



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 30, 1998

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of A. Colpitts, S. Glowa, B. Wentland and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospital food services.

Mining Reserve Fund

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of C. Suitor, S. McDuff, P. Stadnick and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman) to consider immediately restoring the \$6 million taken from the Mining Reserve Fund.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? No. Dispense.

THAT the Urban Shared Services Corporation (USSC) has announced plans to privatize laundry, food services and purchasing for the Winnipeg hospitals; and

THAT it is estimated that more than 1,000 health care jobs will be lost over the next year as a result, with many more privatized in the next two or three years; and

THAT under the terms of the contract, Ontario businesses will profit at the expense of Manitoba's health care system; and

THAT after construction of a food assembly warehouse in Winnipeg, chilled, prepared food will be shipped in from Ontario, then assembled and heated before being shipped to the hospitals; and

THAT people who are in the hospital require nutritious and appetizing food; and

THAT the announced savings as a result of the contract have been disputed, and one study by Wintemute Randle Kilimnik indicated that, "A considerable number of studies have compared costs of service delivery in health care between self-operation (public sector) and privatization. Invariably, privatization is more expensive."; and

THAT no one in Manitoba seems to benefit from this contract, especially patients.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospital food services.

Mining Reserve Fund

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

WHEREAS mining is a billion dollar industry in Manitoba directly employing more than 4,300 people pumping more than \$240 million in wages alone into the Manitoba economy; and

WHEREAS part of the mining taxes on operating mines goes into the Mining Reserve Fund; and

WHEREAS the Mining Reserve Fund was set up for the welfare and employment of persons residing in a mining community which may be adversely affected by the total or partial suspension or the closing down of mining operations attributable to the depletion of ore deposits; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has withdrawn \$6 million from the Mining Reserve Fund and put this money into general revenue; and

WHEREAS many mining communities having contributed millions of dollars to the provincial economy for many years are now nearing the end of their known ore resources.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLYPRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Energy and Mines to consider immediately restoring the \$6 million taken from the Mining Reserve Fund.

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? Dispense.

WHEREAS the provincial government has embarked upon a project in which it is closing hospital kitchens and having hospital food transported in from Toronto for reheating; and

WHEREAS this proposal will not improve the quality of food but will cost hundreds of jobs to the provincial economy; and

WHEREAS on December 8th of 1997, the provincial cabinet staged a photo opportunity for the media in which government MLAs were served chicken breast from a chef flown in from Toronto for the occasion while the actual meal served residents that night was macaroni and peas; and

WHEREAS this proposal will result in more health care dollars being spent on questionable privatization projects; and

WHEREAS in December of 1997, the provincial government was forced to drop a similar privatization scheme involving home care which had been opposed by the clients, families and the public; and

WHEREAS once again the provincial government without consultation has committed itself to a privatization project which will likely cost taxpayers more money for a poorer quality service, thus forgetting the patients who deserve better care.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLYPRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Health to consider immediately cancelling the hospital food proposal and concentrate on delivering quality health care instead of using health dollars to provide contracts for private firms.

* (1335)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Supplementary Information for 1998-1999 for the Canada Manitoba Infrastructure Works.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 43—The Victims' Rights and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 43, The Victims' Rights and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur les droits des victimes et modifications corrélatives), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

I would advise the House that the Lieutenant Governor recommends the bill to the House, and I would like to table the Lieutenant Governor's message.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 44—The Statute Law Amendment Act, 1998

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour

(Mr. Gilleshammer), that leave be given to introduce Bill 44, The Statute Law Amendment Act, 1998 (Loi de 1998 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives), and that the same now be received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon thirty-seven Grade 9 students from Sir Winston Churchill School in Thunder Bay, Ontario, under the direction of Mr. Jim Jack.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Manitoba Telecom Services Rate Increase

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, last year, or two years ago, when Mr. Nugent's testimony was presented in this House, Mr. Ross Nugent honestly stated that the new private telephone system would go through a rate shock for consumers. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) answered that issue by saying Mr. Nugent was wrong, and that there would be rate increases based only on service for the future and so-called rate rebalancing. We asked a number of times on the impact of taxation policy on a private company versus a public company, and the Premier basically said it would not have any impact on consumers.

I would like to ask the Acting Premier: why has the telephone system application or the telecom system application to the CRTC, why is it now said there will be a massive increase in rates for consumers based on consideration of the new company, and why are they proposing that the consumers of Manitoba pay between \$8 million next year and \$38 million in the future per year to deal with the Tory mistruth, again, on the Manitoba Telephone System?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Well, again, Madam Speaker, it is the Leader of the

Opposition who is absolutely incorrect with some of the information that he puts on the record. I encourage him to look at some of the information that was put out back on April 1 of this year when Manitoba Telecom Services outlined this entire issue. In fact, it was covered in at least some of the local media, April 2 article on the front page of one of our local papers, so I encourage him to look at some of that to get a better understanding of the issue.

But I think the message for consumers is that the process of going before the CRTC was the same process under private ownership and public ownership. That process does work, because if you look at the last rate request from MTS, they made a rate request increase of \$3. CRTC approved a rate increase of 84 cents. As a result, today we continue to have the lowest residential rates of any of the major telephone companies in all of Canada right here in the province of Manitoba. So that process works, and in terms of any future rate adjustments, any future rate requests, Manitoba Telecom Services—

An Honourable Member: Why do you not just give Tom a call?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) just continues to—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: Well, I would like to thank the minister responsible for the golden share for that answer, Madam Speaker, but he did not answer the question. I asked the specific question about what the impact of tax provisions for a private company would be on the Manitoba consumer.

The document tabled that we have received indicates there will be, and I quote: a dramatic increase in the future when MTS incurs actual income tax expenses, a dramatic increase for the consumers of this province, something that we alleged and members opposite denied. Mike Harris did not sell Ontario Hydro because of the tax considerations. We have a delayed tax impact, but we have a tax impact.

Will the minister confirm that \$38 million that will be incurred by the local consumers, will he verify what

that will be for the local consumers who will have to bear the price of a broken Tory promise and Tory ideology?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, again, the Leader of the Opposition is incorrect. At the time of the privatization, we talked about a one-time tax adjustment that Manitoba Telecom Services would have in terms of writing off a pension adjustment to the level of some \$360 million. We said at that time it was our expectation that the benefactors of that would be the consumers here in Manitoba, and that has been the case. In fact, MTS made a request in their last rate application, as the member recalls, for some shareholder entitlement relative to this tax issue and CRTC turned that down. They did not grant that application to Telecom Services, again proving very clearly that the process of going before the CRTC is there to protect consumers, is there to make companies ensure that any adjustments they are requesting are legitimate ones.

But again, members opposite have difficulty accepting the fact that companies should pay taxes, and they fail to recognize that when companies pay taxes, they pay them either to the federal government or to the provincial government, and those taxes are spent very wisely in the province of Manitoba on health care, on education, on support to families, things that are very important to all Manitobans.

* (1340)

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the member will know that the public Crown corporations in Manitoba have the lower rates because one of the factors is they do not have the shareholders' entitlement, the greedy kinds of conditions that shareholders and executives look at. If members opposite do not think the enhanced share option plan is greedy, let them stand up and say so. They also have the taxes to pay, as opposed to those rates staying lower. The figure in the document is \$38 million. The government never had the intestinal fortitude to table that in the House. They knew there would be a delayed impact on taxation policy for the new private company. Would the member confirm that \$38 million a year, when the delayed impact takes place, will be close to a 30 percent rate increase or a dollar per year over the next six years, a 30 percent rate

increase for average consumers, seniors and others on fixed income because of the Tory broken promise and ideology?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, nobody has ever denied that under private ownership Manitoba Telecom Services ultimately would pay income taxes. In fact, today that industry, about 70 percent of the business that the Manitoba Telecom Services is in is in a very competitive environment where every company that they compete with pays taxes to either the provincial government here in Manitoba or to the federal government, so that has never been denied. But we have said very clearly, there is a process for Manitoba Telecom Services to go through with CRTC where they have to justify any of their expenditures and any of their rate adjustments.

That process has worked very well in terms of the recent examples we have in Manitoba, and as a result, today we continue to have the lowest residential rates in all of Canada right here in the province of Manitoba, in large part as a result of that very important process.

Manitoba Telecom Services Rate Increase

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): It is interesting that the minister talks about rates and the CRTC. It was this caucus, it was 50 municipal councils and it was the MSOS who spoke out against those rates. The government said nothing, and it is amazing because, when it comes to stock options, that golden share speaks awfully loudly, Madam Speaker.

I want to ask the minister directly this time, because we are not going to let him wriggle off it on this one: will he pick up the phone and phone the chair of the board, Tom Stefanson? Will he phone the government appointees on the board, reappointed again today at the shareholders' meeting and tell them that we, the people of Manitoba, say no to what will result in a \$6-a-month rate increase because of MTS's application?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, again I do not accept necessarily any of the figures put on the record by the member for Thompson in terms of his past experience with providing

information on this issue or any other issue to this House.

I have said very clearly the process is the same under private ownership as it is under public ownership in terms of going before the CRTC. The opportunity to appear, whether it is the Canadian association of consumers, Manitoba Society of Seniors, is available to organizations like that, and if they have the kinds of concerns that are outlined and they have outlined some concerns today, I certainly encourage them to do exactly what they are suggesting they will do, and that is to make representation and appear before the CRTC committee because that is the regulatory process. That is the one that is available to all citizens, all consumers, if they have any concerns about Manitoba Telecom Services.

Mr. Ashton: As a supplementary, I would like to ask the minister responsible for MTS whether he has contacted the chair of the board, Tom Stefanson, the board appointees of the government, and asked them to take the money they want for the increases out of the gold-plated stock option program and not out of further rate increases for Manitobans.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, we do not get involved in the day-to-day operations of Manitoba Telecom Services, nor should we. We have examples of other government-run enterprises when the people opposite had their hands in them, whether it was the forestry industry in the North or ManOil in western Canada. We are still paying for the debt on the mismanagement of people like that across the way.

We have a board of directors of 11 individuals, 11 reputable people from right across this province. There are some 70 million shares that have been invested in by thousands and thousands of Manitobans who continue to hold this corporation accountable for their decisions. In fact, the annual general meeting was just today, here in the city of Winnipeg, where roughly one-third of the shares issued were represented, either by proxy or in direct attendance at the meeting. I am led to believe that those shareholders today ratified the reappointment of the board by some 99.5 percent, so that is the opportunity that is available to them, as shareholders, as consumers to either appear before the

CRTC or as shareholders to make representation at the annual meeting of Manitoba Telecom Services.

Mr. Ashton: The only ones with their hands in anybody's pockets are people like Tom Stefanson and senior officials at MTS.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Thompson he was recognized for a final supplementary question, to which no preamble is permissible.

* (1345)

Annual Meeting—Minister's Proxy

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): As a final question, and I ask the minister responsible for MTS, who spent two weeks trying to deflect his direct responsibility as minister responsible for MTS for that stock option program: who represented him at the meeting today, and did that person go in there with a clear message for the minister to scrap that unacceptable million-dollar-plus program for people like Tom Stefanson and others who should not be getting that kind of money at the expense of the ratepayers, the people that have to pay for those phone increases?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): The proxy issued on behalf of the Province of Manitoba for the meeting today of Manitoba Telecom Services outlined the same two individuals as the previous proxy. The direct appointment was Mr. Julian D. Benson, the secretary to Treasury Board, and the alternate appointment is J. Patrick Gannon, the Deputy Minister of Finance.

The only issue before the annual meeting today where we had the opportunity to vote as a special sharer under our special share in a separate class again was the nomination and appointment of four out of the 11 members of the board of directors. We reappointed the same four people who we believe are outstanding Manitobans: Mr. Robert Chipman, Ashleigh Everett, Don Penny and Sam Schellenberg. Those were the provisions under the special share. In terms of operating decisions, we did not participate in operating

decisions. The issue that the member raises, I am led to believe was not an issue that was on the agenda or was raised specifically today at the annual meeting.

Hepatitis C Compensation

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, yesterday the National Assembly in Quebec supported the extension on compassionate grounds of the existing compensation program for all victims of contaminated blood who were not covered by the existing program. This morning Ontario indicated that it was prepared to support Quebec's call for compensation for more people. On Monday, the Minister of Health, when referring to the federal government, said in committee, and I quote him: if they are prepared to live up to their responsibility, the provinces certainly are, I am sure, and would be prepared to meet with them to discuss this further. Certainly I would be.

I would like to table the Quebec resolution, and I would like to ask this Minister of Health if he is willing to join his colleagues from Ontario and Quebec and pressure the federal government to return to the table and reconsider the compensation package for people living with hepatitis C to include all those who acquired hepatitis C as a result of contaminated blood. Is the minister prepared to do that?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, first of all, the resolution that was passed by the National Assembly in Quebec and the kind of word we are hearing from Ontario is a resolution that offers no provincial participation in an expansion of that plan but asks for the federal government, who the Krever report indicated has the lion's share of responsibility in this area, to endeavour to expand that particular plan. If the federal Liberal government wishes to do that, and the only caveat—and I have put it on this House, that if they were to do that, that is certainly their business. I am not going to tell them what to do with it, but it would have to be new money. I would not want to see a situation where a national government took money out of transfers to provinces to pay for an expansion in coverage in essence in our health care system. So, if the government of Mr. Chretien wishes to endeavour to do that, certainly they are not going to listen one way or

the other to the advice of Manitoba. They are free to do that as long as, I would say, it would be new money.

Ms. McGifford: The minister really dances around the question.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the honourable member for Osborne pose her supplementary question now, please.

* (1350)

Ms. McGifford: Yes, Madam Speaker. I asked the minister if he would join his colleagues, put pressure on the federal minister to return to the table and discuss the extension of compensation for all victims of hepatitis C. This is the commitment he made on the record on Monday. Would he live up to his commitment?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, my commitment has always been that if federal and provincial ministers of Health meet to discuss any issue, I will be there, but also part of our comments that were in committee where we discussed this was the prerequisite of course that the national government had to be there with money. We have heard the Prime Minister, and he has confirmed with his actions recently what I have been saying from the beginning of this, that the national government, who bears the lion's share of responsibility, never came to the table with the intention of doing other than compensating those individuals for whom there was a negligence in the system, and the dollars and actions that they have taken all the way through have proven that. Let us not forget that, although this is a tremendous tragedy for the individuals involved, the provincial governments today, collectively, are there with some \$1.6 billion in health care costs that we are having to pay with not one penny, not one penny of support from Mr. Chretien and the federal Liberals.

Ms. McGifford: I would like to ask the minister if he could tell us exactly how many Manitobans with hepatitis C were infected before January 1, 1986. If he does not have those figures, which seem to be so important in this compensation package, would he endeavour to get them, put them before the people of Manitoba so that we can really understand this issue

and understand the minister's position and his refusal to extend compensation to all Manitobans?

Mr. Praznik: What the member does not seem to recognize, again, despite our discussing this for many hours, is that the lead in this particular package and the lion's share of responsibility rests with the federal government, that the provinces have only been the purchasers of blood. The operators of the system, or the Canadian Red Cross Society who in essence are bankrupt, and the national government who had the regulatory authority, they have to bear their responsibility, and they rarely do that in most cases.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to table for the benefit of the member—just to put this in perspective of what others are doing in the country—this wire story from Saskatchewan, and I quote, “Taking a page from the federal Liberals, Saskatchewan's NDP government Tuesday voted down a motion proposing hepatitis C compensation be extended to all victims of the disease. They instead voted in support of an 'expression of sympathy' for those who got the virus from tainted blood. The Saskatchewan exercise was something of a mirror image of a federal one played out Tuesday in the House of Commons, where the Liberals survived a vote of confidence . . . Except that in Saskatchewan, it was the NDP that declined opposition requests the matter be put to a free vote, and the Liberals who criticized the decision . . . NDP backbencher Andrew Thomson argued his government is showing compassion by providing ongoing health care to all victims.”

**Gerald Wilson Jr.
Trial—Jury Selection**

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): I had the opportunity of sitting with the family of the late Dorothy Martin yesterday in The Pas, and they indeed were disappointed with the outcome of the trial of Gerald Wilson Jr., and indeed have a lot of questions about the entire system and the administration of justice to aboriginal people in the province of Manitoba.

One area that I would like to touch upon this afternoon, Madam Speaker, is on the jury selection in this particular murder. We all know in this Chamber that 50 percent of the town of The Pas is made up of

aboriginal people, and seven years ago the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry in their recommendations cited that as a need to be addressed. I would like to ask the Minister of Justice what efforts his government have made in attempting to meet these recommendations.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I think the member raises a very important question. The issue of jury selection, of course, is fundamental to the administration of justice. I know that, generally speaking and in this particular case, there was a concerted effort to ensure that there was a panel from which to draw jury members, the panel being representative of the community. Clearly, the issue of who actually sits on any particular jury is a matter to be determined by the lawyers on both sides of the case, and I understand that process was proceeded with, and the issue that the member raises I believe was dealt in a very appropriate fashion.

* (1355)

Mr. Robinson: As I said, the Martin family indeed are very concerned. I would like to read a portion of a victim impact statement by the daughter of the late Dorothy Martin, Summer Rose Martin. She says: I feel like my family is breaking apart without my mom or my heart cracks in half. My feelings are not very strong anymore without my mom. I feel that everything inside of me is part of my mother. I miss my mom a lot.

That was part of what was heard in the courtroom yesterday. If indeed what the minister is saying on the subject of juries, why was there not a noticeable presence of First Nations or aboriginal people on the jury during the Gerald Wilson trial?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, I can indicate that the process follows a very clearly defined procedure. The issue of appropriate community representation is always borne in mind, and certainly my departmental officials are very aware of that particular issue.

I do want to say that I certainly—my sympathy goes to the family in particular, and indeed the family was very thankful for the job that the Crown attorneys did in that particular case and thanked them in a very formal ceremony. I know that the family went through a very difficult time, but I know that they were very pleased

with the job that the Crown attorneys did in that particular case.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister as well—the government's Crown counsel, the ones that prosecuted this case, did ask for an adjournment sometime during the trial to question the make-up and the composition of the jury. I would like to ask the minister if indeed it was his department that asked them to withdraw that argument that they had.

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, if the member is in any way suggesting that any political official in any way had any input into that trial, I can certainly indicate that no political official had any involvement in that trial because it would be inappropriate for a political official, including the Attorney General, to become involved in any specific case and the prosecution of any particular case. I know that Crown attorneys will have discussions as professionals amongst each other about the particular conduct of a case. That happens on a regular basis and I encourage that.

Hepatitis C Compensation

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health regarding the hepatitis C issue.

Madam Speaker, the Minister of Health acknowledges that the Krever report indicated that in fact the federal government had the lion's share and the federal government had to play the leading role. But he also acknowledges that the federal government has to take some responsibility. What I am asking the minister today is to also take responsibility. Equally, the province had a responsibility for that. They also have a responsibility for those that fall outside of that time frame.

My question to the Minister of Health is to acknowledge that the provincial government has a leadership responsibility to do something for those that were infected by hepatitis C that fall outside that time frame.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, let us talk about responsibility past and

present for a moment. Anyone who examines the Canadian blood system and how it operated in the past recognizes that the operator of that system was the Canadian Red Cross Society, which was an independent operator. The national government, with its constitutional responsibilities, was the regulator. They were the ones who were to ensure that the operator managed in a manner that produced safe products, as safe as possible, for the Canadian public. What was the role of the provinces? We, in essence, were the purchasers through hospitals. Actually, we were not even the direct purchasers; it was our hospitals that we fund, who in itself are independent, who purchase blood and blood products for the citizens in our respective jurisdictions.

So what influence, what role did we have in how the system operated? Minimum at best. So the responsibility for blood in Canada has not been a provincial responsibility, only in the sense that we have been the purchasers. Madam Speaker, we now accept that that old system does not work, and we as provincial governments are becoming the builders of a new Canadian blood system that we will be responsible for in the future as operators.

* (1400)

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the minister says minimum—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamoureux: My question to the Minister of Health is: will the Minister of Health acknowledge—when he says “minimum at best” for the Krever report, in other words, because of the courts it is minimum at best—that he does have a role outside of that time frame and he does have a responsibility to do something for individuals infected with hepatitis C outside of that time frame?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, would the member propose that if a pharmaceutical manufacturer produced a product that did not work, the provincial government should be responsible for the work of that manufacturer or the national government who regulates that product? Just compare the analogy. If the member would just think for a moment and compare it to other parts of the

system. Even the New Democrats have not asked us to take that responsibility. We, as Manitobans in our health care system, do provide today for virtually universal coverage in our health care system for people who are injured or ill, no matter how they came down with that illness, and as provinces we are investing or spending some \$1.6 billion just for that group of people where there was a negligence. Add to that what we will be spending for the others that he speaks about. So every provincial government today is there providing dollars without one penny of support from the federal Liberals, because these are all marginal dollars and are not added to our transfer payments that are capped.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, will the minister acknowledge that we compensated people for the flood of the century, not because there was a legal mandate to do that; we did it because we live in a compassionate society, and the provincial government took on responsibility? What we are asking is for the government to also look at the compassionate arguments of this particular issue and acknowledge that there is a need to show some compassion and to assist individuals with hepatitis C—[interjection] The province. We are talking about the provincial government, not what is happening in Ottawa. Understand.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, never in this House have I seen such an advocate for a federal offload of responsibility as I have just witnessed. Let us not for one moment—and this is a very serious debate, and I have to thank all honourable members on both sides of the House who have been participating in it in Estimates. We have had a very good debate on principle and issue and ramifications. It has been an excellent one, and I congratulate the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) for bringing her resolution. But just for one moment let us look at the context.

We as Canadians do provide a very extensive safety net for Canadians when they become ill. We provide free medical care. In Manitoba we provide home care; we provide Pharmacare support. On a national basis, the Canada Pension Plan provides income replacement with disability. So we have a variety of tax credits.

So we already have a very extensive safety net, whether you are injured or with hepatitis C, cancer,

lung cancer, heart problems and cannot work. We do provide today a safety net. So let not for one moment the member opposite imply that there is nothing there. There is an extensive safety net in place today for whoever is unable to work or is ill.

Swampy Cree Tribal Council Murder Investigation—Compensation

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, the Swampy Cree Tribal Council, after learning that the investigation into the death of Dorothy Martin might not go anywhere, hired an investigator. This investigator became quite instrumental in identifying areas which became part of the overall RCMP investigation.

My question to the Minister of Justice today is: would he consider acknowledging the usefulness of the work done by the Swampy Cree Tribal Council and reimburse the tribal council for its costs?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Madam Speaker, I know that the council did what they did out of a profound sense of concern, and I certainly share their sense of concern that every homicide is thoroughly investigated and brought to the appropriate legal authorities. I am not aware of the extent of the work done by this particular individual, but I know that this matter is still before the courts, as has been announced by the prosecutor. There may well be an appeal of the sentence, and I do not think it is appropriate to discuss this case in any detail.

Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Family Notification Recommendation

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Given that the AJI recommended—and I would like to quote a little bit from their recommendation. That is, it says: a better way to have approached the problem of breaking the tragic news would have been for the officer to approach the chief of the band or someone else at the band office, tell him or her the news and ask that someone familiar with the person accompany the officer. In this way the bereaved could be informed in her own language by someone she knew. Such a person would also know what kind of family or community support might be most appropriate.

My question to the minister is: why has this recommendation not become a matter of policy by now?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I am very proud of the way that the various victims' services operations have operated throughout the province. I had occasion to speak to the Victims Services people up in The Pas and indeed up in Thompson, and I know that in a number of recent very important cases those personnel, along with the RCMP, did a very admirable job of ensuring that the family was advised and kept apprised of a particular situation in a very sensitive way.

