region.

In the Interlake Region, on the community-based scene, a steering committee is currently preparing to implement plans for a three-person community psychogeriatric team to begin operating in this region within the next six months.

With respect to institutional-based services in the Interlake Region, a review of psychogeriatric services at Selkirk Mental Health Centre is currently underway.

In Norman, a community mental health worker specializing in psychogeriatrics has been selected. This staffperson will provide direct case management and consultation services. There are no institutional-based services in the Norman Region which provide itinerant services on a quarterly basis.

In Parklands Region, there is a three-person community psychogeriatric team been put in place. There are a lot of things happening in this particular region, a lot of activity, a fair amount of enthusiasm when I visited in that region. In implementation, two staffpersons are going to be added to complement existing adult day programs in the region, allowing them to provide service to cognitively impaired seniors who require more intensive supervision and assistance with personal care. This respite will allow family caregivers to cope with continuing to provide care in the home.

Supported housing will add to the range of residential alternatives to prevent unnecessary institutionalization. With respect to institutional-based services there have been none in the past in the Parklands Region, but a total of 10 long-term residents of Brandon Mental Health Centre have been relocated to a personal care home in the region and a registered psychiatric nurse position has been transferred to the facility to provide ongoing care to these relocated individuals, as well as specialized input for the other residents of the facility.

Additional geropsychiatric consultation has been made available.

As yet, there are no community-based or institutional-based services in the Thompson Region but, as I have set out many times, there will be.

In the Westman Region, a five-person community psychogeriatric team has been put in place. Additional geropsychiatric consultation has been made available. Two staffpersons will be added to complement existing adult day programs in the region, allowing them to provide service to cognitively impaired seniors who require more intensive supervision and assistance with personal care. This respite will allow family caregivers to cope with continuing to provide care in the home. Supported housing will add to the range of residential alternatives to prevent unnecessary institutionalization.

With respect to the institutional-based aspects of mental health services in the Westman Region, relocation of psychogeriatric inpatients of BMHC is proceeding on schedule. Of an initial total of 143, 33 patients over the age of 65 remain awaiting placement to a more appropriate residential environment.

In most cases this relocation has resulted in returning people to their regions of origin, and in implementation, a 10-bed psychogeriatric rehabilitation unit will be located at the Brandon General Hospital and will provide service to residents of Westman, Parklands and part of the Central Region who require a longer-term hospital stay to complete a program of treatment.

Do not forget the Rideau Park psychogeriatric centre in the city of Brandon. That is something that the previous government, as I recall, put into place, and I think it remains always up to capacity at about 100 beds.

In the Winnipeg region, the community-based side, the Winnipeg psychogeriatric service co-ordination project is being hosted by Riverview Health Centre. A three-person psychogeriatric case management team has been selected and will begin operations in the fall of 1995. Additional geropsychiatric consultation has been made available.

With respect to implementation, as well as demonstrating the effect of case management with difficult cases in the Winnipeg area, the project is intended to implement a method of co-ordinating existing services within Winnipeg which are a combination of institutional and community based. I am sorry for the length of the answer, but I think it does cover all the bases with respect to psychogeriatric issues.

Mr. Chomiak: I appreciate that information. Just turning to the issue of registered psychiatric nurses, I wonder if the minister could outline for me what the status is of the program at the Brandon University.

Mr. McCrae: Progress, Mr. Chairperson. My father always used to tell me that if you are ever in a committee and you do not know what else to report, always report progress, but I do know what to report in this case.

An Honourable Member: Progress.

Mr. McCrae: Yes. It is better than the other, believe me, progress is. In Brandon of course this whole matter of psychiatric nurse training in Manitoba has some history. The honourable member may be aware of it. At one time there was training for psychiatric nursing in three sites—Portage la Prairie, Selkirk and Brandon.

Little by little I guess the previous New Democratic government closed down the training at Portage, and we have moved the training in Selkirk over to Brandon. These were the right things to do in my view. The Liberal Party may want to review this again, I do not know, but I think basically, up until now at least, the Liberal Party has been working with us on this, and we have brought a significant infusion of capital dollars to the Brandon site of psychiatric nursing.

I invite honourable members to look into the opportunity of having a look at the facility there. It really is a beautiful, old building that has been beautifully restored. It is a good place for training for psychiatric nurses. However, we are getting into baccalaureate training for psychiatric nurses, and this area has been, perhaps not surprisingly, quite a

transition from a two-year diploma program to a four-year baccalaureate program. It is my hope that we can finalize arrangements with Brandon University to bring this about. But I understand we have made this progress: students in the program, last year's students, are under the proposals that we are still finalizing, but things are looking a little better today. We have good days and not so good days in the discussions, but they are coming along.