So I think that we have learned much from the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. I think that document continues to guide much of my thinking and my government's thinking in terms of what needs to be done. In respect of any matters in which we can improve our communication and our sensitivity to victims, this government will certainly consider all such steps.

**Gerald Wilson Jr.
RCMP Investigation**

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, my last question to the Minister of Justice is this. At what point in the RCMP investigation did the Department of Justice become aware that there were problems in the investigation, and what action, if any, did the minister take to correct these very serious inadequacies in the investigation and by so doing would have ensured that justice was carried out?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Madam Speaker, I can assure this House that if any issues of impropriety or allegations of impropriety—without reflecting on any particular case—if any such allegations are brought to my attention, I do refer that to the deputy minister and he then to the Crown attorneys responsible for any particular case. So, if the member is ever aware in any particular case that there is a concern, certainly my office is available to transmit any messages to the appropriate prosecutors.

But, as I might indicate, it would be entirely inappropriate for me as the minister to specifically

direct any particular prosecution. I know that the member was not suggesting that I do so, but I do take his comments to heart, and he can be assured, as can members of the public there as well, that their concerns will be taken very seriously not only by my department but by the police department, the RCMP, whom I have a great deal of respect for.

**Gerald Wilson Jr.
RCMP Investigation**

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): To the Minister of Justice, Madam Speaker. This is the second time this week I have had to rise in this House in regard to public allegations about shortcomings or irregularities in RCMP investigations into the killings of aboriginal women. Today it has come to our attention through the media of allegations of a, quote, mess in the investigation into the killing of Dorothy Martin, matters regarding the withholding of evidence, missing evidence, witnesses not found, for example, a recording that was not done, and other allegations I understand of a lack of fingerprinting of the sawed-off shotgun that was the tragic instrument.

My question to the minister, following on the questions from the member for The Pas: when did the minister or his department become aware of allegations of shortcomings or irregularities in the RCMP investigation into the killing of Dorothy Martin, and why is a meeting not being held until next week? The trial is over.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Madam Speaker, this is a particular member who takes somewhat delight in trying to pillory RCMP officers, in attempting to pillory Crown attorneys, and indeed—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

* (1410)

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The minister is clearly violating the provisions of Beauchesne that indicate that members should not attribute motives.

The member for St. Johns, our Justice critic, has asked some very serious questions about a very serious case that is of great concern to the family, to the community and to many Manitobans. I would appreciate it, Madam Speaker, if you would call the minister to order and ask him to respond with the same kind of seriousness to a very serious series of questions on this matter.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice, on the same point of order.

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, in respect of this particular member, I know that the Crown Attorneys Association has had to consistently release press releases asking the member to be fair to the Crown attorneys. Just on Tuesday—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister, with the greatest respect, is not speaking to the point of order. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I would remind the honourable Minister of Justice that his answer should be as brief as possible and deal with the question raised.

* * *

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am aware that at any particular situation in this case the Crown attorneys responded in a very quick and efficient way to any particular concerns. I think this was indicated by the families specifically recognizing not only the Crown attorneys in The Pas as having done a very good job, but indeed the chief and council in respect of the other case, thanked the specific Crown attorney for doing a very good job, so instead of just criticizing the Crown attorneys, perhaps he should just take to heart some of the words that the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) raised the other day about unfairly criticizing not only the Crown attorneys but the police.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, with a supplementary question. [interjection] Order, please. The honourable member for St. Johns was recognized for a supplementary question.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would this minister, instead of defaming a messenger, listen to the voices of aboriginal

women in Manitoba, aboriginal peoples in Manitoba, and would he tell this House: when did he become aware of irregularities in the police investigation, and why are he and his department not meeting with the RCMP until next week? The trial is over; the sentence has been handed down, and by the way, the Crown attorney did a good job; I am looking at this minister, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Toews: Yes, while I appreciate that the member finally recognizes that the Crown attorneys in this province are doing a good job, in respect to the allegation that I am not sensitive to the concerns of women and specifically aboriginal women, I recall very specifically, when I was a Crown attorney under the NDP government, what they used to do to women who complained in abuse cases, and what they did was throw them in jail. That was their approach. I know that my predecessors, the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey) and the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) are very sensitive to the concerns of women.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Bail Procedures

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Madam Speaker, our government is committed to use every means available to implement tougher penalties for criminals. While members opposite continue to question not only our government's commitment but the commitment of our Crown attorneys, we believe in working in partnership with all stakeholders to ensure public confidence and safety is enhanced.

Yesterday the Minister of Justice announced measures clarifying the conditions under which prosecutors will oppose bail applications by suspected criminals in Manitoba. Utilizing changes in the Criminal Code, the Crown will emphasize public confidence in the justice system, the seriousness of the offence and the potential for a lengthy term of imprisonment as grounds to oppose bail. Even when a judge releases an accused, the Crown will argue for appropriate conditions, such as curfews, nonassociation clauses and other conditions that provide the police

with better tools to monitor the accused in the community.

While members on the government side of the House continue to pursue strong law and order, members opposite are more concerned with, according to the Winnipeg Free Press, mastering the 15-second newsclip than with providing the public with other options. It is also worth noting that, while members opposite have in the past disparaged our initiatives, they have a tendency to pause and then claim them as their own. One only has to remember the member for St. Johns' (Mr. Mackintosh) remarks concerning The Parental Responsibility Act, calling it another bell and whistle, yet less than one year later he was touting the need for parents to pay for the child's misdeeds under their proposed operation coverup.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans want a government of substance, and we have delivered. The only thing members opposite have delivered to Manitobans is their usual offering of tired, old rhetoric.

Israel 50th Anniversary

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): It is with a great sense of humility today that I rise to pay tribute to the people of Israel, past, present and future, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the modern State of Israel.

None in this House need reminding that this state was founded against all odds, against the indifference of the great powers, and the not-so-benign residual occupation by Great Britain under the so-called Palestine mandate.

Madam Speaker, while most western nations are today friends of Israel, we should never forget that those nations were not friends in 1947, that in 1938 we Canadians turned Jews away from our doors, that our most affluent clubs in this city barred Jews from membership until relatively recently, that our University of Manitoba had a quota for Jewish students. We should remember these things, not to flog our guilty consciences but simply for the same reason that numbers of us gathered with those from many cultures and histories for the past three years to read out some of the names of those murdered in death camps during the most recent Holocaust.

We read 2,000 names last Friday, Madam Speaker, a lot of names in two hours, but we read only three-one-hundredths of one percent of those known to have been murdered during the Holocaust. We read that we could publicly lift up their names, publicly say "never again," publicly say that we will remember. Though the survivors become fewer, we will remember. For to remember in biblical terms is literally to put the members back together, to again make them present in a real way. The commitment to remember is all that stands between civility and hope and the law of the jungle and the deep prejudice and fear that dehumanizes those who celebrate different traditions and memories from our past.

* (1420)

Madam Speaker, we remember the words of the prophet Micah, who saw the possibility of the day when everyone 'neath their vine and fig tree could live in peace and unafraid.

Finally, we remember through this 50th year of the modern state that it is at least 3,000 years since the people of Judah occupied the land and that they through the ages have contributed so much to humankind and their understanding of true justice, mishpat and the ultimate goodness of creation. We give thanks for their contributions to science, to the arts and all knowledge, and we pray for their future as citizens of a peaceful world, Madam Speaker.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): I rise today on the topic of fetal alcohol syndrome. I want to thank the ministers who announced recently, of Health and of Family Services, this government's commitment to spend over a million dollars over the next three years as a first step towards preventing fetal alcohol syndrome and dealing with its effects.

Every year in Manitoba approximately 200 children are born afflicted with this most tragic and preventable disease. In partnership with the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre and the Nor'West Co-Op Community Health Centre, this program will work with women who are at risk of having FAS babies or who have already had a child with this disease.

I want to mention at this time that earlier this year this government supported a program in Portage la Prairie, a pilot project operated through the Westend Day Care in Portage la Prairie specifically to address those children's needs that are afflicted with fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect, through art and using that creativity to develop their skills.

I stand here today thanking the government for their commitment to the people of Portage la Prairie and indeed all the people of Manitoba, to work towards the wiping out of this most tragic and preventable disease known as fetal alcohol syndrome. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Evan Burns

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I would like to rise today to praise the life and mourn the death of Evan Burns, who passed away Tuesday morning at the age of 36. Evan, of course, was a person who was well known to members of this Chamber. He was a person who had suffered multiple sclerosis, and as such he had worked with all of us on issues that faced disabled people and the challenges disabled people have to live a life of independence and to live a life of dignity.

He had worked, I am sure, with ministers of Health across the way and with those of us on the opposition side. At various forums and areas of discussion on home care policy, he pushed all of us to develop a program for people who are disabled that starts from their needs, not from the government's programs. He pushed all of us to produce alternatives that would make sense for the disabled across our community. He was a very passionate individual and a very articulate individual.

No matter what side of the debate one was on in the home care dispute on the home care privatization, one had to be moved by the passionate speech he made out in front of this Legislative Building just a little over two years ago today. It was one of the finest speeches I have ever heard from a person I agreed with or disagreed with any time inside this Legislature or outside this Legislature. He stated very clearly that he was drawing a line in the slush on the issues of

privatization, and he said better than any of us on either side of the debate why it was important—

If I could have leave just to complete my statement, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Doer: Thank you.

—for us to have a home care program that worked and started with disabled people. He was a very, very inspiring individual, and his inspiration of ideas and his commitment to his fellow citizens and policies that would make sense for the disabled community I think will live with all of us. It is truly tragic that I rise today in mourning his death, but I am proud to rise in memory of his life. Thank you.

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, I wonder if I may have leave to respond to the comments that were made by the Leader of the Opposition.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: For clarification, there is one member's statement remaining allowable. There are five a day, so if the honourable member wishes to take advantage of that, I would suggest that the independent members are allowed a turn today, and if they are willing to secede their daily rotation to the member for Sturgeon Creek—okay? All right.

Mr. McAlpine: I too would like to add my condolences to the family of Evan Burns, as the Leader of the official opposition has raised. I, too, personally knew Evan Burns, a person with a lot of integrity. He had a lot to offer. I learned a lot from Evan Burns in terms of his struggle for life as a person who suffered from MS and lost his life through his struggle with cancer.

Madam Speaker, we did have a part to play in that struggle that he experienced for a number of years. I do not think there is a person that I have ever experienced that was as brave and really stood for what he believed in terms of creating for other people, not only for himself, but for other people in Manitoba. I, too, would

like to share, along with my colleagues from this side of the House, in mourning the death and the passing of Evan Burns. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

Energy and Mines

* (1450)

Mr. Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 254 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Energy and Mines. When the committee last sat it had been considering item 23.2.(d) Geological Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 47 of the Estimates book.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): We are now in the Geological Services branch, and I have several questions in this area. One of my concerns has been that this branch has been underfunded. Now I do not have the actual numbers and it looks like a fairly steady rate of budgeting, but there are certain indicators, I think, that tell a story, and that is the number of projects that are being undertaken by the department in any one year, the number of field days conducted, the number of days per project in the field. These are very relevant because, as I have said in the past, one of the most important things that the department does is provide that base information, the geological data. If we cannot afford to put the geologists out there because we do not have enough supports or we do not have enough equipment or we cannot fund the assistants that are required so that full field seasons can occur, then I

think we are doing a disservice to industry, to the geological community, to the geologists themselves and to the taxpayers of Manitoba.

We do have a considerable number of professionals and technical people in the department. The minister indicated there were 32 geologists. I have some numbers which indicate in 1996, for instance, there were only 14 projects totalling 1,069 days of field work. In 1997 there were 26 projects, field days of 1,350, and the number of days per project was only 52.

Now in a comprehensive field season, you can get crews out in May because the geological assistants, the university students, have completed their program of study, so in theory you could be out doing that essential work through May, June, July and August, a full four months, giving you approximately 120 days available for that important work.

Can the minister indicate if my numbers are accurate and the number of projects that we anticipate to be doing field work this year?

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines): With respect to the field days, the figures that my department provides me with are that '97-98, 1,157; '98-99, projected this year 1,192. My staff's speculation is that the additional days that you have probably relate to support staff. These are actual geologist field days that I have given you.

Ms. Mihychuk: If we in theory put out all 32 geologists for a full four months with a full complement, how many field days would be available in the summer program? That is simple mathematics.

Mr. Newman: I am advised that the correct number for field geologists is 21. They are the ones that actually do field work. The additional field days for this year will be 35, given the figures that I have given you, but the average number of days per geologist using that figure of 21 is 58 days per geologist.

Ms. Mihychuk: Well, I guess no matter which way you cut it, I think that 58 days would amount to approximately two months, and my argument would still hold that you could double the number of field days in a full season of four months.

I am wondering if the number of field days is related to the support budget, the available monies for field assistants, available monies for the equipment and transportation, et cetera. Is that the limiting factor for the field program?

Mr. Newman: I fully acknowledge that the amount of resources dedicated to this area is a factor in the number of days, but another factor which is relevant is that in some cases the field geologists do not perform in the field for the full maximum period for reasons of choice by the department in terms of compiling field data and doing work in an office setting. A portion of that season is utilized for that purpose without in any way relating to resource allocation.

Ms. Mihychuk: Even if we look at 21 field geologists of the 32 that the minister identified, provide four months of field program, the total number of field days available is 2,520. We are approximately looking at half, half of the optimum in terms of what may be available for those individuals.

Is the minister satisfied with that performance or field program?

Mr. Newman: I am advised that a reasonable, fair description of the number of days in a field season would be 90, and in an optimum situation where we had no concerns about resources within government, we would prefer to expand the number of days closer to those 90 in most cases, subject to the qualifications I gave you earlier.

* (1500)

Ms. Mihychuk: Is the minister prepared to provide additional supports in terms of Other Expenditures, line item 23.2.(d)(2) would it be, to potentially expand the field season program, if there are limitations based on those resources?

Mr. Newman: Frankly, no one has ever made that case to me, but if the department made that case to my level, given what I believe to be the importance of this kind of contribution to enhancing mining investment and mining activity, I would be very, very interested in having a well-developed argument to be in readiness to ultimately perhaps replace the kind of support or be

replaced by the kind of support that we are giving MEAP because, as I have told you previously, my belief is that MEAP does have a limited life in that, when we overcome the negative good will created by the NDP, those resources—I would like to then argue—could be best dedicated in the same amount or in an appropriate amount in order to meet the more optimum objectives of geological work by geologists within the department.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister indicate if the field projects that are going to be conducted this year are industry based, and by that I mean either mineral deposits, providing geological information in terms of the Superior project, et cetera? Are there projects that are more theoretical? In the past, there have been individuals who have done, for example, caving for years on the department's budget, and although that may have been geologically very interesting, its economic merits have been questioned.

Now, that individual is no longer with the department, and I would assume that that field program has been terminated, but it does raise the issue of priorities and to ensure that when we do send out people or make that expenditure that it is related to the economic well-being, whether we argue in the short term or in the long term, but that it be relevant and necessary, particularly when we have seen the loss of resources over the last 10 years in this area and presently with the economic crisis in mining.

So it is a fairly delicate subject, but I want to be assured that the programs are based on the needs of Manitobans and perhaps not the personal interests of individuals that may have the ability to go out in the field.

Mr. Newman: I am advised that all of our projects have been vetted through the Mineral Exploration Liaison Committee and have been prioritized by them, and they have endorsed the projects being put forward for this year.

Ms. Mihychuk: Was that the procedure in the past?

Mr. Newman: In the past, I am advised that there have been some exceptions to this particular process. I made the inquiry as to whether or not it would be anticipated

that there would be departures in the future, and I am advised and agree with the approach that that should only take place and will only take place in circumstances where something unanticipated or not considered by the liaison committee comes along. At that time that might be seen to be a higher priority but, other than that, the prioritization done through the process we discussed will be adhered to.

Ms. Mihychuk: I take that as an assurance and just wanted to raise the issue, because it is well known that the situation occurred. I am glad it is over and that we are moving on to a new era and that we focus our resources in places that are very much needed.

One of the other areas that I would like to ask, are there any studies this year going to be occurring in terms of lake sedimentation or riverway studies?

Mr. Newman: We will be involved in a flood frequency study relating to the Red River in conjunction with the geological survey of Canada, and that would be a flood frequency over the last 500 years.

Ms. Mihychuk: In the past year, I believe last year there was the decision to get rid of the internal lab analysis for geochemistry, and those positions were released, and now that work is being contracted out. What has been the result of that decision in terms of efficiency, cost? I guess those are the two areas. Are we getting the job done in a timely manner, and what is the cost per sample now versus when it was done internally?

* (1510)

Mr. Newman: The value of the services contracted to the contractor, ETL, was \$60,220.80 for this year. The department advises that all contractual commitments in terms of turn-around time are being met. So that is the detail on the efficiency in cost.

Ms. Mihychuk: Does the department provide availability of sabbaticals for geologists via deferred salary? This would give individuals the ability to put some money away for a future time when they wished to take a year off to perhaps do geological studies in other parts of Canada, perhaps do some international

work, perhaps to go back to university, or it may give them a year to get out of the bush. You can get a little bushwhacked sometimes, and it is important to have that flexibility, I think, for geologists.

This is a fairly common practice in certain sectors. For instance, in the education sector, which I just came out of in my other role, it is encouraged. It allows the department, for example, to bring on new people, to provide them with the ability to be a geologist for a year or two years and allow them the ability to get to know the department, the mining industry, and get their foot into the industry. So in a sector where there is not a great deal of turnover, there is not a whole lot of movement in the geologists, I think there is going to be a bump. We are all sort of aging in a group, but other than that—and I do not think they are really ready for retirement yet—

An Honourable Member: I think you are, as a politician.

Ms. Mihychuk: I am just moving my way up. This would provide the opportunity for them to self-deposit, so it does not cost the government anything. This is a very good idea for the government—I will give you this one without any charge—and be excellent morale and provide flexibility for the geologists. So I am wondering if the minister does not have that available, if he would consider it.

Mr. Newman: Once again, thank you for your constructive suggestion and approach. It does appear to coincide with the kind of approach the department is planning for. Through the provincial geologists committee and the national geological surveys committee, the branch is investigating the potential for establishing exchange programs to facilitate the kinds of objectives you described.

Ms. Mihychuk: I think that is a really positive sign, and I hope that there could be that type of sensitivity, that as well as the additional supports in terms of what we had talked about earlier, providing supports for families. I think it would make the field much more sensitive and open and make it much more attractive for individuals that were not necessarily attracted to geology. That is exactly what we want to.

One of the other areas I wanted to ask about is industrial minerals. There was a situation raised in the past year about building stone, in particular, a quarry south of Snow Lake. I do not know if the minister is aware of that. They were, unfortunately, unable, because of regulation or rules at that time, to access money or grants of any kind through MEAP, but it seemed to be that the rules should have been changed, that there may be potential for exploratory development, or possibly job creation. So I am looking to the minister to provide some leadership or information in terms of that sector. Are there supports for industrial minerals, for the development of industrial minerals in Manitoba, and what do we see those being, if they are not established already?

Mr. Newman: Well, you are definitely once again not only being constructive, but touching a matter that is dear to my own heart in terms of renewed emphasis. The industrial minerals area has an enormous potential in this province, the magnitude of which is only now starting to emerge. The refocusing to reprioritize has led to the emergence of an industrial mineral strategy, and the strategy involves the department actively striving to promote the industrial mineral sector.

In addition, an industrial minerals geologist will be hired in this fiscal year, and a delivery of the aggregate program has been transferred to the Geological Services Branch to facilitate co-ordination with other industrial mineral and geological mapping activities. An industrial mineral and specialties metals advisory board, or otherwise called a steering committee, is currently being established to identify market and development opportunities. Some form of incentive program analogous to MEAP is being considered to help promote development in this sector in conjunction with our MEAP review.

*(1520)

With respect to the very specific situation you described involving, I believe it would be John Kobar and his dolomite deposit in the northern area. We have had several meetings with him and with economic development people from Snow Lake and the mayor and other representation from Snow Lake. We have had several meetings with Cross Lake about their black granite potential deposit usage. We are in co-operation

with Rural Development, playing our co-ordination role, looking at a feasibility of a finishing plant in conjunction with the Department of Rural Development and the Snow Lake community development group, with a view to achieving funding of a feasibility study.

We are doing things to actively promote a better knowledge of the use to which those kinds of products can be utilized in Manitoba by consumers here, and we have encouraged a greater involvement by the private-sector people in the industry in doing international marketing by participating in trade shows elsewhere. Our experience has been building those networks as a key to raising the profile of Manitoba, and it was noteworthy, I think, that there was a presence by several groups marketing industrial minerals at our Mining and Minerals Convention in Winnipeg last November, and I would expect even more participation this year.

Ms. Mihychuk: In terms of the summer field season, in the past season were there any field accidents last year?

Mr. Newman: No one has any knowledge of any accident of any sort. Certainly there are no majors ones.

Ms. Mihychuk: Are all summer assistants treated equally, and by that, are they given equal opportunity to experience different types of field environments, the different jobs that are involved? I can cite an example. This is quite a long time ago, but the female summer staff were not required to drive an outboard motor, and one of the experiences was to provide support services to the camp. That would be taking garbage over to an island, et cetera. It provides the student the ability to learn how to handle the motor and do various other jobs that are all providing a well-rounded experience to those individuals. In this case, the females did not do that job. Ultimately it resulted in this individual not having the experience with an outboard motor and ultimately was in a very serious accident in a summer situation.

So I want to be assured that, no matter what your gender, each field student would have that opportunity

to use various types of equipment and experience different field situations.

Mr. Newman: I am advised that certainly at the acting-director level there is no knowledge of any discrimination based on gender of the type that you have described. If I ever heard that there were, I would be very unimpressed. I think that everyone should be given the same privilege to get their hands dirty and take on the tough jobs. I agree that it is not only a learning experience which can instill pride and self-esteem but it also increases competencies, and beyond that, can be a safety factor. Your point is well made, and I would expect that that would be the way things are done in the department.

Ms. Mihychuk: Does the branch have plans to instruct the field crews to liaise with local First Nations communities in the areas, if they are going to be doing field work in those areas?

Mr. Newman: The practice that has been followed in the past has been to send a letter to the neighbouring affected First Nations or other aboriginal communities with a view to informing them as to what to expect by way of geological work being done by the department, and this year that letter will be sent under the signature of the deputy minister.

Ms. Mihychuk: The supports for crews that are in remote areas are shipped in from various places in the province. It sort of depends on the project. Is there a commitment to use locals, and by that I mean, if you are in the northern Superior project, if you have helicopter support, are you going to be obtaining your groceries from a nearby community, Thompson, Norway House, or are you going to be bringing it in from Winnipeg by truck, which has been done in the past? It would be a huge benefit to the local community to be able to provide supports for those crews.

* (1530)

Mr. Newman: I am advised that the source of food and camp supplies is based on a cost normally coming from northern service centres, which would be the larger northern communities. They are flown in using local air services when that is the appropriate means of

transport. The department will also purchase supplies from smaller communities where they are available at an appropriate price and accessible.

Ms. Mihychuk: That concludes my questions in this area.

Mr. Chairperson: 23.2. Energy and Mineral Resources (d) Geological Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,604,500—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$1,171,700—pass.

Resolution 23.2: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$8,910,400 for Energy and Mines, Energy and Mineral Resources, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

Moving on to 23.3. Industry Support Programs (a) Mineral Exploration Assistance Program, \$3 million.