The students who were enrolled in first year last year—or just finishing I guess their first year—will have a year's credit go to their baccalaureate training. Under the new program we will be taking in a second class of first-year people. That is what is happening in preparation for a baccalaureate program.

These matters are not simple; they are complicated. They involve issues related to curriculum, issues related to credentials of teaching staff, and they are all important issues, because they deal not only with the future of psychiatric nursing but they deal with real people who are there and already working and teaching nursing students, and it also involves real students who are caught in the middle of all of this as we attempt to resolve all the issues.

* (2300)

There have been some recent developments that give us a little bit more reason to be hopeful about a positive and long-term result. I personally obviously see Brandon as the site for psychiatric nursing. I also see Brandon as a site for nursing training. That was very unfortunate what happened with respect to the collaborative program at Brandon General Hospital.

I am getting off psychiatric nursing, so I better get back on track, but I would hate to see that sort of thing happen twice. In fact I still hope against tall odds that we have not totally lost the training program for baccalaureate nurses in collaboration with Brandon General Hospital. I do not have an update on that.

That is where we are at right now. Not all the dots are on the i's and all the crosses on the t's yet, but we may well be making some progress in the direction that I would like to see us go.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, are we targeting therefore for September of '95?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, we are, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I know it is still very preliminary, but does the minister have any idea what the numbers are in terms of the class size?

Mr. McCrae: The proposal is that there be room for 50, but we do not know if we will have 50 this fall.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the minister announced last year a two-year plan to offer psychiatric training to general practitioners, I guess. Can the minister give us an update as to the status of that program?

Mr. McCrae: While we await an evaluation from the University of Manitoba, there are certainly some very good outcomes as a result of that program. There were six doctors enrolled in that program, five from outside Winnipeg, one from Winnipeg.

They have all completed successfully the course of study. They have returned to their communities and are now providing enhanced services in those communities. They are consulting with other caregivers on psychiatric issues in their communities. Outside Winnipeg, they are located in Gillam, Thompson, Roblin, Steinbach and Dauphin.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, is the minister therefore saying because of the experience they are considering an expansion of the program?

Mr. McCrae: We are simply, at this time, waiting for the evaluation from the University of Manitoba before any further steps are taken, but meanwhile we have six communities enhanced by this program including Winnipeg.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, in terms of the evaluation of the program, is the evaluation of the effectiveness of the program, the teaching methodology or the establishment of a permanent program? What does the evaluation entail?

Mr. McCrae: We expect to be receiving from the University of Manitoba a detailed answer to the question that the honourable member has asked. I am interested in the answer myself. So we will know as a result of that just where we can take that program from there.

Obviously, the doctors I am sure who have gone through this feel that their abilities as practising physicians in predominantly rural Manitoba communities have been enhanced by this, otherwise they would not have gone into it in the first place, I am sure. I am glad that they did. I congratulate them for their initiative in doing so. It is my hope that we will receive a report from the University of Manitoba, that we can then share it with the honourable member and see what we should do in consequence of that report from the University of Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, one of the areas under consideration, as I understand it, under the MMA agreement was a ceiling or a limiting of the ability of psychiatrists to do psychoanalysis. Is the minister aware of any moves in that regard?

Mr. McCrae: I think the best thing I could hope for is that whoever provided the honourable member with that information would include me on his or her mailing list.

Mr. Chomiak: It was via telephone call, and it was one of the many late-night phone calls that I get on a regular basis. I am sure the minister can relate to that. Do we have an update on the rural stress line?

Mr. McCrae: We are reviewing the performance over the last few months. I mean, it has only been going since last December. While I think you have got to be reasonable and give anything like that an opportunity to get going, we also, in our evaluation of this particular service, want to bear in mind the actual performance of the first few months in addition to how it works in conjunction with other crisis lines and services that exist in the province, so our examination is not complete in that area at this time.

* (2310)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the minister has indicated that he has on his desk or very shortly will have on his desk the recommendations of the northern and rural health committee concerning the governance of rural and northern regions. Can the minister indicate whether or not Mental Health Services agencies and bodies will be integrated into the regional plans?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, they will.

Mr. Chomiak: While I appreciate that there are still issues concerning governance that obviously will come up, will the mental health aspect be integrated with the representative bodies or will they exist as separate entities?

Mr. McCrae: I am not really sure I understand the way the honourable member has put that question. We want to see mental health services integrated in terms of the pure service delivery. Decision making about mental health services should therefore also be a collaborative approach in the various regions. Does that answer the honourable member's question?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, I believe that was a good answer to a poorly framed question. I appreciate the minister's response.

I guess one of the concerns that has been expressed to me is the hope that community-based programming is not lost in the entire process. One would assume that is integral to the entire *raison d'être* of the regional districts in general. I presume that is being looked after.

Mr. McCrae: Assuming the honourable member's question indicates his feelings and that of his party, I am happy to give him the assurance that we see community health services as a community-based issue in the future for a long, long time as exactly the path we should stay on. We have already, I think, demonstrated that it works. I guess no matter what the political future of our province, this is the way we will be headed until someone shows us it is the wrong way, and nobody has done that yet. Nobody is trying.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, the minister last year provided us with a list of nongovernment agencies that

are funded by the department in the mental health area. Would it be possible to obtain that information this year as well?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, we will be making that available.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, at one time there existed a mental health management information system. Does that system still exist?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, such an information base or system exists. However, Health staff suggest to me that its usefulness could be greatly enhanced if it was integrated into the general health information database system.

Mr. Chomiak: Somehow I anticipated that answer.

Mr. McCrae: I was not needing.

Mr. Chomiak: No, I just thought when I asked the question that is what I was—[interjection] But there does exist presently in the department a separate management system that deals with mental health, socioeconomic, et cetera, and other data?

Mr. McCrae: It does exist but in view of some of the changes it is not complete any more, because it existed as a consequence of the eight regions and the activity there by the department. It existed at Brandon Mental Health Centre, Selkirk Mental Health Centre, Eden Health Centre and the Health Sciences Centre, so we are not putting it forward as something that reflects the kind of up-to-date information that we think it should contain.

Mr. Chomiak: One of the real North American-wide problems amongst youth is youth suicide. If it is a problem amongst youth, it is further exacerbated and more acute in the aboriginal community as well. Are there any specific strategies, initiatives the department has launched to deal with youth suicide, both in general for the community at large and specifically for the aboriginal community?

Mr. McCrae: There is certainly no question but that this cause of death is a serious matter and a much more serious matter for aboriginal young people. That is

something we confirm from a Health department perspective. We provide mental health workers in our province with training in this matter, in suicide prevention, and that is with an emphasis for aboriginal communities that we serve.

* (2320)

The work of Dr. Postl's committee again signals the beginning of a new emphasis on this and other children's health issues. When Mr. Toews was here, the mental health issues related to the health of Manitoba's children were certainly on our part viewed as part of his mandate and that of his secretariat and will remain that way. I am not going to give that speech 8(a) again tonight, but the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) raised health issues again today in Question Period, health issues for aboriginal people. I do not know, he may have mentioned suicide. It certainly is an issue. He mentioned child deaths amongst aboriginal people being two and half times that of the rest of the population, and we know that suicide is one of the major causes of deaths amongst youths.

We accept that as a serious, serious challenge for us. There will be significant emphasis placed on that as an issue but especially by the Children and Youth Secretariat, and we have tough issues to get through in that. There are a lot of things that we will get through without too much problem in our consultations, but this is an area that troubles me, as the honourable member knows.

Mr. Chomiak: Within the child health strategy, if I recall correctly, we were talking about—there is a mandatory healthy child curriculum or a curriculum that deals with healthy child. I do not know if the curriculum contains something on suicide awareness or suicide signs or something along those lines, and I do not even know if it is necessarily appropriate, but it seems to me that given the scourge of this, it would be at least as important as something like AIDS awareness.

Again, one does not want to overburden the school system or the curriculum, but it seems to me it would be a valid inclusion within the context of that

curriculum, because that could reach a considerable amount of individuals who would not be reached in terms of that awareness, an awareness of the signs and awareness of the causes, et cetera, so I just throw that out as part of consideration.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, the honourable member touches on something that requires some discussion between us, I think, as colleagues in the House. It is a sensitive thing, there is no question about that. The suicide awareness issues, I do not know what is the right age to begin discussions of those sort of things, and yet you want to be early enough that you get a job done, you get a result.