Ms. Mihychuk: I think we passed this.

Mr. Newman: I had some answers to some questions you raised the last day. Would this be an appropriate time to provide them before you move into this area?

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave of the committee for the minister to provide the answers that were presented last sitting of this committee? [agreed]

Mr. Newman: The names of the Mining Board members. I gave you four names. The names of all the members are Presiding Member Douglas Nicol Abra, Deputy Presiding Member Ian Restall, Member Donald T. Anderson, Member James E. Matthews, Member Lawrence Yusisatan.

The per diem rate for a presiding member is \$336 or \$191 per meeting lasting three and one-half hours or less. The per diem rate for other members is \$192 a day or \$109 per meeting lasting three and a half hours or less. Reasonable travelling and out-of-pocket expenses incurred in the performance of duties may be claimed by members. The Mining Board held two hearings in 1997 and one hearing in 1996.

You had asked a question about claim inspections. In 1997, the claims inspector went into the field to carry out inspections on approximately 20 occasions for

periods of time varying from one to five days. Prior to December 1997, no record was kept of all the claims visited if no problems were encountered, but since that time a new procedure has been put into place. It is now required that the inspector log all claims visited regarding problems encountered. A claim is normally visited if (1) inconsistencies are noted when plotting a new claim on the claim maps, (2) a staker reports that he or she is unable to find the stakes of a claim to which he or she anticipated tying on, (3) a new, unknown staker comes into the area; the inspector might check out his or her claims to see what kind of job they had done. An inspector will also carry out random checks on claims within an area that is visited for one of the preceding reasons.

With respect to the budget, the reduction from two to one inspectors incurred in the fiscal year 1992-93—since that time, the operating budget for the inspector has been raised from \$7,000 to its present level of \$14,500 annually. These costs do not include salary or vehicle costs.

At the committee meeting on the morning of April 23, the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) asked how many geologists have left the department since April 1995. At that time I responded, subject to confirmation, that the number was four, two female, two male. Staff have checked out records, and I can now confirm that the number is in fact five, two female, three male.

Pursuant to our discussion the day before yesterday on April 28, you sought information about annual employment in Manitoba mines. The figures which we have obtained include Rea Gold's Bissett mine. They are derived from the monthly figures reported to the Mines Accident Prevention Association of Manitoba. Stats Canada numbers differ and are incorrect because they class smelting and refining as manufacturing, not mining, and mining diamond-drilling contractors are not included for the purposes of this analysis. The figures for 1989 total 4,384; 1990, 4,350; 1991, 4,789; 1992, 4,696; 1993, 4,388; 1994, 4,047; 1995, 4,237; 1996, 4,438; 1997, 4,470.

The mining companies who comprised this listing—the mining companies are listed here, so you can see

that this does not include the explorationists, the junior exploration companies that are active in Manitoba. The companies that are used for this analysis are Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting in their Flin Flon, Snow Lake and Leaf Rapids operations; Inco Ltd., LynnGold, Tanco, Rea Gold, TVX and Blackhawk. The magnitude of HBM&S is: in Flin Flon, 1,520; Snow Lake, 73; Leaf Rapids, 444; Inco Ltd., 1,762; LynnGold, none since 1989; Tanco, 125; Rea Gold's figure for 1997 was 229 and in 1996 was 60, before that nothing; TVX, 262; Blackhawk, 95. Total 4,470.

Ms. Mihychuk: Thank you very much for those numbers and that information. I appreciate the speed of the response, and it certainly clarifies some of the concerns that I had about some of the dramatic differences of numbers that we heard—one number being 2,000, that would have been a drastic reduction. It also explains some of the comments made by the Mining Association, always cite the statistical variation between StatsCan and themselves, so I thank the department and the minister for providing that information.

Mr. Newman: With respect to the Mining Association, we also have information from them so you can see why—maybe what we have done is established a methodology for talking the same process and the same methodology for arriving at numbers. That is why I cited the notes to the comments I made about the figures we provided because the Mining Association now includes diamond drilling and contractors in their employment figures. So, for example, their figures for 1996, where we would have said 4,438, they said 4,901; and for 1995 where we said 4,237, they said a total of 4,333. But they do break theirs down and do show the contractors and the diamond drilling numbers separately but also inclusively in the total figure.

* (1540)

Mr. Chairperson: 23.3. Industry Support Programs (a) Mineral Exploration Assistance Program \$3,000,000—pass; 3.(b) Petroleum Exploration Assistance Program \$1,000,000—pass; 3.(c) Manitoba Potash Project \$175,600—pass; 3.(d) Acid Rain Abatement Program—Flin Flon \$115,700—pass.

Resolution 23.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$4,291,300 for Energy and Mines, Industry Support Programs \$4,291,300, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

The next item to be considered for the Estimates of the Department of Energy and Mines is the item 1.(a) Minister's Salary. At this point we request the minister's staff to leave the table for the consideration of this item.

23.1. Administration and Finance (a) Minister's Salary \$13,200. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Mihychuk: I am going to use this opportunity to do a little summary of a nine-point plan that I think should raise the concerns of Manitobans and raises concerns for me in particular. I am not going to be presenting a motion to reduce the Minister's Salary to a penny or to half, but I raise these concerns because I think that the minister sincerely wishes to be knowledgeable and to be responsive and aware of the situation, but I think unfortunately that is not the case.

In this sector I think that the minister's efforts to deal with Hydro, Northern Flood, Treaty Land and other initiatives that he has been involved in have perhaps taken him away from this sector which has a certain amount of self-reliance, and I think that this year I guess in total feel that perhaps the minister is less knowledgeable about mining than he was the year before. He is still a rookie. I mean he only got the position a year ago, so I think that there is room to improve. I am not even talking about his vocabulary in terms of geological terms which is a challenge to anybody.

But my serious concerns I have to put on the record because mining is at a critical stage right now, because I believe that it is essential to Manitoba's economy, because I believe it deserves the respect and attention of a government which unfortunately it is not getting.

One of the first things that was evident is the lack of mining experience in the minister's executive office. This was a decision by the minister. I completely understand. I respect the deputy minister; however,

really there is a marked lack of expertise in the minister's office.

Item two, there is the issue of three individuals, I understand, of the five that work only part time for the department, probably a maximum amount of 50 percent devoted to Energy and Mines, the rest being to Northern Affairs, while their salary is totally supported by the department. I know the minister indicated he would look at that. I hope he does. I think that is not representing the situation as it should be in terms of Estimates. Salaries should reflect the jobs they do.

Item three, the department goals which are established to support the department's mission appear to be changeable at whim without consultation of the stakeholders, the partners—and basically from my perspective to ensure that they are met. Sometimes goals are met and sometimes they are not met, but the idea is that there is a process, that they are challenging and something that we all work towards. It is a real concern to me when goals can be changed at whim by the minister or by the department, and I have to object to that.

Item four, as noted by the motion that I presented, the withdrawal, the unprecedented withdrawal of \$6 million from the Mining Reserve Fund, a fund that was established with the. I think, clear intent, as articulated in the bill, to provide that support to mining communities, the workers in those communities at times of crisis when a mine is about to close or is losing reserves. That is all articulated clearly in the Mining Reserve Fund act.

I am not challenging that what they did has somehow broken the law. Clearly those provisions are there, that there is the ability of the government to take the money out, but for the 27 years I believe that the Mining Reserve Fund has existed, it has never been done before. The funds have been directed to provide supports for those mining communities, and we have a serious difference of philosophy and opinion on this. I obviously do not support using the Mining Reserve Fund for exploration in areas, speculative exploration. These are programs that are looking at the long term. What that fund to me seems—it was directed at providing immediate supports to the workers in those

mining communities. So I feel that this is a serious, serious concern, and I have to express my objection.

Item five, serious concerns I have raised about the monitoring and inspections of MEAPs, a program in which exploration companies receive money. For instance, we learnt during this process that there have been no field inspections since May of 1997. I know that this was raised here. The minister indicated his concern, and I think that there will be improvements, but this is now the second year and the improvements may come at the end of MEAP. I sort of heard hints from the minister that we may be looking at other options, but when there is public money there must be the serious attempt to monitor and ensure that that money is spent as indicated and that the people of Manitoba are getting a meaningful return, and that includes field inspections by competent personnel who know what they are supposed to be looking for and in a co-ordinated approach.

* (1550)

Item six, the fact that the department encourages exploration companies to work in Manitoba without specifically identifying, in our case, this year, resource management lands. These are lands identified in co-operation with First Nations by encouraging companies, and we have a very significant expansion in the Marketing branch. This has been ongoing for several years. There is no onus or there is not an equal onus required by that branch to ensure that the respect and the awareness and the sensitivity is also provided to those exploration companies. The priority seems, explore, explore, explore and they should know better than to go on First Nations land. Well, we are actively encouraging exploration companies to come into Manitoba, we should also be respecting First Nations, their aspirations and their need to be aware of what is happening in lands that they have identified.

Item seven, the issuance of public monies through the MEAP program to promote and actively provide exploration in lands identified by First Nations without requiring these companies to register any type of disposition, that is, the exploration permit or any other type of public notice that they are into those lands. Had that been given, the situation which we discussed in some detail would not have happened. The community

in question would have been able to access that information, raised concerns with the minister or at least meet with the companies to find out what type of activity was going to happen. But by not requiring companies to issue or to hold an exploration program while still receiving public money I feel is a serious concern and flies in the face of the words of the minister when he talks about respect and working in partnership with First Nations. There must be that type of open accountability, especially for companies that receive public money.

Item eight: The issue of the Systemhouse deal apparently is not going to be very useful, if of any use to the department. I understand that the department is way ahead of what Systemhouse is providing. They have done a very good job in providing high tech, some of the best technical upgrading in the department. Their equipment surpasses what is available through Systemhouse. They are going to be required to keep three of the four personnel that they had who maintained the whole system, so they are going to be required to pay additional money for Systemhouse as well as keeping that support staff. That to me seems to be totally inappropriate. We are using money for something that is, in this case, not providing the information or the base that this department needs. It is highly technical and moving ahead and in fact may even hold back the department if they complied with just receiving the Systemhouse desktop program. So that is another area. I know that it is a government comprehensive program that is adopted by the government, but I think in this case it is going to be costly and not particularly effective for the department or for the people of Manitoba.

And ultimately No. 10: The minister's lack of knowledge of the department mining numbers, his knowledge of the mining industry seems apparent, and that is extremely unfortunate. I think that the minister shows sincere interest and effort and I do not blame him. I think that he has got on his plate a very large mandate, including very important sectors that are very time-consuming and demanding, but mining is extremely important to the people of Manitoba, extremely important to the revenues of the government and deserves the attention of the minister, his senior staff, and I feel that in this case, the mining sector has been shortchanged and that is extremely unfortunate.

But overall I have always enjoyed working with the minister who has been very co-operative and provided information, and so it is with some regret that I condemn his performance as the Minister of Mines, although he seems like a very nice person, not too knowledgeable about this area. I think that there is enormous room to improve, and on a serious note, that mining and the mining sector needs direct attention at this time, given commodity prices are falling, people are losing their jobs, and there is a number of very serious situations in Manitoba's mining community. I thank the minister for his co-operation in providing information and look forward to next year.

Mr. Chairperson: 23.1. Administration and Finance
(a) Minister's Salary.

Mr. Newman: I think I need a transfusion because of the bite in my lip. The only comment that I will make is I really do appreciate the honourable member for St. James doing my annual evaluation, and it demonstrated the sort of quality that was befitting a candidate for one-half of the job that I now have— aspiring candidate for the job that I now have.

Mr. Chairperson: 23.1.(a) Minister's Salary
\$13,200—pass.

Resolution 23.1: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,156,900 for Energy and Mines, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1999.

This now concludes the Estimates of the Department of Energy and Mines. The next set of Estimates that we will be considering in this section of the Committee of Supply is the Estimates of Civil Service. What is the will of the committee? Proceed.

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

Mr. Chairperson (Gerry McAlpine): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Civil Service Commission. The honourable minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission, do you have an opening statement?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister charged with the administration of The Civil Service Act): I do,

thank you. Mr. Chairman, in introducing the budget Estimates for the Civil Service Commission for 1998-99, I would draw attention to the Supplementary Estimates Information which has been provided and contains a good deal of organizational program and financial information to assist the members with the Estimates review now before us.

The budget Estimates for the Civil Service Commission for 1998-99 show an increase of approximately \$107,000, from \$4,087,000 to \$4,258,000. This increase can be largely attributed to two factors. The first results from additional operating costs associated with the implementation of the government-wide desktop management initiative involving the installation and upgrading of computer work stations and related software. The second involves salary increases related to the three-year collective agreement, which has been applied equally to staff excluded from the bargaining unit, which would include staff of the Civil Service Commission.

The staff year complement for the Civil Service Commission also shows an increase of six staff from 81 to 87. These additional staff years will accommodate the third intake for the Management Internship Program for a total of 18 staff years associated with that program. During 1998-99, it is expected that the original six interns will graduate from the program and be placed in career positions throughout government.

* (1600)

Mr. Chairman, in my opening remarks in May of last year, I made reference to the fact that collective bargaining would be a major priority within the Civil Service Commission during 1997, and I was hopeful a satisfactory settlement would be achieved consistent with the government's bargaining framework. As the members opposite will know, last fall the government was successful in achieving a three-year collective agreement with the Manitoba Government Employees' Union covering the period of March 29, 1997, through to March 24, the year 2000.

The achievement of a longer-term settlement has provided a period of labour relations stability in which the focus of the Civil Service Commission can now turn toward some of the longer-term corporate human

resource management issues facing government. As an example, the Civil Service Commission currently has several staff seconded to and participating in the Better Methods project, which involves a complete updating and redevelopment of the government's corporate financial and human resource management information systems. These systems will have a significant impact on the way the Civil Service Commission manages information and conducts its business in the future.

In addition, the conversion of the new software applications contained within the Better Methods project holds a solution for the Civil Service Commission with respect to the year 2000 issue. The current and outdated management and employee information system is not year 2000 compliant, so it is important that commission resources be directed towards resolving this issue.

The Civil Service Commission continues to explore and expand the use of technology to improve access to services. Two years ago, government employment information was made available on-line through the ACCESS 1-2-3 employment information service. This year, a completely revised and updated personnel policy manual will be made available through the government-wide Internet providing human resource professionals, managers and employees on-line access to the personnel policies and practices which affect them. In addition, the course calendar for organization and staff development will be on-line with a future intent to develop and include information on employee benefits and the Employee Assistance Program. These developments are all consistent with the broader principles of accessibility and transparency in the distribution of information to employees across government.

As referenced earlier, workforce renewal initiatives, such as the Management Internship Program, will be entering its third year with the expectation that the original six interns will be placed in positions throughout 1998-99, allowing room for an additional six interns to be hired the following year. Six new interns are currently in the process of being recruited for 1998-99, with the expectation that the new interns will be appointed sometime in May of 1998.

In addition, the Aboriginal Management Development Project directed at the development of

existing aboriginal employees is entering its second year, and the Civil Service Commission will be providing support to a new aboriginal public administration program. This new program is designed to recruit and introduce external aboriginal candidates, with a priority on youth, to the systems and processes of government over a two-year internship that would prepare the interns for employment in government.

These initiatives are all designed in recognition of the aging demographics within the Manitoba public service and the need to prepare the service for the transition and renewal that will be required over the coming years.

With those, brief opening remarks, Mr. Chairperson, I would now welcome any questions.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the honourable minister for those comments. Does the critic for the official opposition have an opening statement?

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): No, I would prefer to just go right into questions, if possible.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the critic for the official opposition for those remarks. We invite the minister's staff to join us at the table, and we would ask the minister to introduce his staff when they are present.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Joining me at the table is Paul Hart, the Civil Service commissioner. On his left, Gerry Irving, assistant deputy minister, Labour Relations; and Mr. Bob Pollock, director, Human Resources Programs Branch.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister. We will now proceed to line 17.1. Civil Service Commission (a) Executive Office (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits on page 22 of the main Estimate book. Shall the item pass?

Ms. Barrett: Before we get to subappropriation 17.1(a), I would like to ask the minister a question about chart 4 on page 15 of the Estimates book, well, actually charts 3 and 4 in combination which is distribution of salaries and distribution of staff positions. As I look at this, actually I was struck by the fact that three of the four pieces of the pie have a higher

percentage of salaries than their percentage of staff positions. The fourth piece, which is the largest piece in both categories, oh, second largest piece in the salaries and by far the first largest piece in the number of staff positions. The Human Resource Management Services has over 20 percent less of the pie when it comes to staff salaries as it does when it comes to the number of people.

What I am trying to say is 55 percent of the positions in the Civil Service Commission are in the Human Resource Management Services, but only 35 percent of the money goes in that category. When I read through the Estimates, it is clear to me, at least I think it is, that that is, if I could use the word, the guts of the Civil Service Commission. It is where the vast majority of the activities of the commission take place, or certainly it is the area where there is most direct connection with the members of the civil service.

I just have one question. I am wondering if the minister can tell us in the Human Resource Management Services category what the ratio is of men to women.?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am informed by a rough calculation to give the member an answer that probably three-quarters of the staff in that area would be women and the other quarter would be men.

Ms. Barrett: Yes, and I wonder, as a follow-up question, if the minister could give me the same rough calculations for the other three categories: Executive Office, Admin Services and Labour Relation Services.

* (1610)

Mr. Gilleshammer: In what is called the Executive Office, 50 percent of the staff there are male and 50 percent are female. In the Admin Services, I will just give you the numbers and you can figure out the percentages. Out of 14 staff, one of them is male and 13 are female. In the Labour Relations, about two-thirds of them are women and one-third men.

Ms. Barrett: I appreciate the minister's information on that. I would like to go—we are at subappropriation 17.1.(a), are we not? [interjection] Thank you. I am also looking now not only at the Estimates book but at

the annual report for '96-97. I will be through the Estimates process sort of going back and forth, because sometimes there is more information in the annual report than there is in the Estimates book in other things.

Under the Expected Results in the Estimates, it says “ongoing review and revision to the business plan, role and mission for the Civil Service Commission,” and in the annual report it states that the mission is “to contribute cost effective and client focused strategies, policies, and services that meet the needs of executive government and departmental management.” I am wondering if the minister can identify who the client is in this mission statement.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The clients that are served by the Civil Service Commission are departments of government and government employees, as well as, the general public.

Ms. Barrett: The second mission statement in the annual report says “to anticipate the human resource implications of a constantly changing environment and prepare options for management to address those implications.” I would like to ask the minister if he could anticipate some of the elements in that constantly changing environment to look a little in advance and see what kinds of things are being looked at.

Mr. Gilleshammer: To serve the clients that we referenced, the departments and the employees and the general public, there are a number of challenges that face the Civil Service Commission. Probably the one that comes to mind first is the technological change that we are faced within the workforce. I referenced others in my opening comments. We have an aging workforce. We have changing demographics. I referenced the internship program, and we also referenced an aboriginal internship program. We have two different programs there. So these are, I guess, items in society that the staff at the Civil Service Commission must take into consideration as they not only plan the programs but also try and determine the nature of the workforce that is going to be required in coming months and coming years.

Certainly, we are also concerned with the fact that there appears to be shortages of skilled people in some

areas and also the competition we face from private sector, particularly for individuals that have technological skills that are in high demand across North America and across the world. So staff, I believe, do their best to anticipate some of the changes that we are going to face as we move into the next few years and into the next century.

Ms. Barrett: The minister spoke about shortages of skilled people in some areas and in technological areas. Are the shortages largely in the technological areas, or what areas are there shortages of skilled people in the civil service today?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That would be the best example and the primary area of concern at the moment.

Ms. Barrett: What kind of technological skills are we talking about here? A little more specific.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Some areas of concern are in the area of information technology, systems management staff, project management staff, and database administrators.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Chair, I understand all those individual words, but I do not know exactly what they all mean in this context. So, what is a systems management person?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, we have a special operating agency within the Civil Service Commission called Organization and Staff Development. They are responsible for putting forth many of the programs that staff require to stay current as far as technology goes and to update on their skills. I know even from within a small complement within the civil service in my own office, from time to time they are accessing programs like that. Perhaps we could arrange to have an overview by individuals in that particular SOA to inform the member of some of the courses and some of the curriculum that is being used.

Ms. Barrett: I appreciate that. Would that help me understand more of what the areas that the minister said in his earlier answer were shortages? Would discussion with the SOA give me some of that information? What exactly do these categories of individuals do?

Mr. Jack Penner, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am sure it would be helpful to have that overview. Probably the best person to get into more detail on that is the chief information officer who has just come into the system, Mr. Kal Ruberg, who has been with us just a matter of weeks. But what I am finding, and I think seeing, is that there are highly technical systems that are being used.

Changes are going on so rapidly that this is an area where both government and the private sector are expending many hundreds of thousands and millions of dollars to put systems in place that are going to provide the information and the communications abilities between departments. Mr. Ruberg, as I have indicated, just started a few weeks ago, but through his office, if the member is looking for a global snapshot of what government is doing to provide training and skills and in-servicing for members of the civil service, that may be a good area to start.

Ms. Barrett: I will call Mr. Ruberg, and I thank the minister for giving me that information.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Penner): Item 17.1. Civil Service Commission (a) Executive Office (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$170,200—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$61,600—pass.

17.1.(b) Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$535,800. Shall the item pass?

* (1620)

Ms. Barrett: No, no. Thank you, Mr. Chair, so I had my hand raised.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Penner): You are welcome. I did not see your hand.

Ms. Barrett: I know you did not.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Penner): I was reading.

Ms. Barrett: This is where we would discuss Systemhouse? Is this the appropriate place to discuss Systemhouse?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Probably the best place to discuss it would be in the Estimates for the Department of Government Services, but the part of that initiative that affects the Civil Service Commission would be lodged in this particular line.

Ms. Barrett: How many pieces of equipment? I do not know if you could call them terminals, what the technical term is—I am a Luddite of the first order—but how many terminals will there be in the Civil Service Commission upon conclusion of the Systemhouse process?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We have already been transitioned, and the number is 65.

Ms. Barrett: I did not realize “transitioned” was now a verb form. Sixty-five terminals. So what is that in relation to the number of staff? What percentage?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told now that the transitioning has been completed, it is about one per staff.

Ms. Barrett: Could the minister explain what was encompassed in the transition process?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The transitioning involved getting rid of the old equipment and bringing in the new equipment, and part of that was also providing two to three days in-service training for the staff.

Ms. Barrett: Two to three days in-service training for the staff. Was that provided onsite or did staff go to Systemhouse? How was the training done?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told it was offsite.

Ms. Barrett: Where are the old computers, the ones they got rid of? Where are they now?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told they are in storage.

Ms. Barrett: Are they going to remain in storage, or is there some anticipated further use for the no longer required PCs?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That, ultimately, is a central government decision which has not been finalized yet.

Ms. Barrett: Could the minister explain what central government means?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, it means that individual departments are not going to find their own solution to that. There will be a government-wide solution, and I know that solution is being worked on.

Ms. Barrett: And who is working on that solution?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Staff within Government Services.

Ms. Barrett: So the staff within Government Services are working, I assume, in consultation with staff of other departments to determine what happens to these outdated pieces of equipment, or will they decide on their own what will happen to them?

Mr. Gilleshammer: They are taking the lead on that and certainly will take advice from other people within government, but Government Services certainly is the department responsible.