I am interested though in breaking down suicide statistics and having a look at where, as opposed to the broader approach. I do not know that there is anything wrong. If there is nothing wrong with the approach the member is referring to, there would not be anything wrong with a universal approach to it, but I suspect if we broke down those statistics we would see higher levels of youth suicide in certain communities. I am very interested in going right after those areas and applying whatever resource is required and not just for the purpose of being able to demonstrate better statistics but for the purpose of saving a good portion of the problem, which means lives here, saving lives.

I would be interested in knowing from the department in due course the kind of strategies in the other departments involved that are being entertained for the purpose of proposal to government with regard to this and a few other issues. I have had one very graphically brought to my attention one day dealing with young children suffering from dental caries because of the bottle issue. There must be other things like that that could be brought to my attention that I just know a targeted approach could achieve a very, very significant result and impact. We could be very proud of very tangible results in those areas.

I know we are supposed to think about the whole population and we do that, but there are some areas where there is just a screaming requirement for attention. I want to respond in whatever time I have in this position or any other position of responsibility to those kinds of needs. Now that means co-operation

again and I am accused sometimes of being the one not co-operating. I will accept my share of responsibility, but I sure would like to see something done in those areas of highest need.

What better place to start. That was my criticism of the honourable former member for St. James, the leader of the Liberal Party, in his broad-based free breakfast approach. Somehow it does not work in today's fiscal environment, but I know we are spending enough on other things in some places that a free breakfast would be cheap when compared with the beneficial results.

There are a couple of areas where I just know the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and I could probably work closely in achieving some results. When I have a proposal, one of these days I may just come privately to the honourable member for Kildonan with a proposal that I can get his support for.

We can, the two of us, bring that to our colleagues in this House through the Estimates process a year, maybe two years down the road, and say, and this is what a little bit of co-operation was able to achieve. Nothing would give me more pleasure.

Mr. Chomiak: I look forward to that opportunity in the process. I just wanted to return to the Supplementary Estimates book and on page 63, it is indicated that there are 11 staff years under Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Surely that does not include all of the staff, including the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre, et cetera, and where do those staffing numbers show up?

Mr. McCrae: The staff year numbers the honourable member is looking at on page 63 represent totally or almost totally psychiatrists who are attached to Child Guidance Clinic or the youth forensic service plus administrative support for those personnel.

Anybody employed by MATC, which has its own board—MATC works very much like other hospitals so that would not show up here, nor would community mental health workers staff years in the regions. These 11 refer to the Child Guidance and youth forensic.

* (2330)

Mr. Chomiak: Where would the staff years for the Adolescent Treatment Centre as well as the community mental health workers show up in terms of the appropriations?

Mr. McCrae: That is one of the problems, I think, with the Estimates as they are printed. They do need a little bit of supplementary information to make them very clear.

For example, the MATC personnel are not civil servants. They would show up I guess in that part of the budget dealing with hospitals. So they do not really come under a heading of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. That is not as helpful as I would like it to be, but I suppose if we did it some other way, that might be a little misleading or confusing too. So I can understand why the honourable member needs to ask.

The regional staff appear in Winnipeg and Rural Operations, that is in subappropriation 21.3 (d) that you find staff like that.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for that information.

Under the Chief Provincial Psychiatrist, can the minister outline who is the Chief Provincial Psychiatrist?

Mr. McCrae: Dr. Hugh Andrew.

Mr. Chomiak: Where does the Chief Forensic Psychiatrist fit?

Mr. McCrae: Dr. Yaren is a member of the staff at Health Sciences Centre.

Mr. Chomiak: And he is also designated as the Chief Forensic Psychiatrist?

Mr. McCrae: Dr. Yaren is called the Chief Provincial Forensic Psychiatrist but does not seem to enjoy that official designation in these documents before us.

Mr. Chomiak: I am reading the objectives in the job description of the Chief Provincial Psychiatrist. It seems to me that he is the administrative head of the

department that deals with a lot of the activities that are entailed under legislation. Is his role totally and exclusively that of an administrative position?

Mr. McCrae: Dr. Yaren, if the honourable member looks on page 58—I am sorry, Dr. Andrew. If you look at the Activity Identification heading there, that is basically what Dr. Andrew does.

Mr. Chomiak: Does the minister have any data on the number of hearings handled by the Mental Health Review Board?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, I see the Mental Health Review Board—we will make available to the honourable member statistics relating to the work of the Mental Health Review Board.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the minister for providing me with that information. We have dealt with the items so expeditiously, my brief little survey is complete, so perhaps we can go through the process of passing these appropriations, then move on to something else.

Mr. McCrae: Are you telling me there is nothing left in that box for tonight?

Mr. Chomiak: You know, I did not prepare as much, because I did not know they were coming up tonight.

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): 3. Community and Mental Health Services (f) Chief Provincial Psychiatrist (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$195,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$37,400—pass.

3.(g) Adult Mental Health Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$918,900—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$2,256,600—pass; (3) External Agencies \$6,553,200—pass; (4) Less: Recoverable from other appropriations (\$684,000)—(pass).

3.(h) Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$1,016,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$153,300—pass.

3.(j) Brandon Mental Health Centre (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$20,199,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$2,810,200—pass.

4.(k) Selkirk Mental Health Centre (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$16,979,000.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, now that we are in 3.(k), I wonder if the minister might outline 3.(k) with regard to Selkirk Mental Health Centre. I wonder if the minister might outline for me any new initiatives or developments that have occurred at Selkirk Mental Health Centre within the past fiscal year relating to mental health reform.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Chairperson, the honourable member for Kildonan has asked for some information respecting the evolving role and corresponding organizational development of Selkirk Mental Health Centre as the provincial mental health facility for long-term care and rehabilitation, including forensic services, which is close to our hearts in the sense that when he was Justice critic and I was Justice minister, the matter of forensic issues came up from time to time, but with changing circumstances in Canada, we were not so able to access forensic services anymore, because other provinces had enough business of their own and were not able to take our business anymore.

* (2340)

I propose in the next few minutes to give the honourable member a report, and I hope that the honourable member for Selkirk will apprise himself of this information because in the mental health community in Manitoba, Selkirk has played and continues to play and will continue to play a very important role, and I just feel constrained to tell honourable members, all 57 of them, about the developments there.

In early 1992, following the issue of the health policy document entitled Building the Future of Mental Health Services in Manitoba, A Continuing Partnership for Reform, active discussions took place with patients, their families and staff about the implications of reform of the mental health system for Selkirk Mental Health Centre.

A mission statement for the centre was adopted in May of 1992, and this statement describes SMHC's role as providing specialized assessment, treatment, activity and residential services for seriously mentally ill individuals, whose needs cannot be met by other community-based alternatives, plus speciality functions including forensic services, teaching and research in chronic care to position the centre as the province's principal long-term care psychiatric facility and as a centre of excellence. Active strategic planning and implementation of its defined role has been occurring.

Selkirk Mental Health Centre is a 315-bed facility and generally operates on a daily basis with an average population over the past two years of 285 to 295 patients. Community-based mental health service development in Interlake, Winnipeg and Eastman Regions is assisting the timely discharge of long-term patients from the centre to community care options. Over the past two years, active successful discharges have taken place for 12 psychogeriatric patients, approximately 12 long-term rehabilitation patients and another 30 rehabilitation program patients are being targeted for discharge between May and December 1995.

Active planning and follow-up is occurring between the centre and the regional staff and with the patients involved. It is noted that these discharges are of long-term residents and does not account for routine discharges from the admission program at SMHC.

Admissions of long-term patients to Selkirk Mental Health Centre have occurred and are expected to continue to come from Winnipeg region as a result of psychiatric bed reductions in planning with the Winnipeg hospitals in 1993, Brandon Mental Health Centre, nine patients and a variety of patients, at the time this was written, that is, May 24, and a variety of patients with long-term needs, and I refer to new and readmissions from across the province.

With the proposed renovation of the facility for the long-term forensic program, 30 beds will be temporarily taken out of operation and replaced by an 18-bed modern extended-care forensic unit. Once complete, this will effectively downsize SMHC to a 297-bed facility.

Future developments in other areas of the province, like acute care, like psychiatric beds in general hospitals like The Pas and Thompson and elsewhere, are also expected to potentially reduce SMHC's admission population which currently has 27 beds dedicated to this activity, as are ongoing plans for the panelling of psychogeriatric patients to personal care home facilities. These developments could potentially reduce SMHC's population up to an additional 25 in the next two to three years.

Beginning in the fall of 1993, Selkirk Mental Health Centre adopted a program management, a patient-centred approach to care and treatment of patients. The program management model calls for the redesign of patient care, so that hospital resource services and personnel are assigned and organized around patients and their needs, rather than around various professional departments, which is the traditional hospital structure. Three main programs are defined: acute and intensive care, that is 43 beds; rehabilitation including forensic services, 118 beds; psychogeriatric program, 154 beds. Interdisciplinary clinical staff resources are assigned to the three program areas each led by a program manager.