Ms. Barrett: Is there anywhere in the Estimates or in any one of the line items—oh, I guess there is. There is the 34.7 item there for Desktop Services on page 33 under 17-1c. Is that the total cost for—oh, no, wait a minute. Okay, I have a problem here.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Penner): Are we still dealing with the same line item that we were dealing with before, or have we skipped to different line item? Yes. We were discussing Item 17.1.(b) Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits, and (2) Other Expenditures. Have we moved on?

Ms. Barrett: I am not going by the budget book; I am going by the Estimates book.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Penner): Hmm, I need some advice here as to how I maintain a semblance of order in moving along in my book and how we coordinate that with your book.

If the committee would consent, I mean, I can move ahead and then move back again; however, I would ask that we might give consideration to Administrative Services, that line, and then move on from there.

Ms. Barrett: I made the mistake.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Penner): Okay, let us move back then to (b) Administrative Services.

Ms. Barrett: Please, yes. Thank you. I apologize for this. Okay, under Other Operating, I am having a bit of difficulty figuring out what the two columns mean. I am assuming, because I did not do the math myself, that the 134.4 is a summary of Other Operating, is then itemized by 34.4, 82.8 and 17.2. Is that accurate?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct.

Ms. Barrett: Okay, so the Desktop Services number of 34.4 is the full estimate of this cost of the utilization of the Systemhouse system?

Mr. Gilleshammer: For that branch, that is correct.

Ms. Barrett: For the Administrative Services branch. Okay, can the minister explain the elements that make up that particular item? Is that for training or the purchase or lease of the machines? What elements go into the Desktop Services?

Mr. Gilleshammer: It would be for the hardware, the software, the training. Those would be the most significant components.

* (1630)

Ms. Barrett: A two-part question. One, is it possible to get, if not right now if you do not have it but later, a breakdown of those three components that make up the 34.4, and, secondly, where in the Estimates is the cost of the contract? I am assuming there is a contract at Systemhouse, an administrative contract or something. Is that the 82.8, or where is that found in the Estimates?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, we are talking about 14 staff, 14 work stations, and that would be the cost of, as I indicated, the hardware, the software, the training, and the ongoing support.

Ms. Barrett: What is the ongoing support?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, it is I guess more commonly called the help desk.

Ms. Barrett: It may be more commonly called that by the minister, but I have never heard the phrase, so what does the help desk mean?

Mr. Gilleshammer: If any of these 14 individuals, whilst at work on their equipment, requires help, they can phone the help desk and the problem perhaps could be solved over the phone, as I know it often is, or if it is more complex than that, someone could even visit the site and give them the assistance. So it is estimated that part of the \$34,400 for these 14 individuals, which encompasses their hardware, software, training is also apportioned to what is known as the help desk.

Ms. Barrett: Yes, and I can see how you can come up with some pretty concrete figures for the hardware, the software, and the work stations, et cetera, and the training, as you said has already taken place, but how do you apportion the help desk figure? Is there a global figure cost that is charged to the Civil Service Commission and then prorated by the number of work stations?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told the organization known as SHL has been in this business for many, many years, and this is part of the estimate that is built into the contract for this kind of assistance.

Ms. Barrett: So the costs for the administrative services for the desktop services, the SHL contract if you will, for the startup year—no, this is the first year. Wait a minute—let me go back. The minister said that the transition had taken place, so the training had already taken place. Is the cost for the training for these 14 people reflected in this figure—it must have been, it would not have been in last year's, or would it?

Mr. Gilleshammer: This is the 1998 expenditure Estimates, so this is the cost that would be in the current year budget for hardware, software, training, and the help desk. Some of the training is ongoing.

Ms. Barrett: But the training started in this fiscal year, so all the training would be reflected in this fiscal year.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, the training is reflected here and this is the training for 1998, and as a result is part of this budget.

Ms. Barrett: Does the minister anticipate that the training element of this item would be lessened year over year because of the fact that the startup training has been done with current staff?

Mr. Gilleshammer: We anticipate that as new software is developed and comes into the system and as there are staff changes, there will have to be a component within this line set aside for training. It is a little premature to get into the 1999 budget, but probably within three or four months that process will start. But we anticipate there will be training needs.

Ms. Barrett: What is meant by machine utilization figure?

Mr. Gilleshammer: This line, I am told, is there because we still operate under a main frame system and, as in coming years, that expenditure will no longer, for the main frame, be required; but there may be expenditures for other equipment.

Ms. Barrett: I have not been attending all of the other Estimates, but it is my understanding that there is in some other departments an estimate of, say, the next five years of the cost of the computers. I believe the Department of Education has made that estimate. Does the minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission have that kind of a long-term cost? You have a contract, do you not, with Systemhouse?

Mr. Gilleshammer: There are some aspects that I think are fixed term cost, but you would have to get that from the Department of Government Services. We do not have projections out into the future that, I think, what the member is looking for.

Ms. Barrett: So the department did not sign a contract with Systemhouse. The government signed a master contract with Systemhouse through the Department of Government Services?

Mr. Gilleshammer: That is correct.

Ms. Barrett: The minister talked about, in an earlier answer, the need for more software to be developed as things change. Who generates the request? I am assuming Systemhouse develops the software or causes

to be developed. Who develops the software and as a result of what?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Systemhouse, I am told, will purchase that depending on the needs of government and, in our case, the needs of our department.

Ms. Barrett: So the department makes a request of Systemhouse for software in a particular area, and Systemhouse subcontracts or contracts out to another organization, or however, and then delivers the software to the department? Is that the process?

Mr. Gilleshammer: If we have an opportunity to have some input to let people know what our needs are, their task would be to secure it, and we would purchase it.

Ms. Barrett: So the purchase of software is not covered under the—there is not a sort of an element of the master contract as there is in the help desk about software? Software is an additional charge that would be levied by Systemhouse to the department upon request of the department?

* (1640)

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes. There is a standard package. It is called the basic office suite. If we have requirements beyond that, we can attempt to secure it.

Ms. Barrett: Would it be secured through Systemhouse, or could you secure it from another source?

Mr. Gilleshammer: It has to be compatible with the Systemhouse system, but it may be secured from some other source. It has to be installed by them and compatible.

Ms. Barrett: Okay, I think that is all on that at this point.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Penner): Item 17.1 (b) Administrative Services (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$535,800—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$290,000—pass. (c) Human Resource Management Services.

Ms. Barrett: I would like to ask some questions about both the Management Internship Program and the

Aboriginal Management Development Project. The minister spoke about them in his opening remarks and actually, I would say, highlighted these two programs when he talked about the aging workforce and the demographics of our province that are changing. It sounds to me as though they expect the Aboriginal Management Project and the Management Internship Program to assist government in addressing these issues. I would not disagree with him in any of his comments about the face of Manitoba changing.

So I am looking at the annual report where there is a paragraph on each of them, but it is not very detailed. First, with the Management Internship Program, did it just begin or is it in its first term or when did it begin?

Mr. Gilleshammer: If the member would like, I could put on the record some detail on it. Then, if there is still more information you need, you can ask questions from there. Okay. The Management Internship Program is a new initiative approved in the 1995-96 Estimates. It is co-ordinated by the Civil Service Commission. The objective is to proactively recruit younger, talented employees to assist in meeting future requirements of government consistent with public service renewal and change.

Five or six interns are recruited each year, and this is planned over a period of four or five years. It is centrally managed. There are rotational work assignments. There is the central orientation. There is structured training and mentoring over a two- to three-year period designed to provide accelerated learning and maximum exposure to government operations.

The ultimate goal is placement in a middle management or professional career position within government departments. I know that there were six interns brought on a year ago that I had the opportunity to meet, and we are just in the process of recruiting six more. The six interns recruited in May of 1996 are all moving into the third year of the program and I am told they are all doing extremely well. Five interns recruited in May of 1997 have completed orientation and their first assignments. I am also told that they are doing well.

I have indicated we are recruiting some in May of 1998 and during 1998-99 the original six interns will graduate from the program and be placed in career

positions throughout government. Of course, the graduation of the first six interns will allow room for an additional six next year.

I could also provide for my honourable friend the internship short guide and another pamphlet here providing some information on it that I think she would find helpful, so I will table that with the clerk.

Ms. Barrett: I appreciate the minister giving me an overview on that, and I have a few questions which may be covered in the material that he has tabled, but I will ask them anyway.

He says that five to six are recruited each year. What is the recruitment process?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that the recruitment is done by advertising at all of the universities and that the standard process of becoming a member of the civil service is followed.

* (1650)

Ms. Barrett: The civil service process, that means a written application, an interview or a series of interviews are undertaken by these individuals?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, I am told there is a written application, and then there is a screening process that is used to compare the application to the standard, the criteria that had been set. There is a written test, a personality profile test, and then there is a board consisting of Mr. Pollock and some selected deputy ministers who go through the interview process and make the final decisions.

Ms. Barrett: Are the elements in this process comparable to a normal civil service process or are there additional things added on because this is an internship program?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told it is essentially the same, but a little more rigorous in terms of the written test and the personality profile test.

Ms. Barrett: Is there a personality profile test for normal civil service, or is this an additional element to this particular program?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that there is a personality profile test that is sometimes used by departments, if they choose to, but it is used here because this is a training program and it is part of the rigours of getting into the program.

Ms. Barrett: What is the name of the personality test?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told it is called preview assessment.

Ms. Barrett: How many applicants in any one year—I know it is a fairly new program, so about how many applicants does the Civil Service Commission get for this program?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told they have been attracting around 70 or 80 applicants per year.

Ms. Barrett: What are the scholastic requirements? Do applicants have to be completing their undergraduate program, or is it graduate? What level is it?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes, they have to have completed a master's level with a public service focus, and I think that information is contained in the information that I tabled for you.

Ms. Barrett: The minister said that the board was made up of Mr. Pollock and selected deputy ministers. Can the minister give me a sampling or a listing of which deputy ministers are on that board? Do they rotate through, or what are the criteria for selecting the deputy ministers who sit on that board?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am told that it has been the deputy from Family Services, the deputy from Education, and the associate secretary to Treasury Board.

Ms. Barrett: Can the minister give the explanation for why those three deputies have been selected?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Basically, they have expressed an interest in the program, and I guess they are referred to as sponsors of the program.

Ms. Barrett: Only three departments—well, departments and Treasury Board—have expressed an interest in the Management Internship Program?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The interest is across government. The placements are in all departments; the experiences are in all departments. But I would not sort of read anything special into the fact that those were the three that came forward to participate first.

Ms. Barrett: So we have had now, well, two intake processes. The first group is graduating this year; the second group has gone through its orientation and is going to begin; and the third group is being recruited this spring. Does the Civil Service Commission or whoever—I guess Mr. Pollock would be the person who is the co-ordinator of this. Does the notice go out to all departments saying: Are you interested in serving on the selection board, or is it just reallowing the Family Services and Education and Treasury Board to do it again?

Mr. Gilleshammer: All departments were notified, and these were the three departments that, I guess you could say, came forward first and have been part of the process. It is, in some ways, a pilot project to attract bright young graduates to government, to give them an experience across many departments, and to allow them to commence a career in the public service and fulfill a need that government has.

Ms. Barrett: Who is in charge of the whole program? Who is the co-ordinator?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The Civil Service Commission is in charge of it, and the staff at the table here have certainly taken a strong interest in it. I know that early last year I had the opportunity to meet with these people, and I have since met some of them as they have rotated through various departments, but it is the Civil Service Commission that takes the primary responsibility for it.

Ms. Barrett: The minister stated earlier in discussing this that the interns were rotationally assigned to different departments. Who decides the rotation, and what are the criteria for that rotation? How long are they in each department?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The program is monitored by program staff within the Human Resource Programs Branch of the Civil Service Commission. The approximate time of an assignment is about six months.

This is developed and negotiated with various managers in various departments.

Ms. Barrett: So the interns who began, or I guess were recruited in May of 1996, how many assignments would they have had? I assume there was—you said there was an orientation period. How long is the orientation period, and then how many rotations on average would an intern have?

Mr. Gilleshammer: They would have in the area of three or four different experiences and assignments.

* (1700)

Ms. Barrett: How do the supervisors or the people in the Human Resource Branch determine which departments will get which interns?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would say there is a certain amount of negotiations involved, depending on the background of the student, the interest of the student. They are rotated into a number of areas such as Executive Council, Finance, Treasury Board, Civil Service Commission, as well as the line departments. I would hope that this is an ongoing process. If someone, after having two experiences, has an interest in another area of government, that can be discussed and arranged so that ultimately we can have a satisfied, well-trained employee and be able to meet the needs of government.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 5 p.m. Committee rise.

HEALTH

Mr. Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. When this section of the Committee of Supply last sat, it had been considering the Estimates of the Department of Health, specifically the amendment moved by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) to the main motion moved by the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford).

The amendment moved by the honourable member for Inkster reads that the words “and the House of Commons” be deleted from the motion. When the

committee last sat, the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) had been speaking to the amendment and has 22 minutes remaining.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Mr. Chair, now, trying to pick up, if I remember correctly where I left off the last time we met, I believe I was responding to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) on their motion to amend the motion of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford). I was attempting to give an overview of how we got to where we are today and what the issues that are intertwined in this so-called hepatitis C issue are.

* (1440)

Just again by way of background, up until the current time the blood system in Canada was effectively operated by the Canadian Red Cross Society, an independent organization who collected, processed, distributed blood and blood products across our country. They did it, in essence, by providing them primarily to hospitals and places where people receive blood or blood products.

The federal government, under its responsibility for products and product safety, just as it is in the case for food, for pharmaceuticals, et cetera, had the regulatory responsibility to ensure that the blood system was safe, or as safe as it possibly could be. That was the way the system operated. The federal government had responsibility to regulate. They were often sometimes slow in getting into regulation, but they had the jurisdiction for it. The Canadian Red Cross Society collected, processed, distributed blood and blood products to our hospitals, which again are independent bodies.

The province's only role, in essence, was to pay for it, and the mechanism of payment was one where, I believe, we made annual grants to the Red Cross, as provinces, for this particular service they offered.

As a bit of an aside, I am a big believer that the correct way to fund is by direct purchase of product and we fund the facilities to purchase the product and then I think it is much better than the grant system. But beside that point, there was a Canadian blood

committee, sort of an informal committee in which the provinces were represented as we administered the grants, or worked out the grants with the Red Cross, but we, in essence, were the payers for the system. So the responsibility must rest with the operator and it must rest with the regulator, and that is where the responsibility really has lain.

Now, what has happened since? The Canadian Red Cross Society, some would say, is bankrupt, others would say it is insolvent—probably no difference between them. The reality of it is that their liabilities and potential liabilities far exceed the value of their assets, and they, of course, today control and own most of the Canadian blood system, so they have very little to pay to compensate people who were injured or may have a claim, not even on a humanitarian basis. But people who would have a legitimate and legal claim for compensation from an operator, their resources with which to pay are swamped or in no way adequate against their assets. So they just do not have the cash to be there.

The federal government of course is there, and what we have seen across the country is in the various lawsuits that have been filed to date, provinces have been named as a party, as a defendant because of this Canadian blood, this unofficial kind of blood committee we had that provided the grants to the Red Cross.

So any liability or relationship to liability that we may have in here really rests with that committee, and that is dubious, I would argue, at best, but my point is that there are others who ran and were responsible for the blood system as regulator and operator. So one of those parties is bankrupt, the other is the national government, who wields great power and authority.

In the lawsuits that in essence have been filed in a variety of provinces, all three, federal, provincial, and Red Cross, have been named. So we have an issue here. The federal government invites us to the table in essence and said: We are all being sued here, let us do the legal work and find out what our case is. They did, and they identified that from the period in 1986 to '90—and by the way, I understand most of the class actions suits, and I look to Mr. Wendt at the back of the room for a nod one way or the other, but I believe most

of the class action suits have been filed in that parameter. That is why in fact the federal legal department in the questions we put to them indicated that was their area because most of the cases that are coming forward are in that area. I suspect that they are there in fact because that is where their legal advisers view there being a negligence that they can prove.

So the federal government said: Let us see if we can handle this on a national basis with a program, and it makes eminently good sense to have only a national program, because there has been a lot of mobility among Canadians and people may have been infected in one province and live in another, et cetera, and you get into some real issues if you have go-it-alone programs. Even Quebec, with its separatist government, wanted to be at least operationally part of this program just to avoid those kinds of issues of mobility and where people are across the country.

So we started meeting. Mr. Rock avoided some of those meetings. He wanted everything to be worked out by officials. I have commented on that in public and what have you. But we worked out parameters, and it was always based on dealing with negligence issues. That is what the federal work did, that is where they came from, and that is where we had been. More importantly even, the dollars that the federal government talked about and brought to the table, and we negotiated more than they initially brought, but what they brought to the table was solely to deal with the negligence issue.

So their actions, their discussions all through this process and the premise on which ministers met had to deal with negligence issues. Mr. Rock, on a number of occasions in speaking to the media, in my humble opinion, talked about this as being a compassionate plan and gave the impression that it was to compensate all hepatitis C people. That was never what he discussed with us, in my recollection, or what the plan was or where our discussions or where the federal dollars were. So if he made those statements in the media for perhaps some quick political support, I think they have come home to haunt him, and that may be part of the problems that are there, but he is a cabinet minister of federal rank, and he has to take responsibility for those types of things.

So that is where we were. Now, what about a program going beyond the negligence area? Well, the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) asked me today about numbers, and we can share some of those in more detail, but the potential population of people with hepatitis C outside of that area, there is a fairly large variance, because it does take a long time to find out if you do in fact have hepatitis C, as Mr. Wendt discussed in his Estimates committee, that the records of the Red Cross, the hospitals in terms of blood transfusion are not complete enough to get a full sense of how many people you would even want to do a look-back test on. So there is a great range.

A rule of thumb that ministers have talked about is it potentially could be double the group that would be considered in the compensation package. So if that is the case, one would have to look at at least another \$1.2 billion.

Now, a problem for the provinces—and this is what dominated all of our meetings—was, and we were just again talking about the group for which there was a negligence. For that group, we did a fair bit of work—British Columbia, Manitoba and, I think, Ontario. We used our numbers, and we looked at what our health care expenditures would be as provinces. We estimated that it would be somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$1.6 billion in today's dollars for the life of the people who would be in that category, on health care costs, and what is interesting is that, because of the way our health transfers work, that is all money at the margin, and not one penny of it, quite frankly, is coming from the national government.

Now, the hepatitis C community rightly made the argument: Do not hold us in a battle, a federal-provincial battle. I agreed with them, and we all did, and that is why I think we worked on and got an agreement on the plan. But the point that Manitoba made and New Brunswick made and other provinces made over and over again was that the federal government has to recognize that, in this area where there was a negligence by the system, or potentially a negligence by the system, they had some responsibility at least to account to us for those health care costs.

What surprised me was that not only did the federal minister not acknowledge it initially, but he tells us that

the Prime Minister just would not acknowledge it at all. So I know a little bit about how people feel in getting the brush-off of Prime Minister Chretien. This money is of no value. You would have to spend it anyways. Well, we spend money on the treatment of people who are injured in automobile accidents, yet we do go back and get money from Autopac for that. We treat people who are injured in the workplace. The Workers Compensation Board pays for that. And British Columbia, encouraged by the federal government, is looking at getting money back from the tobacco industry where it suffered costs due to injuries through tobacco.

* (1450)

So I have said, and I have said it on the record, that one of the things we as provinces have to look at in that area—and it is a bit of an aside to this issue—is this: Do we have a potential case against the national government for a share of the costs that we are expending in health care? We may in fact do it, but that is an aside to this issue. I only flag it by way of discussion.

So we had that agreement. It was in place for the reasons I have outlined to deal with that group. What about extending it? Here is the great issue that we have to grapple with. This is not just about people who received hepatitis C in the blood system when, in fact, there may not have been a negligence. One of the regrettable things about this whole point is that there are a number of things that play in the blood system through this period. There was a period in which the Canadian Red Cross Society in running the blood system, and I think Mr. Justice Krever has commented on this, did a deplorable job. They just were not managing it well.

Because of that, it is argued, and very strongly, that there were people who received tainted blood when they otherwise should not have. Even the decision to distribute blood they knew was tainted at the time speaks to just how badly that organization managed its affairs and made decisions. Quite frankly, that is why we as provincial ministers said we cannot allow the Red Cross to continue to run the Canadian blood system. I am pleased to indicate that we hope by the fall that the new Canadian blood agency will, in fact, be

running the system, will be purchasing the assets of the Red Cross, and some \$100 million of the proceeds from those assets will be contributed to the compensation package. The Red Cross still insisted on keeping some \$30 million to carry on its operations, and were very insistent upon that, so I just make that point—a bit of an aside.

So, if we extend it to an area where there was not negligence, for hep C, it raises the issue: Should the health care system provide a compensation package beyond the Canadian social safety net, because we are not talking about a void here? We as Canadians have already built an extensive social safety net with health care. In the case of Manitoba, we add Pharmacare; we add home care. We have other supports in place. a variety of tax credits, and nationally, through the Canada Pension Plan, we provide a disability pension for those who are unable to work. So we have a social safety net in place. It may not always be adequate, and I am not suggesting it is, but we have built one for Canadians when they are injured, when they become ill through whatever means and are not able to—or need medical attention or need medical care or are not able to work. We have built that. So even the plan we have put in place for those who were injured through a potential negligence, we have said this is on top of the safety net. So that is what we are really talking about. is the top-up to the safety net. Nobody is being left without any help. I want to make that point. We as Canadians do not find that acceptable. That is why we have built a social safety net.

So the question is: do we provide a top-up to that for people who suffer injury during the course of treatment or care in the health care system when there is no negligence, when the system in assuming the risks, the normal risks of delivering health care, sees results that were not what was of course hoped for—allergic reactions to drugs that leave people crippled and unable to work and enjoy life; surgical procedures that do not turn out the way intended in assuming risk and may leave people a cripple? I am thinking of some very delicate spinal or neurological procedures. Even in blood we cannot guarantee that the blood system will be 100 percent pure always. The next blood-borne virus that comes along, we do not even know if we will have a test to it. We probably will not discover it until people start becoming sick with it.

Those are the risks of the system, and those risks are balanced against not using the system which for many people is death. So we balance those risks all the time. The question is: do we provide a top-up above that, above the social safety net for people injured in that system, and if we do, how do we pay for it?

We as provinces do not have the resources to get into that level of insurance, to top that up. We simply do not. We already pay for the negligence insurance part of the system. We cover physicians' insurance through our negotiations with the MMA. We indirectly pay for the insurance of hospitals within the system, so we already provide insurance for negligence. We cannot afford, quite, to be blunt—nor would I think if the member looked at all the demands on money in the system, would argue that is a priority.

So our difficulty in this area is: do we in this particular case go beyond where the system is negligent, and if we do, then why are we not giving it to everybody? Why are we not providing extra compensation to someone who has a bad reaction to a drug that is part of the risk and may not be able to work because of it? Why are we not providing a top-up to someone who goes in for a surgical procedure, the risk is borne and things do not work out quite the way as hoped for and is made worse by it?

We may want to do that as a society, and it is great for us as legislators to talk about it, but if you are going to agree to do that, how do you finance it? With all the demands, growing demands on health care, would that be the priority we would accept? I think the reason, in fairness to all colleagues across the country, why the New Democratic government in Saskatchewan—and I quoted from the press release today—why all provincial governments, why the Liberal government in Ottawa has taken the position that it has, is because they have looked at and we have looked at the implications of a no-fault insurance top-up for injury in the system where there has not been a negligence, that is part of the normal risk, and the cost could be huge.

I just tell the member a real-life dilemma in building the new Canadian blood system that we are involved in is the cost of insurance for that system. We are having enough difficulty finding insurers for the new blood system where we are liable where there is negligence.

Add on top of that anybody who may be injured through the normal risk of blood, we could not afford to build a new blood system. We could not insure it. We would have to self-insure it, and quite frankly it would be hard to recommend we even get into owning a blood system at all.

That is the real fear here because if the cost of these things, by adding on where we do not have a responsibility and do not have the resources to be there—could make it unaffordable, and that is really what we get into. This is more than—and regrettably for those people who are in the category, but it is more than just hepatitis C. I think what has made this so hard to take for those people, so very hard, is that their injury may have come at the time when the blood system was doing all that it could reasonably expect it to do. When it could have improved its system, it did not. It has been severely criticized.

The Red Cross has actually had the responsibility taken away from it now for running the blood system because of the way it managed. If it had managed well, we still very likely would have a number of Canadians, a significant number of Canadians, who had hepatitis C through the blood system. The regrettable thing is that that particular group is mixed in obviously with the area where there is a negligence. I appreciate someone who got hepatitis C through the blood system saying, why me; why did this happen; someone has to compensate me for what has happened; and why are you compensating that person and not me because of the time.

Well, the time becomes very significant, very significant in principle, very significant in whether or not it could have been prevented. Based on the work that was done by the federal government, the '86 to '90 window was picked because that is the period where it is believed the blood system could have made a difference and did not, whereas the period before, it is believed that the system could not have made a difference or that it was highly unlikely it could have, given the developing state of technology.

I know the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) looks at me, and there may be a debate around this. I am not the expert, and I did not prepare the preparatory work, but like all tests, they have a period of development. So that is the logic about where we are

today. It is a difficult issue. It has lots of implications. The only comment I do make is the reason why Liberals, Conservatives, Parti Quebecois, Independents, New Democrats in governments all across this country have taken this position is because we have been intimately involved in the development of this issue. We know the implications of where this could be. We know the other parts to this, and I appreciate there is a very large human side to this.

The one thing I think we can all say as Canadians, at least unlike in many other countries, particularly the United States, is we do have an extensive social safety net today to ensure that whether you have cancer and cannot work, you have lung cancer and cannot work, you have heart disease and cannot work, you are crippled through an accident that was not compensable and you cannot work, we ensure your medical costs are there, your home care, Pharmacare supports are there, and we have a variety of income assistance. Not arguing all of them are adequate, but they are there as part of our social safety net. So what we are really debating is the top-up to that. At least as Canadians I think we can be proud that we have, unlike many, a very extensive social safety net in place today. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): I want to just make a few remarks, and I want to begin by reminding people of the motion. The motion reads that this committee recommend that the Legislature and the House of Commons hold a free vote on whether to extend compensation to all victims who have contracted hepatitis C from contaminated blood.

One of the things that I have found very interesting is that most of the members opposite who have made presentation to the committee, and some very interesting presentations have been made, but most of the members opposite have argued that compensation should not be extended. I have not heard one of them argue as to why there should not be a free vote, and indeed I do not even think one of them has mentioned the expression.

Point of Order

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): On a point of order, I think the member

should be very careful who she attributes comments to. I think I made it very clear in my particular presentation as to what my position was, and I do not want the member misrepresenting my position in any way. So, if she has specific comments to attribute to specific members, please let her do so but do not put various members in groups without identifying them.

* (1500)

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable Minister of Justice does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts. The honourable member for Osborne, to continue.

* * *

Ms. McGifford: The Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) may not have had a point of order, but if indeed he did mention "free vote," I do apologize to him but wish he did not make his comments in so adversarial and unpleasant a way. But, leaving that aside, I wanted to address the member for Inkster's (Mr. Lamoureux) amendment. The member for Inkster thought that we should delete the phrase "House of Commons." In other words, this resolution would merely request that our House have a free vote, the Legislature of Manitoba.

I noticed that when the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) was speaking, he spoke with great sympathy for people living with hepatitis C. He mentioned Susan Wish, and I think we have all heard her letter and we are all very sympathetic with the plight of Susan Wish and her family. The member for Inkster also talked about people suffering from AIDS, many of whom also acquired their illness, their virus as a result of contaminated blood. I am sure that the member for Inkster is very concerned about people living with hepatitis C and people living with AIDS, but it seemed to me, none the less, and I heard his arguments, that one of his reasons for wanting to delete House of Commons from our recommendation was to let his colleagues in Ottawa off the hook. Now I could be wrong, but it certainly crossed my mind.

And then we heard from the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski). The member for The Maples, I believe, supported the idea of a free vote in the Legislature of Manitoba, but he did not support the idea

of a free vote in the House of Commons, or maybe I am not being fair to him. Perhaps he supported a free vote in the House of Commons, but did not think that we should include that in our recommendation, because I think his point was that what goes on in the House of Commons is none of our business and that we should not try to address issues and proceedings in the House of Commons in any way. He wanted to limit the work we do in regard to hepatitis C to what work can reasonably be done in Manitoba. But I do think that part of our work as legislators is to advocate with our fellow politicians in Ottawa, and if we could do something that would help bring about a free vote, I certainly would have been in favour of it.

I know the member for The Maples felt that when he was a school trustee, what he did as a school trustee should have nothing to do apparently with what Mr. O'Shaughnessy did as a city councillor or what the member for The Maples now does as an MLA. I think personally, I conceive of a more holistic kind of model where we support one another and work with one another. So, personally, I reject the arguments put forth by the member for The Maples. I am very pleased to see that he is sympathetic, and he did indicate his sympathies with people living with hepatitis C, but he supported the amendment from the member for Inkster, and I do not support that amendment.

I notice that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), when he made his presentation, was very concerned with the Workers Compensation Board in Ontario, and particularly the relationship between the Workers Compensation and the NDP government. He did discuss hepatitis C issues, but frankly his concerns with hepatitis C seemed peripheral that day to his concerns with the Workers Compensation Board in Ontario. I think he missed the boat in his arguments. I think he had an opportunity to address the issue of hepatitis C and he chose not to.

The Minister of Culture (Mrs. Vodrey) seemed to show more interest in hepatitis C and compensation, but she—and I did read her speech quite carefully—did not mention the question of a free vote—[interjection] I guess it just slipped her mind, as my colleague from Thompson says.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) of course has spoken about the hepatitis issue extensively in this

committee and in the House, and I am sure in the work that he has done down east and in various locations where Ministers of Health have met. I think the minister is to be commended on his knowledge. He is absolutely thoroughly knowledgeable in the issue, and I certainly appreciate it.

On the record, the minister has presented some very detailed answers. He has certainly outlined the issue of accountability, so that even I as a layman can follow his arguments, and that is certainly to his credit. He has sprinkled his work with the word "malfeasance" and brought that word into my vocabulary, and I am very grateful.

The minister has spoken about the operator of the blood system, the Red Cross, the regulator of the blood system, the federal government, and the purchasers of the blood system, the provincial government. He attributes responsibility for contaminated blood, and the passing of that blood to what might have otherwise been very healthy individuals. He has seen responsibility as being that of the Red Cross and that of the federal government. We can only concur that the minister is absolutely correct, that the lion's share of responsibility is with those two bodies.

Nonetheless, the minister has been very clear that Manitoba, our province, was the purchaser of these products—and I am not a lawyer, so I cannot speak with expertise—but the purchaser of those products seems to me to have at the very least an ethical and moral responsibility for those products, and presumably also a legal responsibility, though I am not a lawyer.

The minister has not really addressed the issue as to whether we should have a free vote with regard to the extension of the hepatitis compensation package. As I said, most of the members opposite, with the exception of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), have talked about why we should not offer compensation, but they have not addressed the issue of a free vote. So I can only conclude that they support the idea of a free vote and that they will pass this motion and allow a free vote in the House where we can all vote according to our conscience and according to how our consciences dictate us to vote. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Chairperson, I had indicated to the Minister of Health that I did have

a couple of questions that I wanted to ask. In listening to his response, as I indicated yesterday, I can be somewhat sympathetic to the arguments of both levels of government in terms of what it is that they are saying, but there are a couple of things that come to mind. You know, the package covers between 1986 and 1990, and it is hard for me to imagine how on January 1, 1986, someone, it is determined, as being negligent; yet, the day before, it is not negligent. So in the month of December, let us say, in 1985 that there was no one that was infected by this infection, hepatitis C; likewise, towards the end of the negligence, how rigid we are in our definition. I can appreciate why it is that that has occurred, but again I would go back to the arguments of compassion.

In Question Period, the Minister of Health made reference to, well, what if a pharmaceutical company had a drug that came out and it had side effects, would we indeed be obligated. I think there is a substantial difference between the Red Cross, the Canadian Red Cross, what used-to-be type thing, and a pharmaceutical company. I think the circumstances are quite different, and the circumstances surrounding this is what we need to look at.

* (1510)

I have not heard the numbers. The member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) asked a question today in terms of do we have an idea of numbers of individuals. I had talked to a constituent yesterday, and that was one of the questions that was posed. Do we know how many individuals are we really talking about, and I think that is a valid question to ask. The minister speculates in terms of, well, we would anticipate that it could be as much as an additional \$1.2 billion, I believe is what he had indicated. Do we have any idea in terms of the province of Manitoba what would be some sort of a compensation package? Are there going to be any exceptions for the minister? Is there ways in which individuals that have been infected might be able to appeal for some form of compensation? I think those are valid questions and some answers need to be known for people.

I think that assists MLAs. As I indicated yesterday, I found that the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) and the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) are obviously

quite aware of this particular issue, but it really has become a very dominant issue in the last year, in particular since the hepatitis C agreement was finalized between the different levels of government. I say that because of the Hansard search that I had conducted. So there needs to be more awareness amongst all of the elected MLAs, and I think there is some merit to be arguing for some sort of an independent vote inside the Manitoba Legislature.

We moved the motion to delete the House of Commons—you know, the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) might have had some differing reasons than me, but I really felt that what I wanted to do was to focus the attention on that of the provincial responsibility and is the province looking at doing anything outside.

Already, for example, in Ottawa, we hear some Liberal M.P.s are talking about the next step or what possibly might be there. Is this something which the Minister of Health is even considering? Has he ruled this out? Do we know the numbers? Do we have any idea in terms of numbers for the province of Manitoba, not across Canada but for the province of Manitoba?

In Question Period today I drew the parallel of the Manitoba flood of last year. Mr. Chairperson, we did not have a legal obligation to go and compensate. We did it because we felt it was the right thing to do. You have to look at the situations, the circumstances surrounding it and make a good decision. Maybe we might not. If you narrow it down and you say, well, here is the area where there has been demonstrated negligence and it has come down through the courts. Well, maybe there is something that we can do outside of that area. Maybe it does not have to be as healthy as a compensation package. I do not know the details of the compensation package or exactly what individuals between that time frame are actually going to be receiving, but maybe there is something that we can do for individuals who do fall outside that time frame. That is what I am interested in hearing. I think that is what my constituents would want to hear, what other options that the government might be looking at.

It pleased me when I was coming to the office today and I hear on the radio that some members of Parliament are looking at the next step, if in fact there

are additional things that can be done. Well, that is really what we are asking of the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), or is that something which he is not prepared to entertain. If that was the case, I think that a good number of Manitobans would be disappointed. If the Minister of Health said well, look, we have 150,000 Manitobans that fall outside of that area, and here is the type of cost it is going to be and so forth, well, then he might have some arguments as to if there is going to be compensation, it is going to have to be strictly the health care benefits that are there today, and will ensure that they are going to be there for the infected individuals. If we are talking a dozen, 20, 30 individuals infected in Manitoba outside of that time frame, well, again, that can portray it quite differently.

But government and the Department of Health, I believe, have to look at this as a situation which is very unique, because it is a unique situation that we are in, and there is a responsibility of the government to indicate what its actual intentions are with respect to it. So, as the one constituent had asked, the question was how many people in Manitoba are infected? Maybe the minister can comment on that. The other issue for me personally is, is the Department of Health looking at any sort of compensation? I say it to the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) in the sense of think of individuals who would have had the operation in December of 1985 or January of 1991. Can we say with absolute certainty that there was no negligence in that area?

Mr. Chairperson, I do think because of the situation that at the very least the government should be exploring—at the very least—what it could be doing in addition to what is given to all Manitobans. We all expect that if we get sick that we can go into the hospital and get our ailments attended to, but as one constituent, whom many of us have made reference to that I happen to represent, states, it puts the family into a very serious situation in which they are looking at a possible future of social assistance.

This is the reality of the situation for many individuals who fall outside that time frame, so I would be interested in just hearing a response to that.

Mr. Praznik: I gather there were four questions that I identified that the member has asked in his comment that I will attempt to address.

The rationale on the time frame, again this was developed by the federal government, by their legal team that had looked at this particular issue, and it was based on the principle of the period in which it was reasonable to expect that the Canadian blood system, in other words the Red Cross, or them as regulators who could have imposed a test, could have, in fact, used a test to test for hepatitis C and did not, that particular period, which means—and I should point out to the member that in the development of medical tests there is usually always a period, and hepatitis C is rather new, I guess, in terms of the work, that this is an evolving virus, but the work on developing a test which took place over a period of time, discovering whether the test was effective enough to warrant its use, it does not happen on one particular day, it happens over a period sometimes of years.

Prior to that 1986, it was viewed by the federal legal team that put this together that the test was not yet widely enough accepted, in fact not really used at all, or rarely, in the blood systems in the world. It was in the process of being perfected, that by some point in early 1986 the test started to be used on a more frequent basis by a number of states in the United States, not by all, but at least it was starting at that point to be adopted and used because its ability to produce a decent result was certainly now being exhibited, and it was being accepted and adopted in neighbouring jurisdictions—started to. So it was felt that 1986 would be the right time in which one could—in fact, I think it would be generous in accepting that area as a period for beginning the window of which there was a negligence.

By the particular date in 1990, that is when the Canadian Red Cross started using the test, so after that point our blood was being tested for hepatitis C. So, in essence, anyone who would have gotten hepatitis C after that period is unlikely to have gotten it from the blood system. They have contracted it through needle or other means. So it is really that period from 1986 to 1990, the argument goes, that that was a period in which a test was now available, was starting to be used in other jurisdictions. It is when it was coming into sort of its being accepted in the North American blood system as a legitimate and useful test, and the Canadian Red Cross did not adopt it until 1990.

So that is why, in fact, there is a view by the federal government and the lawyers who prepared this information for provincial and federal ministers, that that is the period in which the system may, in fact, be negligent. That is mirrored considerably by the lawsuits that have been launched across the country, that the group of people—I believe particularly in British Columbia and Quebec—the group of litigants have been litigants that have fallen in that 1986 to 1990 infection period, that they have not been joined by people prior to that because I imagine, and there was some speculation that their legal counsel also agrees that it would be very hard to make the case that this test was part of the standard of care or an acceptable part of the standard of care within the blood system. That is why in fact those dates were the ones that were developed, again, by the federal government and given to us as provincial ministers. Whatever provinces did do some legal work, I believe they concurred with that particular analysis, so that is why that particular time.

The member talked about the analogy between pharmaceutical reactions—in company—and the Red Cross. Well, whether one is made ill by a reaction to a pharmaceutical product or by blood, you are still made ill, and you are made ill through a substance that you have received in the course of your treatment in the health care system. That is the analogy that we have drawn. In the case of a pharmaceutical, if the pharmaceutical was negligently provided to you, then you have a right to sue the person who provided it; if it was negligently made, you have a right to sue the maker of that product for compensation, and if you were right, you will be compensated. It is just like with blood, if you have received bad blood and there was a negligence on the part of the maker, or provider, or regulator of that system, you have a right to sue. In fact people are doing that in that 1986 to 1990 period. So it is, I think, a very similar analogy.

We do not provide compensation above the social safety net for individuals who may have had a bad reaction to a pharmaceutical product that is not negligent. It is part of the risk of that product. Pharmaceutical products are approved by a regulatory body. There are often allergic reactions or side effects that are suspected. It is part of the risk, sometimes not known at all and cannot reasonably expect to be known. People are injured and made worse by that

reaction, and yet we do not provide a top-up there, and that happens regularly in the system.

The member asked again about the number of individuals. As I have explained, Mr. Ulrich Wendt who handles this in our department was at committee some weeks ago, and I know that not all members could be here with three sittings of the committee, three sessions going on in different committee rooms, but he did get into the fact that within our blood system the records of hospitals, the records of who would have been transfused are not complete enough to have a very accurate number. So there is a range that he discussed and some sense as to where those numbers would be, but because it takes many years often for hepatitis C symptoms to develop, and as a result people to have that test done to determine if they have it, it is going to take some time before one really can firm up numbers. All one can do is estimate. Given the lack of records of those who may have been transfused going back to those years, it may be very, very difficult to give an accurate estimate today.

The last issue the member raised was the next steps of Liberal MPs in Ottawa talking about this. I know that the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Herb Gray, made comments earlier in the week about adding coverage for pharmaceuticals and home care, et cetera. The reason that even came up is because a number of provinces do not have anywhere near the extensive home care supports or even Pharmacare supports that many of the other provinces do, particularly Manitoba. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario have far more significant uninsured support programs, whether it be Pharmacare which is income based or home care or other things, than the Maritime provinces, the Atlantic provinces, for example. I think even Ontario in many ways does not provide the same level of home care and other supports as say Manitoba or Saskatchewan.

So what Mr. Rock initially talked about was having some top-ups or whatever for hepatitis C individuals so that they could access some of those services, et cetera. It did not go too far in discussion because, needless to say, if the federal government was going to pay for that top-up, provinces said, well, we are paying for it already, are you going to provide us with the dollars? Oh, no, we would not do that, said the federal

government, and it became somewhat complex and they just walked away from it. So if they are prepared to provide dollars for some additional services, we would be glad to take them and provide those services outside of our system, but that offer would have to come from them.

Again, Manitoba already provides significantly more than many of the other provinces do in terms of those supports, so it may not even be all that applicable in reality to the citizens of our province; it becomes more a question of who pays.

So those are the issues that the member has raised. It is the most difficult issue, there is no doubt. There are many principles involved here that have great significance, but the one I just say to him is if we accept the principle that we must provide a top-up to the social safety net for people who suffer some injury or loss because of the normal risk or expected risk in our health care system which is there every day, that includes the future Canadian blood supply that the cost of, in the case of the blood supply, just trying to ensure that system becomes prohibitive in many ways to Canadian provinces owning it. Those are very real numbers, so that is not trying to be cruel; that is not trying to make this a money issue.

The question is we are providing a package. In fact, we are stepping into the shoes of the Red Cross, to some degree, who have not lived up to their responsibilities. We are stepping in there to ensure that there is a package for those for whom there is a negligence. We are providing all of the health care and additional health care costs for those where there is a negligence and those without as part of our health care system. We have income supports through federal programs like CPP and others.

We have those things in place, but if we are going to take this a step further to those where there is not a negligence and add a top-up compensation program, it raises the question are we only going to do it for this issue, because there is a political debate around it, or are we doing to do it to all who may be in like circumstance? I think any reasonable person has to say, on principle, you would have to do it for all, and that if you do it for all, how are you going to pay for it? This is on top of the social safety net, and it is an area that is

part of the normal risk of health services. If you do that, would that be your priority for a new expenditure? I think it would even be hard to justify it on that basis.

Really, what members are asking for here is a gratis payment beyond the social safety net, where unless one is proven wrong in law, to those who have suffered injury in the course of the regular course of operation of the health care system. What makes this different somewhat is because of the huge problems with the Red Cross and in the regulation of the Red Cross and the terrible reputation that has resulted where there was clearly, or appeared to be clearly, negligence in their operation. What has made this different is this group and that have been somewhat co-mingled, and it is difficult for those people to understand why some would get and others would not.

I am not saying it is an easy argument, but when you sort it out and get down to the principle, this is why I believe you are seeing the federal government taking the position that it is. Mr. Rock understands these things very, very well, and the consequences are probably very great to do otherwise. That is why I suspect he and Mr. Chretien have taken the position that they have.

Mr. Lamoureux: Just very quickly, because I am not understanding really the numbers, the minister makes reference to the fact that there could be a lot of people. If I was to say five people, 5,000, 50,000, is there a range of actual numbers of people in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, again, the reason why we do not know exactly what those numbers will be is the ability to check back as to who accessed the blood system. Those with hemophilia are much easier because they are regular users of the system, but those who are the casual users, from time to time, often a one-time user, the records kept by the Red Cross, the hospitals are not adequate enough to go back and get an accurate number. So there are sort of guesses out there, and the rule of thumb that has sort of been worked on by the working group would be about the same number, I believe, about the same number as who would be in the 1986 to '90 group. I think we expect about 20,000 or so who would be in that group across Canada, so it is possible within a range that there is another 20,000 or

so who may be in the group outside of that across Canada. We have seen as high as 60,000, I believe. Again, it underlines the point about how badly the Canadian blood system generally was run over the decades by the Red Cross and regulated by the national government.

That is why I think there is so much interest in this because people recognize the system was bad and people were injured, but because the system was bad, that does not necessarily mean that those people still would not have been injured. We know some are likely injured by the system because of how bad it was, and that is why we are there to compensate, but it is still likely that many of those people would not have—their circumstances would not have changed, even if we had the best run blood system in the world. That is the difference between the two groups.

Mr. Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

The question before the committee is the amendment moved by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) to the motion of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford). The amendment reads as follows: that the words “and the House of Commons” be deleted from the motion. Shall the amendment pass?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed to the amendment, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it, and the amendment is defeated.

The motion before the committee now is: that the committee recommend that the Legislature and House

of Commons hold a free vote on whether to extend compensation to all victims who have contracted hepatitis C from contaminated blood. Is there any more discussion?

* (1530)

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Question, question.

Mr. Chairperson: The question before the committee is the motion moved by the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford): that this committee recommend that the Legislature and House of Commons hold a free vote on whether to extend compensation to all victims who have contracted hepatitis C from contaminated blood. Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed to the motion, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it, and the motion is defeated.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On division, Mr. Chairperson.

Some Honourable Members: On division.

Mr. Chairperson: On division. Pardon me, the motion is defeated on division.

* * *

Mr. Ashton: I am quite disappointed that we not only defeated this motion, but did not do what I thought would have been an excellent move to send a signal to

the federal government, I think, who have now said on the record that the government in this province does not believe there should have been a free vote in the House of Commons, nor does it believe there should be a free vote in the Manitoba Legislature on this issue, and I think that is unfortunate.

I want to indicate, though, we are not going to let that issue rest at that point. We will continue to fight for what we feel is fair, that is, to extend the coverage to all hepatitis C victims. What I would like to ask the minister as a follow-up to this issue: Is he now in a position of tabling this agreement? The federal-provincial agreement which we are now getting clear signal from this government is clear government policy, period. They do not want a free vote on this, either at the House of Commons or at the Legislature. Is he in a position to table that agreement now, and, if not, when will we be in a position of seeing the detailed agreement, the agreement, the federal-provincial compensation package?

Mr. Praznik: All we have to date is an agreement in principle, I guess, and sort of a memorandum that form the basis of principles at a news conference. Our staff across the country are working away at it. The more important part, of course, is that we have a framework. It has to be negotiated with the various groups working on behalf of the hepatitis C community and ultimately—pardon me, even ministers of Health sometimes take ill—it ultimately has to be approved by the courts. So we are sometime away before getting a formal agreement in place.

Mr. Chair, I am also advised that the lawyers representing those who have filed class action suits have just begun to meet with the federal-provincial team, so we are probably a long way away from having a completed document. But that will have to become public, and in course I have no problem providing that to the member when it does. Like all very detailed agreements for settlement, this is going to probably take some time to negotiate and draft. There are actuarial issues that have to be settled and how a fund will be used, et cetera, so it is somewhat complex, as I know the member appreciates.