In addition, SMHC operated two community rehabilitation home facilities for eight patients. You only have to visit the town of Selkirk, as I have done on several occasions, to get a bit of an understanding of the culture of caring in that community. That community, like Brandon, is accustomed to working with mental health care providers and to some extent mental health patients, and reform is something that is welcomed in Selkirk. When I was there, well, just two weeks ago or so being part of the ribbon cutting for still another mental health service in downtown Selkirk, a thrift shop—I do not know if it is a thrift shop, but it is a store where you can buy things. You can drop in there.

If you are a mental health patient, you can access a meal, and they have this really, really great plan going in the backyard for patio and lawn and a very nice atmosphere, and when I was there the staff made me feel tremendously welcome. I think that is the way the patients who visit there must feel too. That day they were having hot dogs and potato salad and there was a

nice refreshing cold drink, and the people were very friendly.

The mayor was there, getting back to the point I was going to make, Mayor Bud Oliver was there and he personified to me the kind of spirit that exists in Selkirk when it comes to how that community wants to treat mental health consumers. The town of Selkirk, like I said, has a tradition like the city of Brandon does.

* (2350)

There is a crisis stabilization unit which we recently opened in Selkirk providing caring service to mental health consumers. The Salvation Army sponsors that service, and I enjoyed my visits there. I have been there a couple of times now, briefly mind you, but I have been there a couple of times. It is nice to chat with the staff. I also had the opportunity to chat on my second visit with one of the patients or consumers, clients, in that facility.

These are very much appreciated services from all I have been able to tell. I look forward to when we can give more statistical data to talk about when we talk about these facilities. Ongoing refinement of the care and treatment processes are continuing in the development of a patient-centred approach. Currently, a review of the support services, like housekeeping, dietary and porter mobile services is underway to assess and plan for the reorganization of these services consistent with the program management and patient-centred model.

Clinical professional issues are managed by way of a clinical discipline advisory committee. I am going to deal at less length, only by mentioning, community partnerships, community patient and family involvement and forensic services. All those things are important, and I could go on at some length about each of them, and perhaps some other time, time will be available for that.

I just want to close these brief remarks by a very brief reference to the physical plant upgrade at SMHC. The Canadian Council on Health Facilities Accreditation survey in 1993, among others, identified the current facility as somewhat deficient and out of

date. In addition to the proposed forensic site development, SMHC is currently developing a plan to address the forensic environmental needs of the psychogeriatric population. A proposal to address modern standards for the seriously mentally ill geriatric population in the province currently residing at SMHC is being developed, so a strategic plan and implementation process have been developed to address the role of SMHC as the principal mental health facility in the province.

I know the honourable member was wanting to know this information, and I know the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) will be very interested in having that information on the record, as well, and I share it with a generousness of spirit that one very often feels at this hour of the day, because they are too tired to feel anything else, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 3.(k) Selkirk Mental Health Centre (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$16,979,000—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$2,559,900—pass.

We will now revert back to Health Information Systems, 2.(c).

Mr. Chomiak: As the hour nears midnight, I thought perhaps we could outline where we will proceed tomorrow. We are now on 2.(c), and we will move through 2.(c) some time tomorrow, and I assume if we finish 2.(c) tomorrow, we will go back to the regular pattern, finish 2.(d) and then get into 3.(a), 3.(b) and then continue along the normal course.

I do not expect we will get through any further than 2.(c) probably tomorrow, and after that, when we move into 3.(a) and (b) and (c), I anticipate that Wednesday, when we are in 3.(a), (b) and (c), we will be fairly extensively into the Home Care section on Wednesday probably, and after that, we will probably proceed fairly expeditiously Thursday and Friday through the other sections.

Mr. McCrae: I would just like to thank the honourable member. I understand from staff that it is very helpful to have that information. Certainly, it helps us from our end of it.

The approach the honourable member has been using, sometimes we get into a little tussle now and again, but I believe the staff of our department is far better utilized when we know, generally speaking, what to expect. We do not need to ask very busy people to be hanging around the Legislature when they can be more usefully doing something else.

So I just say thank you to the honourable member for that approach. We have come a long way. I know we have some distance yet to go, and I would like to accord my co-operation to him, and he has certainly been doing that for us and we appreciate it.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to call it twelve o'clock? [agreed]

The hour being 12 midnight, committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): The hour being after 10 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 12, 1995

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