Mr. Ashton: I understand the minister would like to take a short break. We are willing to recess for 10

minutes. What I would also suggest, too, is that if the minister wishes to signal to his staff that—I do not think the minister will need staff to be here for the rest of the afternoon. We are going to be continuing on the hepatitis C issue. I might be away. I know people are very busy, but I do not think there is any point in having them stick around until five o'clock, so if that is of any help to the department.

Mr. Chairperson: It is agreed that we take a 10-minute break until a quarter to four. [agreed]

The committee recessed at 3:36 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 3:51 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. When we recessed the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) had the floor, I believe.

Ms. McGifford: Actually, when we recessed, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) had the floor, but I will now take over the floor.

So, thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to say that I was extremely disappointed in the outcome of the last vote, the vote that took place in this committee. We thought it was the chance for us to have a free vote in our Legislature and would have provided all members with the opportunity to vote according to their conscience. I still do not understand—and I think I indicated this earlier—according to the record and according to remarks persons put on the record, members opposite, nobody really made an argument as to why we should not have a vote, a free vote.

People made arguments as to why we should not extend compensation, but the question of a free vote was virtually untouched with the exception of one member who insisted that he had spoken about it. I have no reason to think that he would say he did if he did not, but, basically, the major issue, the free vote, voting according to conscience was untouched.

I know that members will remember that the House of Commons—well, I suppose, particularly the

government; I should not say the House of Commons—has been soundly criticized for its refusal to allow its members to vote according to conscience. The Prime Minister, in particular, has been criticized for making what should have been a vote perhaps according to conscience into a confidence motion. I know there has been discussions in the newspaper of his bullying tactics, et cetera, et cetera, and yet this government chose to reject a free vote in our Legislature, and I think this says something. In fact, I think it speaks volumes; simply, why not a vote according to conscience? What would this government have to lose by allowing such a vote?

The minister today in the House tabled a press clipping, and I seem not to have it. I know I did have it. The minister provided me with one just at the same time as I found one, but the press clipping that the minister tabled had to do with a free vote that did take place in NDP-governed Saskatchewan, so I notice that there was a free vote there.

But I do want to point out to the minister that, yes, we do disagree with the vote taken in Saskatchewan. We do disagree with the stance taken in Saskatchewan. I know the minister knows—[interjection] All right, the minister has pointed out to me that there was not a free vote, but the point of this press clipping is that the government in Saskatchewan, an NDP government, took a different stance than the opposition takes in Manitoba, and they were described in this press clipping as being trained seals.

Now, I suppose I could throw that insult out here and say that members of the government here are trained seals because they voted against my motion to have a free vote in the Legislature.

But the real point that I want to make here is yes, the NDP government in Saskatchewan has one take on the issue; the opposition in Manitoba has another take on the issue. The federal NDP party in Ottawa has the same take as the opposition party in Manitoba.

One of the things that the minister has not bothered to mention is that the Tories in Ottawa have a very different position than he does, as does, apparently, the Tory government in Ontario, or maybe the Tory government in Ontario, of all provinces, may have a

slightly different position than the minister. After all, we do know that people in Ontario supported the resolution put forth in the Quebec Legislature yesterday.

I want to point out to the minister that the reason we called for a free vote in this Legislature was because we recognized the complexities of this issue, and I know the minister recognizes the complexities of this issue. He has been talking with the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) about the complexities of the date.

So with such an issue it would seem to me that it becomes an ethical issue and not a political issue, and what has just taken place in this committee, as far as I can see, was a political vote, a political vote to bar people from voting against their consciences. So I want to repeat that I am extremely disappointed.

Now, I asked in the House today and the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) brought up the question today, and the minister made some answer about a set of numbers and about an accurate set of numbers. The minister has pointed out that we do not really and truly have an accurate set of numbers, but, you see, I think it is extremely important that in making a decision of this kind, that is, the decision on hepatitis C, that we do have a very accurate set of numbers.

For example, we know that there may be many people infected with hepatitis C who are asymptomatic and may live their whole lives asymptomatic, who may never show any signs of the virus, who may never require compensation, so that the number becomes extremely important.

One of the things that I have been told by local activists with regard to the pre-1986 numbers, and they could be wrong, but one of the things that I have been told is that there are possibly—now, I have so many pieces of paper. He told me that there are possibly 400 Manitobans infected with hepatitis C, pre-1986, and of those, Mr. Chair, it is possible that only 20 percent will ever show symptoms and require compensation, and 20 percent of 400 is, I believe, 80.

This may not be an accurate figure. I am not saying it is, but I am saying it is a figure that has been put forth. It may be as accurate a figure as any we have. If,

indeed, the numbers are that low, then the whole argument of compensating pre-1986 individuals, the whole argument that this kind of compensation could bankrupt our health care system just simply goes by the board. It does not make any sense if we are talking about 80 individuals.

* (1600)

I am putting this number out, as I say, not because I necessarily believe it to be totally accurate. I do not know, but we do not have accurate numbers and we are making extremely important decisions about the lives of Manitobans without having numbers. This seems to me to be bad policy.

It was on Tuesday that former Justice minister, now Health Minister Allan Rock, declared that the file on hepatitis C was closed. Well, I think that all of us who are here today know that the file is not closed. It certainly is not closed for Manitobans who continue to live with hepatitis C and who were infected before 1985. This morning at noon I had the pleasure to meet Lindee David, who is the executive director of the Canadian Hemophilia Society, and she assured me that the file is not closed for them and that it will not be closed for them, that they as a body plan to work until every single individual infected with hepatitis C receives compensation if the individual needs compensation, because I think we need to continually stress that not all of those infected need compensation. The figure that I have is that roughly only 20 percent will ever need compensation.

The file certainly is not closed for the person that the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) and I have talked about, both in committee and outside of committee, together. I am speaking about Susan Wish whose husband was infected with hepatitis C as the result of surgery before 1986. We will not close this file. She will not close this file. Susan Wish has two children. This family is very, very afraid that the husband will become too sick to work at all and may ultimately die a premature death as a result of the infection. Apparently he is very, very ill already. The family life has been interfered with already. They feel that they are being unfairly treated, and they will not close this file.

So I think that what I would like to do at this point, and maybe the minister can stow this question away temporarily because I want to continue a little bit, is to ask the minister to supply numbers and costs of compensation to those infected with hepatitis C through contaminated blood pre-1986. What is the cost to Manitobans, or what would the cost be? I think we need to have that figure if we are going to close files. Until we know more, we certainly cannot close the file.

Earlier today, the member for Inkster was talking about the Krever report and Horace Krever. I think we all remember that there were several ignominious attempts on the parts of various people to sequester all or part of the Krever report, and in this particular case justice won out and Mr. Krever's report was not sequestered. Mr. Krever—Justice Krever, pardon me—of course has an impeccable reputation, and the kinds of recommendations that he makes should not be taken lightly.

I want to point out and read just briefly from his report, and it is very brief. He says, and I quote: The compassion of a society can be judged by the measures it takes to reduce the impact of tragedy on its members.

I think that is something that we can all agree with and that we should all take very seriously and think about. The compassion of a society can be judged by the measures it takes to reduce the impact of tragedy on its members. Well, what are we doing to reduce the impact of tragedy on those individuals and the families of those individuals who were infected with the virus before 1986? I know the minister has spoken about the social safety net, and I will certainly get back to the whole question of the social safety net, but other than that the answer is that we are not doing very much.

Justice Krever also is famous for his no-fault attitude towards compensation, and he goes on to say: Until now, our treatment of the blood blood injured has been unequal. After years of suffering, devastating financial losses, many persons infected with HIV from blood or blood products or their surviving family members finally did receive financial assistance. Other Canadians who have suffered injuries from blood therapy have not received any compensation. Yet the needs of those who have been harmed are the same, regardless of their cause and whether or not fault can be

proved. Compensating some needy sufferers and not others cannot, in my opinion, be justified. Very interesting statement.

Clearly some of the individuals who Justice Krever is referring to here are those persons infected with hepatitis C who, I believe at the time of this statement, there had been no compensation for any of the victims of hepatitis C. Now there has been a change where there is compensation for some of the victims of hepatitis C, but certainly the decisions that have been made do not honour the letter or the spirit of what Justice Krever recommended.

I remember Justice Krever's visit to Winnipeg in summer of 1994, because it was then that I believe this government was embarrassed by its lack of an HIV-AIDS strategy. One of the things that Justice Krever did by publicly embarrassing the government, I believe the testimony by a government official, Dr. John Guilfoyle, one of the things that was accomplished through that visit was that we finally did begin to develop an AIDS strategy, and we have great hopes for that AIDS strategy. The minister and I have talked about it earlier in Estimates. I had hoped that the minister would take Justice Krever's words about compensation more seriously and, as I say, follow the letter and the spirit of what Justice Krever said and work tirelessly for compensation for all sufferers from hepatitis C, all persons who had acquired that virus as a result of contaminated blood because those persons—I know the minister will agree with me here—have been betrayed twice by the system: first, by the contamination; and, second, by a lack of compensation for their sufferings.

The minister got into a bit of a debate with the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) when they were talking about the reliability of the date, January 1, 1986, and the member for Inkster felt that January 1, 1986, just did not quite ring true with him. He could not understand what was the difference between December 31, 1985, and January 1, 1986, and I certainly concur with him. I cannot understand what the difference is. It seems to me that this date is arbitrary at best. My understanding is January 1, 1986, is the date that the test was first used, or perhaps it is needed to be used in the U.S. so it becomes kind of a marker and a cut-off point. But I understand from other sources that there

was a test available in 1982 which could have screened for 40 percent of those who eventually acquired hepatitis C as a result of contaminated blood, but it was not used.

I also understand that there was a test that was available as early as the '50s, and I read from a document provided by Dr. Michelle Brille-Edwards, whom I understand to be an expert. He says: we have known blood was transmitting hepatitis since transfusions began in the pre-World War II era. We did not know exactly how, so we called it post-transfusion hepatitis. Much later we were able to identify specific viruses that can cause hepatitis, and we started to use the specific names: hepatitis B, hepatitis A, and now we are up to G. But we knew all along that infectious hepatitis was being transferred through blood.

So again it seems to me, Mr. Chair, that the date that the compensation package uses is arbitrary at best, and I think that the minister knows that.

* (1610)

I want to just touch on the question of a social safety net because I know the minister has talked about us having a safety net and has said that, well, if people acquired hepatitis prior to January 1, 1986, these individuals would not be part of the compensation package, but they would be looked after by the social safety net. The minister has pointed to a health care system. He has pointed to the existence of Pharmacare. He has pointed to the existence of home care. He has talked about CPP disability insurance.

Well, there is truth in what the minister says. We do have a health care system, although it is a health care system which is sadly being frayed, and we all know that we are moving more and more towards a two-tiered health care system. There are huge waits for diagnostic testing and for other kinds of testing, and it certainly does not work in the best interests of anybody, but certainly not people with severe illnesses like hepatitis C—those individuals, again, who are showing the signs of hepatitis C and living with it.

Yes, we indeed have a Pharmacare plan, but many drugs that people require are not on the formulary. I

know from working in the AIDS community that people on CPP found it—now, I believe, that is not quite true. People on CPP, I think, were able to obtain their drugs under a special plan, the name of which I cannot remember, but I suppose in the new Pharmacare plan, which is based on income to some degree, means testing, that would not be a problem unless the drug, again, is not on the formulary. If people want to try alternative therapies, they are not usually available on Pharmacare. I do not know if any of them are.

Yes, we have home care, but I get calls day after day to my constituency office—we all do—from individuals who say that home care is not adequate, that they are not getting the kinds of services that they need. This is not to blame home care workers. Home care workers are all extremely dedicated persons, I am sure. The problem is people do not always get enough care.

Lastly, I turn to the question of disability insurance. Disability insurance is not enough money to lead a life of any dignity.

An Honourable Member: Disability pension.

Ms. McGifford: Disability pension? Thank you for correcting my term. People who are living on a disability pension live very, very close to the line and often have to depend on family members or the generosity of others simply to get through to make ends meet. Especially if you are ill and you require special foods and perhaps need to take taxis more than other individuals, this sort of thing, it is absolutely impossible to live with any dignity on this amount of money. Again, I know this from personal experience in the AIDS community.

The minister has presented several legal arguments to this committee during the past few weeks. I think that his arguments may make perfect legal sense, but I think that what we have always insisted on is the importance of the moral imperative and the importance of compassion in this particular instance.

I know that the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) today pointed out that we did not have to compensate flood victims. In fact, we did not compensate some of them, but those we did, I think the motivation was a sincere one of compassion. I note that we have in the

past compensated thalidomide victims. I notice that we compensated all victims of HIV-AIDS who acquired that virus through contaminated blood, and our health care system has not been destroyed by this kind of compensation. Precedents have not been set. If a precedent had been set, then we would be compensating people living with hepatitis C, so I really do not understand the argument that says we must not set a precedent. We have not set a precedent in the past when we have been motivated by compassion. I do not think we will today.

Consequently, given that on April 27 the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) indicated to this committee that he would be prepared to meet and discuss the issue of compensation further and given that both Quebec and Ontario are now calling on the federal Liberal government to come back to the table to review the compensation package with the Quebec National Assembly unanimously supporting a motion that read:

“THAT the National Assembly, inspired by the motion unanimously adopted on December 2, 1997, support the extension, on compassionate grounds, of the existing compensation programs for all victims of contaminated blood who are not covered by the said program;

“THAT the costs of this extension be funding by the federal government, considering that the Quebec government already provides for all the services and care given to these persons;

“THAT the Quebec government demand that the federal government follow up this resolution and encourage the other provinces to approach the federal government in the same manner.”

I now move, seconded by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), that this committee recommend that the Legislature support the content of the motion adopted by the Quebec National Assembly and further that the Legislature urge the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to contact the federal government and press for the existing compensation package for victims of tainted blood to be reopened and reviewed with a view to extending compensation.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. It looks to me that the motion is in order.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): If you do not mind, Mr. Chairman, I would not mind, even a copy of it presented to us would be fine.

Mr. Chairperson: Could we get some copies for everybody, please.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I just received an interesting note from one of my staff. The Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Chretien, does me a great honour and service today in Ottawa. I share with members of the committee that we had a call from a member of Parliament's office in Manitoba from the opposition, and he said apparently that the Prime Minister blamed Manitoba, I guess this Minister of Health, for the whole hep C package. Never did I ever think I would see the day where the son of a Lockport farmer in this Legislature, representing only 4 percent of the Canadian people, could have been so influential at a meeting that I could have moved the large and great Government of Canada and such an experienced politician as the Right Honourable Jean Chretien that his decision in all of this was because of little old me here in Manitoba.

* (1620)

How ludicrous the federal Liberals get amazes me, and it is also a sad day when a politician of Mr. Chretien's calibre has to sink to that particular role, not to accept responsibility for his own decisions, and I would just like to, Mr. Chair, for the record, clarify that the position of Manitoba through all of this was that the federal government in fact pay their fair share of the total cost of hepatitis C, and what amazes me about it, is that this gutless wonder who now serves as our Prime Minister, quite frankly, if these statements are in fact true, sends his Minister of Health to our meeting to convey the message that his cabinet will not put one more penny past \$800 million into this, and we will not recognize one penny that the provinces pay in hepatitis C health care costs, and the man does not have the courage of an adult to at least accept responsibility but blames a cabinet minister representing but 4 percent of the population.

My goodness, it is a sad day for the leadership of the Liberal Party, a sad day for Liberals, a sad day for this

country when a Prime Minister has to resort to that. If that in fact is what he said in the House of Commons, then my comments now stand on the record. If it is not what he said, I offer my apology now, but somehow I would think that there is probably some truth to it, given the way the federal government causes its problems.

Mr. Chair, this may be somewhat unorthodox for the committee, but I have a couple of questions of clarification for the member for Osborne. Is the member for Osborne by way of this resolution suggesting that it is the position of the New Democratic Party that, should this plan be expanded, the sole financial liability for this plan should rest with the Government of Canada? That is my first question.

Ms. McGifford: I think that the minister is right, that it is unorthodox and I prefer not to answer his questions.

Mr. Praznik: So what the New Democrats are doing here is playing politics rather than dealing with the issue, and I am saying this sincerely to the member for Osborne. She moves a resolution asking for our support to endorse the resolution that was adopted by the Quebec National Assembly. She is proposing a resolution urging me to meet with the federal government to convey this message, and she will not answer a question on what she intends by it.

I mean, get serious, Mr. Chair. Does the member really want to pass this, or was this just designed to create a political issue here in Manitoba? We, as a political party, we caucus regularly; we discuss these issues. The reason why in fact a free vote in provinces like Manitoba and Saskatchewan are not as important in the House of Commons—because we all have smaller caucuses. We meet; we discuss these things. We make issue, as we all do, but we do not have a caucus of 150 members with wild cards out there doing their own thing. So issues of free votes become much less practical in provincial houses, but she is now recommending that this Legislature, by way of resolution, accept the position of the Quebec government and instruct me as Minister of Health and a servant of this Assembly to contact the federal government and press for that package to be re-opened and reviewed.

I am asking her a very simple, honest, straightforward question. Is it her view that the federal government, as the Quebec resolution calls for, is 100 percent responsible for that package?

Then she says to me, I refuse to answer. Well, that suggests to me that the New Democratic Party is not serious about this issue. I give the member another opportunity. If she is not prepared to clarify what she is asking for in this resolution on the record, how does she expect myself or my colleagues to deal with it seriously? I asked a serious question in the vein of trying to determine whether or not there may be support on this side of the committee and the House for this resolution. If the member is truly asking for our support to do something and not just make this into a political issue of trying to embarrass colleagues by putting up resolutions that she expects they will defeat, then she should be prepared to at least explain what her belief and what her view is. This becomes a very important question.

So I ask again if the member will indulge us. If she could just tell us if the New Democratic Party's position by way of this resolution, which is calling for us to support the content of the motion adopted by the Quebec National Assembly and for me to press the government to re-open this issue, I gather on that basis and given the fact that the Quebec resolution calls on the federal government to pay 100 percent of the cost because of the provincial support for health care costs, is she saying to me and her colleagues in this Legislature that the position of the New Democratic Party of Manitoba is that the package, one, should be re-opened, two, should be 100 percent financed by the federal government as the Quebec resolution calls for, and three, that the province should not have a financial responsibility for that package, which is a different position than what she is saying in the House or has been saying in the House. I am just asking her today, if she truly wishes our support for a motion like this, to at least answer that simple question.

Ms. McGifford: I think the minister is being slightly unfair. I think that I certainly said today on the record, and have been quite unequivocal in saying, that clearly the lion's share of the burden should fall on the federal government. The federal government, as the minister has said and as I have agreed and as we have agreed,

was the regulatory body and as such has much more responsibility than the provincial government. Nonetheless, the provincial government as a purchaser of service, I would maintain, has at least some moral and/or ethical responsibility, and as I said today, perhaps some legal responsibility too. I do not know because I am not the legal expert that the minister himself is.

One of the things that I asked the minister today about was the numbers of persons in Manitoba infected with hepatitis C pre-1986, and I asked him what his estimates or what the estimates of the costs of providing services to those persons might be. Without that kind of information, I think that the questions that the minister is asking are extremely difficult, but I certainly concur with the minister that the federal government has the lion's share of responsibility when it comes to providing compensation packages for people living with hepatitis C, both before and after 1986.

So that would be my answer to the minister.

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I am detecting some confusion in the ranks of the New Democrats here because the motion they put on the table says, and I quote: that I move—the member for Osborne, I am quoting—“that this Committee recommend that the Legislature support the content of the motion adopted by the Quebec National Assembly.”

* (1630)

I would hope she would have read the motion or the resolution of Quebec. That resolution says, and I quote: “THAT the costs of this extension be funded by the Federal Government considering that the Quebec government already provides for all the services and care given to these persons.”

Now, Mr. Chair, on reading the motion put to this Assembly or this committee by the member for Osborne, she says we should support the content of the Quebec resolution. The Quebec resolution, the content of it says the federal government should pay.

I ask what I would consider to be a very straightforward question: is it now the position of the

New Democratic Party, given the resolution supporting the Quebec resolution, which says this should be a federal government program, is it now the position of the New Democratic Party in Manitoba that the federal government should be responsible for an extension of the hepatitis C program? It is a straight, simple question, and quite frankly if the member for Osborne had said yes, that is our position after studying the issue, after looking at the principles, supporting what has happened in Quebec, we concur with that principle, I would have said, well, we certainly have to go and caucus this, but the member for Osborne did not say that.

The member for Osborne said, well, maybe we do not know what the numbers are, maybe if it is not very much, yes, I suppose; maybe if it is more, no, we are not sure. So all I can take—the member's comments or lack of an answer or her answer—is that the New Democratic Party wants all of us to have to vote on this issue. Then I imagine she and her colleagues suspected we would vote this down, and then she would have another media hit or another push to us.

The New Democrats really are not meaning what they say in their resolution, because their resolution says support the content of the Quebec resolution which says that the extension would be funded by the federal government considering that the Quebec government already provides for all the services and care given to these persons. Well, we provide for the care and services today, provide it for those persons in Manitoba. So my question—I say this very sincerely—was legitimate about whether or not common cause could be found, but the member for Osborne backs off and said, well, no, we do not really mean that, because we do not have the numbers. Well, it is not a matter of numbers. It is a matter of principle. Does the federal government pay for the extension or do they not?

What I suspect is that the member for Osborne wants her cake and she wants to eat it too. She wants to say to the public: we supported the Quebec resolution, why would these nasty Tories not pass the same resolution, but at the same point in time she wanted to reserve the right to criticize this government for not putting money in. First you say you do, then you say you do not. That is what I heard from the member for Osborne.

The real shame of this, the real shame in the answer—and even the fact that the member wanted to even avoid answering the question raises my suspicion and that of my colleagues about what the intent of this is. Quite frankly, when the member moved this motion I thought, well, maybe there is some common cause. Maybe if the New Democratic Party recognized that this is not a provincial responsibility, that we are paying for the health care costs, that the national government has the issue here to deal with and that the Quebec government has recognized that, the Quebec National Assembly has recognized that, maybe she was suggesting that the New Democratic Party in Manitoba would say, yes, we recognize that. We will say that the Filmon government in Manitoba does not have a financial responsibility here. This is really the national government and maybe the voice of this Legislature should be added to that call. But the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) could not answer that, and then when she did, said, well, no, maybe, depends on numbers, well, there is not really a principle. So here we have the New Democrats saying one thing in their motion and another in their explanation for it which are different.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

So how do we on this side of the House or how do our colleagues who support the federal Liberal Party, how do we from time to time, how do we decide whether to support this, given that exact opposite position taken by the member for Osborne on behalf of the New Democratic Party compared to the words that she has provided to this committee in this resolution? How do we even consider that support? How do we do that? Because this resolution from Quebec that she is asking us to support is very straightforward, and having spoken to Minister Rochon through many hours of our planning sessions and work together as ministers, he is very, very clear that this responsibility is with the federal government, and the Quebec National Assembly is very clear on that.

So I say to members of the New Democratic Party, before you ask us to pass judgment on this, would you please tell us what you mean? Would you please go back to your caucus and decide what your position is? Is your position, this is the responsibility of the federal government to pay for if an extension takes place; in which case, quite frankly, the member will not be able

to walk both sides of the fence and say, yes, it is the federal responsibility, but I still want the right to be criticizing you for not being into filling in for the federal government when I next rise in Question Period next week, so I can have two positions.

No, the members of the New Democratic party want us to support this resolution. In words, they have said very clearly what they would like us to do. But the member for Osborne in her comments to this committee said something totally opposite. So how do we know what the members of the New Democratic Party want?

Part of being responsible in this very important debate, which is I think a very important debate, is not to play politics with it, to advance a position that common consensus can be found, and what I find so disturbing is that the member moves a resolution and she would not even initially answer my question. She said she would not do it. She did not want to do that. Well, I understand why, because they have two positions. They have one for today and they have one for tomorrow. Well, that says more about the New Democratic Party than hepatitis C. It says more about the New Democratic Party in their different positions than any of the debate we have had here.

So I say to the member for Osborne, I do not know what instruction she has had from her caucus or what her mandate is with this, but members on this side of the House—and I say this sincerely to her—if you would like our support for this resolution—and I belong to a democratic caucus. We must go back and discuss this. This was not an issue that we have had an opportunity to discuss, but we certainly will. I will endeavour to do that.

But before I would even take it back to our caucus for discussion—and my colleagues I think would concur with me—we have to know what the intent of the New Democratic Party is here. What are they really saying? If they believe what they are prepared to write by way of motion that they want approval of the context of the Quebec resolution and they want to propose that this be extended by the federal government and funded by the federal government, then they should have no qualms at all today about saying so on the record of the committee and that means that their position is this is a

federal responsibility and must be funded federally, and it is not a provincial responsibility. They should not then—if they mean what they say in this resolution—be coming back here asking us to fill in for federal responsibility if the federal government walks away from it.

I did not write this resolution. I did not put words in here that said we will adopt the content of the Quebec National Assembly resolution. I did not put into the Quebec resolution that the cost of extension be funded by the federal government. I did not set up this proposal. The New Democrats did, but they are asking this committee and consequently the Legislature to give me instruction as Minister of Health in discussions with the federal government, yet they are not prepared to give a clear message because, quite frankly, in my humble opinion, what it does is if they are serious and want to give a clear message and accept the principles in where we are going and who has responsibility, it means that they will lose the opportunity to be critical and get their eight-second clip in Question Period.

So I ask them, and it may not just be the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), but I ask them to go back and caucus and come back to this committee and tell us what is their true position. Is it to support this resolution? Is it to support what happened in the Quebec National Assembly? Is it to stand by that resolution, or is it to waiver, as the member has wavered in her response in this committee? I invite her, if the members of the New Democratic Party are sincere in this, and believe me, there may be a will to pass this resolution, a sincere will to pass it, but we have to know exactly what the New Democrats mean. They have put two different positions here today. I know other members of this committee may want to comment on this matter as well.

* (1640)

Ms. McGifford: I am just astounded at the minister, that he can accuse me and our side of the House of playing politics after the fiasco with the previous motion calling for a free vote in the Legislature. We saw what happened in this committee. Member after member came in for the vote, voted against the motion without ever giving any consideration to the content of that motion—that is calling for a free vote. Personally,

I think the minister is behaving—I think what the minister is doing at this point is merely being a bully. The motion is before this committee. I have presented the motion. I think it is time for the minister to stop cross-examining me. It is not a courtroom. I am not a witness in a courtroom. I do not know whether or not he is usurping my rights as a member of the Legislature, but he certainly is being a bully in cross-examining me in a way he has no right to do. I would like to call on this committee to get on with the debate, to debate the motion.

Mr. Lamoureux: I would say it is an interesting motion, there is no doubt about that, Mr. Chairperson. It is a motion which I personally could not support. The reason why I could not support this motion is because I do believe that there is a responsibility for the provincial government to address this particular issue.

I look at the province of Quebec, and it does not surprise me that they would have passed a motion of this nature, but they have a different political agenda and I do not think that agenda is in the best interest of all Canadians, let alone Manitobans. I think what I would recommend for the government is in fact that they would vote against this particular motion, because by voting in favour of it, what we are really doing is offloading 100 percent of our responsibility for individuals infected by hepatitis C onto the federal government. I do not believe that would be fair and that is the reason why I would vote against it. I would trust and hope that the minister would not even have to caucus this. I would be very disappointed if he had to caucus this particular issue. I think it is fairly clearly stated in the words of the motion. It is not a motion which I could support, and this minister would lose a great deal of respect from a good number of people, including myself, if in fact this motion was to pass.

Mr. Tweed: I think I will put a few comments on the record in regard to the motion that has been put forward by the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford). I have sat here throughout the last week listening to the debate that took place on the question of a free vote put forward by the members opposite, it seemed as a person who thinks he has an understanding, but after spending the time in here that I have and doing some background reading trying to resolve this issue or come to a conclusion that is something that I think we can all live

with or feel comfortable with—I am not even sure if those are the correct words because I think it is probably one of the most difficult issues I have come to face since coming into government. But I listen to the member opposite and she talks in regard to the dates of 1986 and the flexibility of what is the difference between December 31 and January 1 and a concluding. She refers back to 1992 where there was perhaps a test out there that was 40 percent effective.

An Honourable Member: Eighty-two. He said '92; '82.

Mr. Tweed: In '82, okay. Sorry. I guess the first question that came to my mind when she brought that forward was, well, is this the date that she would be referring to as the start date for compensation? I mean, it is a date that is out there now as opposed to 1996 or 1990. So I am just saying, is this another date that we would start and move forward from that point for compensation? I think in her comments again today she talked about during the wars that the transfusions, people knew that the disease or the illness was being passed on through blood transfusions. They did not really know what it was or what it was called, but they certainly associated it with that type of transaction. Again, I guess my question would be, do we move back to that date and start forward from there as compensation?

I think throughout the whole debate that I have heard in this past week it was, what more is Manitoba going to do for the people's suffering? Not what the federal government was going to do, because we have seen what they are prepared to do. They have put an agreement on the table that all the provinces agreed with and had signed off on, and they put it forward and it was voted on in the House of Commons. We know the results of that vote.

But I guess, as I sit and listen more and more, I keep thinking, you know, if one province were to offer more than the other, would we not in effect be creating a two-tier health care system? Would we not have a system in some areas of the country that would suggest that Manitoba has a better deal for people suffering from this illness? Perhaps we should all move to Manitoba and take advantage of the compensation that they are offering. Then does it become a competition where

other provinces would, in their settlements or in their agreements if they decided or so chose to open this up, would they be prepared to offer more, and would it be to the benefit of the sufferer who is certainly going through a lot not only physically in his health but emotionally? Would they be inclined to seek the highest compensator of provinces above and beyond what the federal compensation package is offering and thus start moving from province to province to collect the benefits? It is a very difficult issue.

The one common thing that showed up throughout this whole week in discussion, particularly from the members opposite, and if I am wrong I stand to be corrected, but what I understand is that the members opposite want to know what the Province of Manitoba is prepared to offer above and beyond the national compensation package offered by the federal government in an agreement with the provincial governments.

If that is true, and if I am assuming what is being said is correct, then I would suggest that the motion put forward by the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), is a contradiction in what she has said all week. What she has said all week is that Manitoba should do more, can do more, should do more, please do more to compensate the people that fall outside of the guidelines that were set on this compensation package, but what the motion is saying is that the costs of this extension be funded by the federal government considering.

She is saying that all these expenses now should be at the cost to the federal government, and to me that is a complete contradiction of everything we have heard here at this table this week. I accept and agree with what the minister has said in his comments. She does want to have it both ways. She wants to be able to criticize the provincial government by forcing us to vote one way or another on these issues, but she also wants to have the right to pass all the total costs on to the federal government by this resolution and again be able to criticize the government for not participating at a higher level than the agreement originally decided or agreed upon, again, by the provinces of Canada and the federal government.

I think it is a very dangerous walkway we are going down in the sense that I believe—and I did not believe

that until just today. I kept trying to convince myself that this was not a political issue, this was something that the members from the opposition were bringing forward with a true heartfelt concern.

* (1650)

After I read the motion put forward today by the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), I have a sense that I may have been incorrect in their sincerity that they have put forward all week. I think what they are trying to do is play politics with this motion that they are bringing forward. I think they will try endlessly to put on the record as many resolutions and amendments as they can possibly come forward with that will put the government in a position of having to vote on certain issues.

I accept that as part of government and I accept that as part of the responsibility of all members as they enter the House, but I do not accept a resolution that has been brought forward that contradicts everything that the members opposite have said all week in this committee, they have said all this week in the House and in their questioning to the minister in regard to what he was prepared to do as the Minister of Health in the province of Manitoba to enhance the compensation to the people that fall outside of the parameters.

I certainly listened, and the member for Osborne has made comments on people that have spoken on the government side, about not debating the motion that was on the floor. I believe that the minister gave her an ample opportunity when he asked her the questions in regard to the motion that she has put forward. I would think that any time a member, be it government, be it opposition, be it the independent members that sit in our House—they should be prepared to give explanation for the reasoning and for the motive behind their resolutions. By the member for Osborne totally ignoring the questions of the minister and basically trying to exclude herself from answering questions by feeling that she is being challenged and she is not sure if her rights as a member are being usurped, I think it becomes very obvious and very clear to the people that have sat here throughout this entire week what the motive is behind her resolution and the motive, I would suggest, of the entire NDP party of Manitoba.

We certainly see in other jurisdictions where Saskatchewan has made their public statement, and I respect them for that. I think it is very important, when you make an agreement between 10 provinces and the federal government, that an agreement has been put in place that all people at the table come to an agreement on the terms and the references, and they put it forward. I think it is very unfortunate that the Minister of Health for the province of Manitoba has to endure this type of conflict just for the political points.

I understand now that it is Thursday and, since the House is not sitting tomorrow, this is probably their last opportunity to get the news coverage that they want.

The suggestion that the province should make compensation available to these people and then to bring forward a resolution that would suggest that the federal government make full compensation to this group of people, I guess my questions would be very similar to what the minister asked is: Is that what the NDP policy is? Is that what they are publicly stating, that they believe the federal government should be responsible for all expenses incurred to implement this program?

When the member was asked that, she denied the question. She would not answer the question. Obviously, whether she feels comfortable that she has the support of her party or even the member that seconded her resolution, I would question whether she does if she is not prepared to answer questions on her resolution that she has put forward here today.

I think that over the next little while, Mr. Chairman, there is certainly going to be lots of debate and a lot more discussion. I think of the discussion that has passed this week in regard to the first motion that was put forward, and I found it very enlightening and very interesting. Again, I cannot emphasize enough that I really believed that the opposition, the NDP, were sincere in their motives of trying to find the compensation for the people that fall outside this program.

Today, with this resolution, I find that I question that sincerity. In fact, I actually would think that they are not sincere at all about this debate that we have had in this committee in the last week. I think that they have—

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: Just on a point of order. I think the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) is trying to contribute in the best way that he can, but he is definitely imputing motives. I have sat through and listened to the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) and to say that her comments are not sincere and genuine, I do not think, is appropriate and definitely not parliamentary.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Turtle Mountain, on the same point of order.

Mr. Tweed: If I did offend the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) on my comments, I will apologize, but I would like to put on the record that everything that she has said this week in regard to the compensation offered to the people outside of this package is being refuted with the resolution that she has put forward in suggesting that the federal government should pay entirely for those expenses. I think that should be made clear on the record, and I think the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) made that clear in his statement on the record too.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I believe that the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) has offered words that, in fact, end that dispute.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, Mr. Chairperson, I thought that the member was apologizing and then withdrawing it, but then he did something that is not appropriate practice, where someone does make a comment, and then he continued with similar sorts of questions, continued into debate. What he should have done, I think, is stopped with the apology for making those comments and then could have continued his comments in debate. He can put on the record what he wishes on this particular case and we look forward to continuing the debate as well, but it would have been more appropriate if he had just said he withdrew the comments and left it at that and then continued with the debate.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Thompson does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Tweed: I think I can resolve this. If it is a—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairperson, if you want to make rulings like that, I challenge your ruling.

Mr. Chairperson: Pardon?

Mr. Ashton: I challenge your ruling.

Mr. Chairperson: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged. Is that where the member for Thompson wants to leave it? I am asking you.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Chairperson, if the Chair makes a ruling that is considered inappropriate, the appropriate thing to do is for a member to challenge the Chair, period. That is what I did, period.

Mr. Chairperson: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged. Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Chairperson: All those against, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: I believe that the Yeas have it.

* * *

Mr. Tweed: I know we are getting close, but I guess just to put on the record for the member of Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), if he believes that I am what he says or what he suggested, the resolution that has been brought forward by the NDP party of Manitoba clearly states that they support the Quebec resolution that states that the costs of this extension be funded by the federal government, considering the Quebec government already provides for all the services in care given to

these persons. Now, if that is not as clear and obvious as I have seen today, then I would suggest that—

Point of Order

Ms. McGifford: On a point of order, this motion has not been brought forth by the NDP party of Manitoba. It has been moved by the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) and seconded by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). It has not been brought forth by the NDP party of Manitoba.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable member for Osborne does not have a point of order. It is definitely a dispute over the facts...

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Turtle Mountain, to continue.

Mr. Tweed: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The time being five o'clock, committee rise.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Would the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with the Estimates of the Department of Education and Training. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time.

We are on Resolution 16.2. School Programs (a) Division Administration (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I have some tablings, Mr. Chairman, that were requested by the member. I have the e-mail addresses that she was requesting, plus the project teams.

Joining us at the table, as well as the staff who were here yesterday, is Gina Perozuk, who is the interpreter for Norma Jean Taylor, who is the principal of the Manitoba School for the Deaf.

* (1440)

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Chair, at the end of last time, the minister was, I think, telling us which 10 citizens she is taking with her to the meetings in Newfoundland. I do not know that the minister had the full list, and I wonder if she could give it to us.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I am taking with me, as I indicated, consumers and amongst them will be—and I am going from memory here, so if you will pardon the pauses—a board member from Red River Community College who is also the parent of a special needs child in the public schools system; the student, or I guess the immediate past president now of the student union at Red River Community College; the immediate past president of the University of Manitoba Students' Union, UMSU; a parent from an independent school, a faith-based independent school; and a parent from the public school system—both of these members of their respective provincial organizations, I should add, as well.

I am taking Mr. Gerry MacNeil, who is the executive director of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees representing the duly elected representatives of consumers, the trustees. How many are that? Six. As well, of course, the two deputies and my assistant and myself.

Accompanying us but not as part of the delegation will be Mr. Dick Dawson, the chair of the Council on Post-Secondary Education, and he is going because he is presenting a paper to the forum. So he is not part of our delegation, but he will be, hopefully, present and able to converse with members of our delegation who will be there.

In short, we have the minister, the two deputies and the assistant who more or less always go. We have two students, three parents, and a representative of the trustees. That is our delegation.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I believe last time the minister included teachers. Is there a reason for not having teachers this time?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, and I explained that, I thought quite clearly, in my earlier answer when I indicated

that—and I think if she reads Hansard she will see that the first two national forum events were comprised mostly of teachers, superintendents, et cetera, and ministers of Education and Education officials. We, in our last two delegations, took official representatives of the teachers' group, the superintendents' group and so on and so forth.

One of the pieces of feedback that we received after they compiled the results of the second national forum was a grave concern that the numbers of service providers outnumbered drastically the number of consumers of education, and the request was made through feedback from the conference that more effort be made for this next one for ministers of Education to select delegations that would give more weight to the consumer representatives as opposed to the service providers, and hence we have agreed to do that for this, at least here from Manitoba.

I do not know what delegations are being taken from other provinces, but here in Manitoba we have said we think that made a good point. We had noticed it ourselves, actually, because what had happened was that in an effort to be fairer, people had selected one representative from each organization, so to speak, and the first two, without any of us really realizing that the number of employee organizations vastly outnumbered the number of parent organizations, so you would have representatives from—depending which province you were talking about. In Ontario, they have several different teachers' organizations. They all could be considered for a representative and so on. In Manitoba, we had teachers and superintendents if we wanted to. We did not. We could have gone down into the subcategories who each have their own organizations. Also, we did not take a principal as someone of MAP because we accepted the MTS statement that principals are not represented by Principals but rather by the MTS.

So we have had some complaints from principals over time that we do not include them, for example, on my implementation committee where we said we would take the president of MTS and one other member. Then the principals complained that even though most of the work of that committee affected principals, we had not selected any principals. We said to them very strongly and clearly that that is because you principals

have made it very clear that you wish to be represented by the MTS, and the MTS states that we should not be selecting you independent of the MTS, and the MTS has chosen not to select you for representation on this committee.

So I did put two principals at large on finally anyhow, and the net result of that was that very quickly then the MTS did put on an official representative of MAP because they feared I had chosen principals who believed in New Directions rather than ones who might adopt the union line. So they then did put their own principals on, but those are the kinds of things we have to go through sometimes to ensure representation. It is easier for us just to say MTS represents them, period, and that is what MTS wants us to say.

So we have never taken some of the subgroups that other provinces will recognize, like the Protestant teachers' association or the women teachers' association or this type of thing.

* (1450)

Parent groups tend to have just one parent group, like nationally there is the home and school. Now there is the Canadian Parents For French. But if you total up the number of employee organizations versus the number of parent organizations that are listed nationally, you will find many, many more employee organizations. So, in an attempt to be fair, the organizers had, in taking one from each organization, inadvertently tipped the balance of opinion to those deliverers rather than those consumers, and the consumers complained fairly vocally and fairly bitterly about it last session, hence Manitoba has agreed to ensure that we take consumers this go-around in response to that identified feedback.

We also recognized, of course, that teachers, for example, do have other vehicles to use to get to the conference. Through their own Canadian teachers' association they can go, and we know that members in Manitoba are involved federally and can go that way also. So we knew they had another vehicle that could enable them to attend.

Ms. Friesen: The minister strayed rather wide from the question, which was a much simpler one, but I gather

the minister had some things she wanted to put on the record, so that is fine. We can pass this line now, Mr. Chairman.

Point of Order

Mrs. McIntosh: I am sorry if I misunderstood. I thought the member was asking for my rationale as to why I had selected consumers, and so I gave a full and complete story as to why, for example, I did not choose subcategories of MTS, et cetera, and gave historical rationale for that. I apologize. I thought she had asked for the rationale.

On a point of order, I think the member in saying that I had strayed from the question, I believe I was absolutely on topic for every portion of my answer. So I think that it is important that the record note that I was in every aspect answering the question and not deviating or wandering away from it as she stated I had. I think if she reads her question and reads my answer, she will be able to determine that.

Mr. Chairperson: Can I get some clarity here? Was the honourable minister speaking on a point of order?

Mrs. McIntosh: On a point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, the honourable minister did not have a point of order. It was a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Shall the item pass? The item is accordingly passed.

Item 16.2. School Programs (a) Division Administration (2) Other Expenditures \$76,200—pass.

Item 16.2.(b) Manitoba School for the Deaf (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,710,700.

Ms. Friesen: I know that the School for the Deaf staff have been here on a number of occasions, last week and this week, I think, so I am glad that we have arrived at this line and hope we can deal with it today.

I wonder if we could begin by looking at enrollment at the School for the Deaf. The school is now in a new

facility, and I would like to ask some questions about that facility later on. Perhaps we could begin with the enrollment, the sources of the enrollment and the range of enrollment. For example, how are the students spread from kindergarten to Grade 12, what provinces the children are coming from at the moment, and what are the changes in enrollment from previous years?

Mrs. McIntosh: For the range of grades and the distribution: kindergarten to Grade 4, there are 25 students; Grades 5 to 8, there are 15 students; Grades 9 to 12 or Senior 1 to Senior 4, there are 42 students; for a total of 82 altogether, and that is fairly stable. Last year there were 73 students; this year there are 82. The enrollment over history has tended to range between 75 and 85, so 82 would be sort of closer to the high end of the normal range of students in terms of numbers. We have seen an increase this year. We do not know if that increase is due to just a regular fluctuation in the number of students, or if the new facility or the new location had anything to do with it or new principal but I do not know what those factors are. It may just be a normal fluctuation, but we note that it has gone up about nine students this year.

The member asked about the number of students and where they are from. The students are all Manitobans except for one student from Saskatchewan. There are 13 students who come from rural Manitoba, and that would include the one from Saskatchewan, who live in residence. They live at the school and the remainder all are either urban or close enough to commute to the school. I think that is all the information she asked for in this particular question.

* (1500)

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister tell us what the capacity of the school is? In the new facility, was there built in the opportunity to expand or was this seen as not the direction the school would want to or need to go? That is one part of the question. The other part is that I am interested in the post-secondary destinations of the students. Could the minister give us a sense of where the graduating class of last year has gone, how many there were and what their destination has been?

Mrs. McIntosh: In terms of capacity, the school can house for daily classes about 175. So there is ample

room for expansion. The residence itself can handle 18, so there is room there for an additional five students. In terms of the destination of the graduates, last year there were four graduates: one has gone to a university in the United States of America, in California; one has gone to Red River Community College here in Winnipeg; and, two have gone straight to the workforce.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, does the school have a particular program for transition for students? Are there staff who are working with people in the workforce or with colleges and universities in the province to make a transition for these students?

Mrs. McIntosh: To anything they might be doing after school, like, not necessarily just in the workforce but also to post-secondary training.

Mr. Chairman, in terms of transition to university or college or work, the school has a career education program as well as a work education program for those who want to go straight to work. They have a guidance counsellor on staff who provides information and assistance to prepare students for that transition from the school to life after school.

Ms. Friesen: Does the minister have an estimate of how many students in the public and private system in Manitoba are deaf or hard of hearing and are choosing not to go to the School for the Deaf?

Mrs. McIntosh: There are about 150 deaf students attending public and/or private schools; they are in a mixture of both, in addition to the 82 who attend the MSD.

* (1510)

Ms. Friesen: I notice that on page 45 of the detailed Estimates book there is contained a footnote that some of the money is for ASL interpreters in the rural schools, and I wonder why that is under this line rather than in Special Needs or in another part of the department. Is there some particular connection to the school, or is there a broader program that is being estimated here in the Estimates book?

Mrs. McIntosh: This is a new position, and it is likely to be housed at the Manitoba School for the Deaf.

Whether or not the person is housed at MSD, we believe the link to the expertise at MSD must be made. The person will find from time to time, if working at the Manitoba School for the Deaf, there may be occasions when there will be some other work that is required for that person to do, but it is the intention to use the technology at the Manitoba School for the Deaf to support rural areas and the Manitoba School for the Deaf will have that capacity in this coming year.

Members of the Manitoba Association of Visual Language Interpreters, which was called MAVLI, have met with me to discuss a document which included a proposal to employ specialists with ASL skills to support ASL interpreters in school divisions. The goal of the ASL specialist will be to travel throughout the province and meet with ASL interpreters working for school divisions, with the goal being to improve interpreting skills at the local level. There are about 40 interpreters who currently work throughout the province who may also need support and training.

Department staff from Student Services Branch have had regular meetings with the MAVLI group and other agencies involved in the interpreting field to discuss the need for this service, but we see this housed in Manitoba Education and Training in terms of the line. We are planning to use the technology at MSD, as I have said, to support rural areas, and the School for the Deaf will have that capacity in this coming year. So that is the reason it appears under this line.

Ms. Friesen: A couple of clarifications from that. The Estimates book actually says interpreters in rural schools, and I just wanted to clarify. The minister said to strengthen skills, I think, throughout Manitoba. So I am interested in whether these are actually rural or rural/urban. What are they? The book clearly says rural schools.

Secondly, the difference between last year and this year in full-time equivalents is 49.85 last year and 50.85 this year. There does not seem to be a large increase in staff. Does this program include an increase in staff, or is it simply a trainer for existing staff?

* (1520)

Mrs. McIntosh: The person is employed to work for all of Manitoba, rural and the North, Killamey, Thompson, places such as those. There is a one-

member staff increase, and the increase of one was for the FTE for interpretive services and for interpreter training. The prime focus is training the already existing 40 interpreters and to have them in the classroom. The member has seen interpreters in the classroom. There is a real skill that is involved in making sure that the student is able to participate fully in terms of asking questions and getting quick responses, and the higher the standard of interpretation, the better the quality of learning for the student will be, so that is, I hope, an answer for her that satisfies the questions asked. I should just add that the interpreter, even if the interpreter is housed in the Manitoba School for the Deaf in Winnipeg, that interpreter will spend most, if not all, of her time in the North and in rural Manitoba and would only occasionally actually be working in Winnipeg at the Manitoba School for the Deaf.

Ms. Friesen: What I wanted to clarify was were these services, and was this training, available to Winnipeg school divisions. For example, I know St. James has a school that includes a number of student who are deaf or in hard-of-hearing programs, so that is what I was getting at when I asked the minister does it include all of Manitoba, and the answer was, yes, all of Manitoba, Killarney, the North, et cetera. It is always the problem when you do a list, you leave some out inadvertently, so could we just clarify the responsibilities?

Mrs. McIntosh: I appreciate the member's request for clarification here. The interpreter is available for Manitoba. Having said that, the bulk of the requests, and the need expressed, comes from rural Manitoba, so in practice what happens is that the interpreter spends most of his or her time in places like Killarney, Thompson, et cetera, in rural Manitoba and not as much in the urban areas. People requesting the service would go through Howard Miller who is in the department and who served as principal prior to Ms. Taylor coming. So he has a good sense of the needs of deaf students, but for those in the main stream, the city divisions tend not to use the interpreter service the way the rural divisions do. They also can go directly to MAVLI, I believe, if they need to, and since MAVLI is located in the city, it may be easier to do that.

The other thing that the city has that rural schools do not is just in terms of the numbers. In the city you will

find, for example, that—you mentioned St. James School Division. They will have hard-of-hearing or deaf students located in St. James Collegiate, for example, where they can have a fair number of them together so that they can achieve efficiencies of scale, whereas in rural Manitoba they cannot always do that. They have distances that are inhibiting and, hence, the interpreter service becomes even more critical. Of course, the School for the Deaf has the specialist right on staff there, so they do not need to make the same kinds of requests. They have the capabilities within the school.

* (1530)

Ms. Friesen: I would like to ask if there are any programs or interpreter programs or training programs or programs for students. What exists for students who have English as a second language and also for aboriginal students? We have talked a lot in these Estimates about the department's intent to expand the graduation rates of aboriginal students. Are there specific programs for them? And does the minister have any sense of how many aboriginal students do have issues with hearing and with language?

Mrs. McIntosh: American Sign Language is not based on any spoken language, so to speak. It is not a translation of English, so a student growing up on a reserve or someplace where Cree was the mother tongue, would have no more difficulty learning the sign language than would a person whose mother tongue was English or French or some other language. It is the language of instruction for the deaf and hard-of-hearing students regardless of their first language. As I say, it is not a translation. It is a language of its own.

So you might have a student be proficient in sign language with two other languages that that student can speak, and maybe neither one of them is English. That does not impinge upon the ASL. There is a definition, or I guess this is a philosophy. It is from the four basic principles of bilingual, bicultural education, bilingual here meaning American Sign Language and some other language. In this case, we are talking about English as the second language. So four basic principles of bilingual, bicultural education are: one, that the American Sign Language, ASL, is the language of instruction. English is taught as a second language, much the same way we would teach core basic French;

two, aspects of deaf culture are incorporated into all aspects of the school to augment learning and social behaviour; three, technology is used as a key element of the learning process; and four, role models of successful deaf and hard-of-hearing staff within the school demonstrate the value of obtaining a quality education and thereby motivate the students to learn. So that is the bilingual, bicultural education milieu, the atmosphere that is—

Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

The staff has just pointed out one thing that I had not realized and is quite interesting, that in Quebec—this is the only exception that they are aware of—you could take a French language speaker and translate into LSQ, which is *Langues des signes Québécois*, but it is a separate language. It is not ASL. It is *Langues des signes Québécois*. That is a new one to me too. It is not ASL. That is the only exception that the staff is aware of. Interesting that, my goodness, the language dilemma flows into even signing in La Belle Province, our dear neighbours to the east.

Ms. Friesen: I thank the minister for the definition. I think I had assumed this, but I certainly did not have the vocabulary to describe it.

My questions were coming from two different perspectives, actually. I probably should have separated them. A student—and I am thinking first of all in terms of the people with English as a second language. I am thinking of the new immigrants, particularly in my community who will have been surrounded by a language other than English in terms of the written language. Are there provisions for them to make that transition? I am sure that it is an extremely small group, but I wondered if there is a method, if there is a process. Is it the kind of thing that a student should go to the School for the Deaf for? Is it something that is available in schools generally? So one issue.

* (1540)

My second issue with aboriginal students, which I should have addressed separately, comes not from the linguistic aspect but from the service aspect. How many students are there, aboriginal students in

Manitoba, who face these challenges, and how are they being met through the department, either through the school or through other means?

Mrs. McIntosh: We are not quite sure how many aboriginal students in Manitoba as a whole are deaf. We do have 13 aboriginal students at the Manitoba School for the Deaf, but, basically, any child who grows up in any written or spoken language that is the language of the home begins at school, whatever school, whether it is the Manitoba School for the Deaf or otherwise, using ASL.

So basically what staff has indicated is that if a student is deaf, a student will not have acquired a language via hearing. That student will enter school using signs or signals of some sort. If it is not ASL, they would begin using ASL immediately when they started school. In those cases it would be ASL. So no matter where they come from, so to speak, in terms of the language of the home or the community, they come to school and begin using ASL as the language of instruction and a language of learning.

Many of them have acquired that prior to their coming, but they would not, say, have learned Portuguese at home if that was the home language because they come to school without yet being able to read or write in most instances, and all communication with them would have been via signalling or signing of some kind. I do not know if that answers the member's question or not.

Ms. Friesen: Well, the part that was not answered, I do not know if it can be answered, and that is the issue of how many aboriginal students across the province, including band schools, need ASL services and whether the department has the resources to meet them.

Mrs. McIntosh: We do not think we have that information. Although, we could certainly do and would do a double-check to see if it is available. But I do not think we have got it broken down into—we have a listing of the number of deaf students in Manitoba. We have got that from school divisions, but we do not know of those how many are aboriginal and, as I say, they do not believe they have got it in the department. The divisions could probably provide it if asked, but again it comes back to the self-declaration on ethnicity,

so some may not declare. The only thing I guess I can say is that 13 out of 82 at the School for the Deaf is a fairly high percentage of the students in this deaf school.

Mr. Chairman, staff has just provided me with some additional information. We do provide services, as the member knows, for band schools for certain things on a contractual basis. This year, it is two that we have contracted for from band schools. That may not be the total number, but we do have the two contracted for band schools right now.

Some band schools could be sending students into public schools as well, because they will do that from time to time for various reasons. Again, we do not have a breakdown on that.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chair, I wanted to ask a couple of questions under Other Expenditures and then pass the two together, if that is okay.

On Transportation, there seems to be quite an increase from \$5,000 last year to \$13,000 this year. I wondered what the reason for that was.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, that includes the transportation costs for staff to supervise work education and residential students. It is an increase of \$8,000 for the ASL interpreter-consultant position that we talked about a few moments ago.

* (1550)

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, further down on the Desktop Services, I am a bit puzzled by that one, and it is not just the overall government contract.

I thought that one of the reasons for moving to this school located in the St. James Division was that renovations could be done, that we would have state-of-the-art technology. Yet, this seems to be a very large increase for a state-of-the-art technology building. So could the minister explain why this has gone from zero to \$135,000, if as the annual report said a year and a half ago this was state of the art?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mrs. McIntosh: What we had before was, frankly, very little. It was part of the whole circumstances surrounding the move in that we knew to upgrade the old School for the Deaf to meet the standards that we knew were required would have cost a tremendous amount of money, six-figure sums of money, hence the search to relocate if we found that it would be less expensive to do all that needed to be done in the new facility, as opposed to attempting to renovate and upgrade the older one.

Having said that then in terms of our commitment to move to a state-of-the-art facility, we have put in some very high-standard equipment which now requires ongoing maintenance. Whereas before we had little equipment and little to maintain, we now have state-of-the-art equipment which requires a high and careful degree of maintenance annually, an expense which before had not been met.

We have interactive television in the school. We have sophisticated alarm systems. We have in the residence, for example, the beds are hooked up to fire alarms so the beds will vibrate if the fire alarm goes off as opposed to hearing a bell which, of course, the deaf students would not be able to hear. So just all those kinds of things are costly but really bring the deaf students to the same level—say, for example, the fire alarms—of safety as hearing students. We tried to match that all the way through so that the nonhearing achieve the same level of service in all areas as the hearing would. I do not know if that is an answer that satisfies, but it is basically going from nothing to something.

Ms. Friesen: My concern is when did this section of the department go from zero to something? It is listed here under last year's Estimates, 1997-98, as zero. I remember that in earlier Estimates we looked—I think it was in the region of \$2.5 million for equipping the school. At the time I asked questions about that, is this going to bring us up to—and I think we discussed issues of a school in Newfoundland as being the ideal, the one that we were looking to emulate. I think at that time I received assurances that the money that was in the Estimates that year would, in fact, bring us close to the Newfoundland example.

In the Estimates for '97-98, it is listed as zero. In the annual report for '96-97, the annual report says in

January of 1997 classes began. The new building has state-of-the-art technology and is architecturally designed to meet the needs of deaf children. So it seems to me that last year we had state-of-the-art technology, so it was not zero. Why was it listed as zero, and how have we gone to 135,000 in one year? What has changed?

Mrs. McIntosh: A couple of points that may help put some clarification around the issue, one being that of course last year the school was still partly under the auspices of the Department of Government Services. Now my timing is getting mixed up, but we went through a period when it was all Government Services. It has come through now that more of the cost is being picked up by the Department of Education because some of the material in it is educational in nature and belongs to the Department of Education.

* (1600)

So that was one shift in more money coming from Education than from Government Services, but it is also that the money is not for new equipment but for maintenance in that the minute the equipment is begun to be used of course it starts to depreciate, so it has to be maintained at a very high level. Some of it is pretty sophisticated stuff.

There is a central room in the school, for example, which does all the electronics for the school, and from that room they can dispense, at any given hour of the day, a particular video to show up on a screen in any room. The technological nerve centre of the school—they have a name, I just cannot think of it, but it is awesome to watch how that works, because teachers can program in, and the technician can just simply—at two o'clock in the afternoon a certain program will appear up on the screen. It has been pre-programmed in the night before throughout the school, and it will come and go in the hallways or wherever they need it.

Along with the interactive television are a lot of those other things, all done through a central controlling room. That is high-cost maintenance and it is higher than we would experience for so-called normal schools where they can use a loudspeaker system, where the principal can just take a little microphone in his office

and say, attention all classes, and all classrooms get it. The School for the Deaf has the same capability, but it is done with more sophisticated technologies that do not require sound, and they are more costly to maintain and more costly to buy initially. This money is for maintenance, not for purchase of new equipment.

Ms. Friesen: Well, I am not disputing the nature of the equipment. I am not disputing the cost of that equipment. What I am concerned about is the difference between last year and this year. The minister has said, for example, one answer she gave me was that, well, part of it was under Government Services. Well, that is possible, but on page 21 of the annual report for '96-97, it does indicate that there was a \$114,000 overexpenditure “. . . due to renovation costs associated with the relocation of the School for the Deaf to Alexander Ross School.”

Now, it is not the cost. It is not the \$114,000 that concerns me. It is the issue that is listed under the Department of Education. So if the overrun costs are listed here, it seems to me that the cost of the renovation must also be listed here. You are not going to have the cost of the renovation listed in Government Services and the overrun costs in Education. That does not make sense. So I am not sure about the minister's first answer that some of this was in Government Services.

Secondly, the minister is talking about maintenance, and, yes, I can imagine that it is very high cost, but I do notice that under this particular section of the department there is a line for maintenance. Again, I am not disputing the cost. It is the fact that it is maintained at the same level; \$39,000 last year, \$39,000 this year. That would make sense. You had the same equipment last year; you have the same equipment this year. One might have expected a slight rise in a contract fee or something like that, but on the whole that seems reasonable. You also have under Other Operating—I am adding a new piece here—there is a \$20,000 increase, from \$40,000 to \$62,000 under Other Operating, so I would have assumed that there was some issue of maintenance increase there. That is possible.

But, when we look at Desktop Services, it is listed as zero last year and it comes to \$135,000 this year. That is a huge increase for a state of the art building. If there

was no cost on that line for the admittedly high-tech services of this building, then why is there \$135,000 this year?

Mrs. McIntosh: Several points. Last year the expenditure was zero because we did not have any technology equipment to maintain. The equipment is now approaching three years old and we are phasing in purchasing some new equipment or repair or maintaining. The member had asked for clarification on the Government Services. The Government Services had acquired the building and done the renovations, and all of those things were Government Services expenses. They put in the equipment. We now have to maintain all of that under the Department of Education and Training.

* (1610)

Just in terms of how these expenses break down, the rentals and maintenance includes costs for office equipment, photocopier rental, fax rental, repairs to equipment. Then you have other, you have the purchase of office supplies, printing costs, cleaning supplies, technology requirements to access the Internet services. Then, and yet a different category, Other Operating, Desktop Services. There was an increase there for desktop management costs that was quite high.

So, if you start looking at how those break down, you can see that, yes, there is a direct comparison in certain categories where the amount we spent this year is very similar to what we spent last year, but others where the circumstances are quite different, hence the costs are quite different. Does staff have another piece of information there for me? Staff has also indicated that Government Services acquired, renovated, and paid for most of the equipment. By equipment, we are talking about educational equipment, not office equipment. Now, there could be occasions when the piece of equipment might be used for both, but there will be distinctly educational equipment that is not used for general office work, and we have to maintain that.

The school has been in operation now for 15 months, and we are going to enter the next fiscal year. We are looking at having to do some replacing, as well as maintenance, in the next fiscal year. The equipment is three years old because even though the school has only

been in operation for 15 months, because some of the computers were purchased in the school year '95-96 by Government Services so it has maybe only had 20 months of use or may have had some use before we used it, but they were purchased in that '95-96 year, made available in the school for its use for the last 15 months, but it is time to take a look at the maintenance and possible renewal of some of the technology for learning equipment.

Ms. Friesen: Could the minister explain to me why the cost overrun, then, for renovation was listed in the annual report under Education?

Mrs. McIntosh: That money was divided in part, some of it through the Department of Education and Training, some of it through Government Services, so it was not entirely one or the other of the department. It was—and I do not have the percentage, except that the lion's share would be Government Services, but a smaller portion was actually Education and Training. Those would be things that were really, in our perspective educationally, imperative-type things. So you have two departments kind of overlapping for awhile, all from Government Services to a portion of Government Services and Education and Training, and now the maintenance solely, in terms of the educational equipment, done by Education and Training.

Ms. Friesen: Well, I am not an accountant, but I am puzzling over the accounting principles here, and I do not know if the minister has the staff here to explain it to me, and maybe there could be something written later. But essentially there is a cost overrun. It has been portioned between two departments. Now, presumably that would not have been in the Estimates. It would be moving things not only between lines, but between departments, and that seems to me unusual. Could the minister explain whether it is unusual or not and what the accounting principle is, and how that is dealt with through the whole principle of Estimates?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I do hope Harry is listening. The only cost overrun that was borne by Education was due to the extra costs for education equipment. There was no apportioning of costs into two departments. We paid education costs; Government Services paid capital. To my knowledge, there was no way that we paid for, say for example, you

know, the construction of walls or the adding of fire doors or that type of thing, but we did pick up extra costs for education equipment. Those were borne by Education and Training as opposed to Government Services, because we were the ones that wanted them there and they were not essential for the integrity of the structure.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, actually, I should correct the record. We should be speaking about \$370,000, not \$114,000. The \$114,000 is an underexpenditure due to a vacant position. In '96-97, there was a \$370,000 overexpenditure on education equipment, the minister is saying.

Would the minister be able to table at a later date the complete budget that Education spent on the Alexander Ross School, including that education equipment, of which \$370,000 is the overexpenditure?

* (1620)

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, Mr. Chairman, we can do that and not to worry. I was thinking of the same figure she was referring to, but it is good for the record to have it clarified that we were talking about what the figure was that we were talking about. We can certainly get that for her. We do not have it here right now, but we can provide it.

Just to make sure I am absolutely clear, she is looking for the total breakdown including the extra costs that Education paid for education equipment, that type. Okay, we will provide that as soon as we can. It probably will not be today.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Chairman, so I want to come back to the Desktop Services and to ask what service the school will be getting for that \$135,000.

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, that \$135,000, that is the figure we are talking about right now, right? So with that I may have left a few things off, but we get maintenance, some new equipment. We need two servers, for example, to replace old ones. We get the troubleshooting for those times when problems arise. We get upgrades to our software, and those are basically the types of things that that \$135,000 would be used for.

Ms. Friesen: I would like to ask a related question and that is who will own the new equipment that comes under that \$135,000, and then a second question which may or may not be related and that is on the line on capital there is, I think, more than a doubling of capital requirements this year from 15 to 37.

Mrs. McIntosh: That has gone from 15.9 to 37.9, and that includes computer hardware, software, appliances, and electronic equipment. There is also an increase in there for technology requirements to access Internet services and for the new ASL interpreter-consultant position.

* (1630)

Ms. Friesen: I want to confirm with the minister that the goods that are acquired under that line, the Capital line, that has gone from 15.9 to 37.9, will be owned, continue to be owned, by the School for the Deaf/Manitoba government.

My other part of my question was, the new equipment that was coming in part under Desktop Services, the 135,000, whether that would be owned by the government or that would be owned by Systemhouse.

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not know, are we as interesting as the other room? Because I can hear the other room, it sounds really interesting—[interjection]

At any rate, in answer to the member's question, Systemhouse has agreed not to provide service to MSD due to the specialized educational equipment at MSD, and arrangements are being made to obtain desktop support and systems management support from MERLIN. Part of this includes equipment replacement. MSD will own all the new equipment. Systemhouse will only support a few office computers to connect to other government departments and then their service to MSD will end. That will be in August of 1998 coming up in just a few months time.

Ms. Friesen: I am not sure I understood all of that. Let me say what I think I understood and the minister can correct me. There is an overall government contract for Systemhouse. Part of that \$135,000 has been allocated to the Manitoba School for the Deaf, but

there is an out clause by which the Systemhouse will not be providing services to the Manitoba School for the Deaf after summer of '98—I forget the exact month.

So this is a very temporary contract under which there will be some maintenance, some new equipment, which, if it is office equipment, will belong to Systemhouse. If it is educational equipment, it will belong to School for the Deaf. Then the troubleshooting, the upgrades and software are going to end this summer '98; I mean, this does not make sense.

First of all, have I expressed it correctly? Secondly, it does not make sense. What is the point? Why is there such a small period of time? Why is it such a large amount of money? Why does it do something which you did not need last year? And, what kind of new equipment can be purchased in that period that makes sense for the government to own on a temporary basis?

* (1640)

Please, Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could simplify the question. The minister may still want to comment on whether I have understood it correctly or not, or which portions are right and which are not. But the simple question it seems to me is: Why is the School for the Deaf involved in a Systemhouse contract of \$135,000 for three months?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, I think we have a response here that will be helpful to the member.

With capital costs, we had an increase of \$22,000 for access to the Internet and interpreters' equipment. The equipment will be owned by the Manitoba School for the Deaf.

With Desktop Services, this is an increase of \$135,000, and for this, we get, one, maintenance by Systemhouse which continues on. It has been in place now for lo these many months and will continue until August of '98. Equipment: New servers brought by MERLIN, as our broker server, will be owned by the Manitoba School for the Deaf. MERLIN is our broker, so MERLIN will be the broker there, and we own the equipment; troubleshooting provided by Systemhouse until August, after which MERLIN does it.

We and they agreed that MERLIN, due to its expertise, was in a better position to provide MSD with the ongoing service it required. The only ongoing support to be provided past August, 1998, at the Manitoba School for the Deaf by Systemhouse will be office support for two or three office computers that are hooked up to the government-wide system, and the two or three computers will be owned by the Manitoba School for the Deaf.

I just apologize. It took us a bit of time just to make sure we had the figures correct there.

Ms. Friesen: I am not sure why under the Systemhouse contract that the department then even talks about equipment because, if the broker is MERLIN, if the new services are going to be brought by MERLIN, is there something I am missing there? Is there a piece of equipment, are there any pieces of equipment, which are going to be provided under the \$135,000 contract? Maybe we can start there and then come to some other stuff in a minute.

Mrs. McIntosh: This is not a contract for \$135,000. We are talking about here, for example, of capital costs which went up to \$37,900, I believe it was, which was an increase of \$22,000. The increase was for access to the Internet and the interpreters' equipment. It is not a contract. It is the increase in the amount that we are spending on capital costs.

Ms. Friesen: Yes, I understood that. The minister dealt with that in part (a) and then part (b); she talked about the Desktop Services and she mentioned four items.

One was maintenance by Systemhouse until August '98, of desktop equipment. Secondly, she dealt with equipment, and rather than talk about the ownership of the equipment, the minister talked about brokering and services to be brought by MERLIN, and so I was going back to the issue of equipment since, in an earlier answer, she had given me under the \$135,000 contract that there was an equipment component, and I wanted to know who owned it and what it would consist of. Thirdly, the minister talked about troubleshooting, which would be covered until '98, August '98 I think is the date, and then MERLIN would do it. Fourthly, there would be office support, which would continue

past August '98 for two to three office computers, and that would be done by Systemhouse and the computers would be owned by the Manitoba School for the Deaf.

So I am still left wondering why there is \$135,000 for what essentially appears to be a three-month contract with an extension for servicing of two to three computers, office computers.

* (1650)

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, there are several aspects here. There is the contractual aspect for services. The member repeats back to me my response earlier in troubleshooting maintenance, ongoing desktop services. The first two items are via a contract with Systemhouse until August. After that, the services will be under contract to MERLIN. The third item will be an ongoing contract for desktop services for two or three office computers connected to the government network. The remainder of the 135,000 is to purchase outright one server. So in conclusion, the 135,000 is partly to buy outright one server, which would be around, say, maybe 10,000, but do not hold us to that; that is ballpark. The rest is for a contract to be split between MERLIN and Systemhouse.

That, I think, may provide the clarification that I think the member is seeking here because I think we are maybe talking about the same thing but in two different ways. I hope that clarifies for her what she has been seeking to have clarified here.

Ms. Friesen: Yes, that helps in part. So we are looking at approximately \$125,000 to be divided between Systemhouse and MERLIN. Could the minister give me a breakdown of how that is divided?

Mrs. McIntosh: We can do that, but we cannot do it today. We can attempt to have that again at our next sitting or as soon thereafter as possible. We will provide it to her.

Mr. Chairperson: Item 16.2. School Programs (b) Manitoba School for the Deaf (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$2,710,700—pass; (2) Other Expenditures \$586,200—pass.

Item 16.2.(c) Assessment and Evaluation (1) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$4,089,500. Do we need a minute to change staff? I think we might just—do you want to just recess for a minute? We will just recess for three minutes.

The hour being five o'clock, committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): The hour now being five o'clock, the House is now adjourned as previously agreed.

This House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 30, 1998

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